

and it's been an exorbitant amount of work. But it just depends what you mean by challenging. There're some pieces where you get done with it, and you still have no idea what the fuck it was supposed to be. I would say Danny Zuko in *Grease* was a lot more challenging than this. Because I didn't care. There was no point. That's what's challenging to me: things that are vapid of meaning and purpose, at least to me. I know *Grease* has its cosmic purpose in the grand scheme. Maybe.

AS: Charlotte is a controversial figure historically—on one hand a courageous protector of history who salvaged items from Nazi and Soviet destruction, on the other an informant to the East German secret police. Why are you inspired by her story?

WM: I like the play because it is ambiguous, and it leaves us with questions rather than with answers. And I like this play because it challenges one to look beyond bad guy, good guy. What is right action in a time of fascism, or in a time of tyrannical oppression? Would it have been better for her to martyr herself and suffer and die and not survive to live and tell the story? Or is it better for her to have done what she did, perhaps in our eyes be imperfect, but to have survived to tell the story and perhaps inspire other people? But to do what? To be flawed?

I think that's one of its main characteristics as a play. We want to idolize our heroes. Especially as a homosexual community, as intersexed people, we want to have clear-cut heroes that we can depend on. Yet the history and the past have been so taken out, have been erased, that the ones that we do have aren't perfect. But nobody is. So it really is an exposition on the imperfection of our heroes. She's a really good example of all of Germany. She transcends just being a homosexual hero. She was a German hero. She was given the Medal of Honor. She was nationally recognized as this amazing person who did all of these great things for the culture of Germany. And then of course when the Stasi files came out the entire country split, thinking is she bad, is she good?

AS: What's next for you?

WM: Next is a move. I'm getting out of Dodge. I'm moving to New York. I have several projects and paths that are 90 to 98 percent done. Meaning album, meaning the musical *One*. You know those kinds of projects that I really want to plug into the New York grid. I feel it's time to be there for a while and see what happens.

AS: *One* was such a big production with all this talk of Broadway. What is its status now?

WM: I let *One* go for a long time. Then three months ago I started working with two brilliant writers and have been doing writing workshops with them. Realized the majority of my research was on Buddhism: more on the content of the piece and less on the structure and way to write a piece.

What we did last summer was exactly what needed to happen. Producers came from all over. The thing that's good for Portland to know—for



McCollum participates in the Oct. 30 panel discussion "Three Theaters: Tales of Identity, Art and Fascism." Two other companies are presenting similarly themed plays this season: Insight Out Theatre Collective's *Leni*, which runs through Nov. 11, and Readers Theatre Repertory's *Address Unknown*, which opens April 6, 2007.

the people who say, "Why aren't you on Broadway?"—is that things take forever. You don't just go to Broadway. It takes years.

AS: How do you feel about the mixed critical response?

WM: It was exactly what I would have expected. I think I agreed with every review. It's interesting when something has your name all over it, but it's not really yours. I think that's something that people either do or do not realize: that it's such a collaborative art form. Your name's on it, but it's not necessarily all your doing.

Part of the flaw was I was way too involved. I wasn't allowed to have objectivity. Which was not my choice. I never wanted to be in the play. I wouldn't have cast myself in that role.

AS: What are you proudest of in your theatrical contributions to this city?

WM: I'm proudest about Insight Out in its present state, which is a very long-term situation—that Insight Out will continue to flourish regardless of my presence.

AS: What is it like being on stage with Noah (Jordan, McCollum's partner, who has appeared with him in *One*, *Assassins* and *Metamorphoses*)?

WM: It's divine. Absolutely divine. It's a joy to see him doing what he loves and supporting his passion. And then to be able to share heightened time on stage together, both in our craft, is one of the most blessed things I think I'll ever get to experience. Because it's both us doing what we love, together. It's sharing a different form of passion. 10

Portland Center Stage presents *I AM MY OWN WIFE* Nov. 10 to Dec. 23 in the new Gerding Theater at the Armory, 128 N.W. 11th Ave. Tickets are \$16.50-\$59.50 from 503-445-3700.

The first time AARON SCOTT saw Wade play Hedwig, he got the car wash during "Sugar Daddy." You can reach him at aaronxscott@gmail.com.

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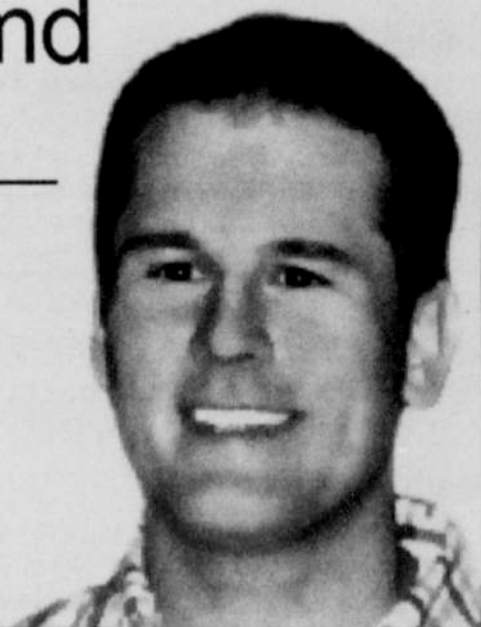
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