

Costume Drama

Dressing up for work and play

"Hail Caesar," the waiting throng announced as I arrived. Or, more accurately, "Hail, Licentius Caesar." Of course, I wasn't arriving at the Roman Coliseum but the Southeast Portland apartment of drag queen Wayne "Celeste Towers" Chamberlain, who was throwing a murder mystery party with a different sort of drag theme.

Wayne started throwing mystery parties in the late '80s for friends. Success enabled him to turn the games into a business, which he's now resurrecting. Hosts choose among various themes (1920s gangster Chicago, 1930s English countryside, 1940s Nazi Germany), and everyone is expected to wear a costume—in my case, a queen-size sheet (no pun intended) and purple satin fabric gathered to resemble a toga. Unfortunately, the folds of my toga forced me to stand with an arm outstretched all night long, which just looked like I was waiting for my deodorant to dry.

Included with the game was a four-course meal prepared by the statuesque Celeste, whose 6-foot-3



Out Going
BY FLOYD SKLAVER

behind the scenes running each and every performance and rehearsal. Now she is one of the few women in the nation leading a major company's production team.

Among the cast were gay artists Paul Arensmeyer and Stephen O'Donnell, who were supernumeraries (extras) along with James Holstad. Having been a super myself in the past four productions, I felt lonely being in the audience until I discovered that Marc and I were sitting in the gay section.

In front of us were Susan Lucas and Heidi Schilling, who were wearing matching rings after just six months together. They met at a birthday party, and after spending a passionate night together, Heidi asked Susan to bring over her coffeepot. Instead, Susan told me, she "brought the whole house." To our right were Mike Caughell and Mark Rutherford, whom we had met seven years earlier while in Palm Springs, Calif., watching a porn film being shot. This is their fourth season as opera subscribers, and both are rabid Puccini fans.

Unfortunately, there's no Puccini this season, but up next from Nov. 2 to 10 is Rossini's *Cinderella*, starring Portland's own Angela Niederlof (in bold print in thanks for her dedication and tireless work at Our House of Portland).

A few nights later, thanks to marketing wizard (and *Just Out* writer) Timothy Krause, my best friend, Brian "BoBo" Wilson, accompanied me to *Mariela in the Desert* at Miracle Theatre, which featured a stunning set by Mark Haack and a stellar performance by Kurt Conroyd. And speaking of stellar performances, be sure to catch *Cabaret* at Portland Center Stage starring Wade McCollum and Storm Large, who was recently outed as bisexual by *Willamette Week's* Byron Beck. Extended until Nov. 4, *Cabaret* also features the hottest chorus boys I've ever seen on a Portland stage, including steamy Scott Sachs, who plays soccer with a gay league on New York's Chelsea Piers.

With his body, one can only guess who else hottie Scottie plays with on the piers. But I'd never fault a guy for being *Out Going*. ☺

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Floyd cracks the case with "The Lovely" Suzanne Hale.

frame towers over her guests even without the additional 12 inches of hair she sports. (In fact, I was afraid it would get caught in the ceiling fan.) Helping in the kitchen were Dale and Edie Cochran, who are in honorary bold print for their decades of support to the drag community.

Casey Ipoche, who has spent the past 22 years entertaining in a dress, first as Mona Samore and now as Monica Boulevard, played the part of Maximus Testosterus, while Karl Rohde played Harangus Adnauseum, which seems appropriate for a former Lake Oswego city councilor. Also there was another honorary queer, "The Lovely" Suzanne Hale, owner of the late-night Roxy. At one point, Suzanne, who told me she "could be mistaken for a trans-vestal virgin," leaned over to kiss me and said: "Don't get makeup on me. I have to wear this again tomorrow night."

While I didn't have to wear a toga again, I did find myself dressing up the next night for the premiere of *Carmen*. Besides being Portland Opera's season opener and its first Friday night performance ever (to accommodate the popular inclusion of Sunday matinees), this was also Laura Hassell's debut as director of production. For 15 years, she has been production stage manager, the person

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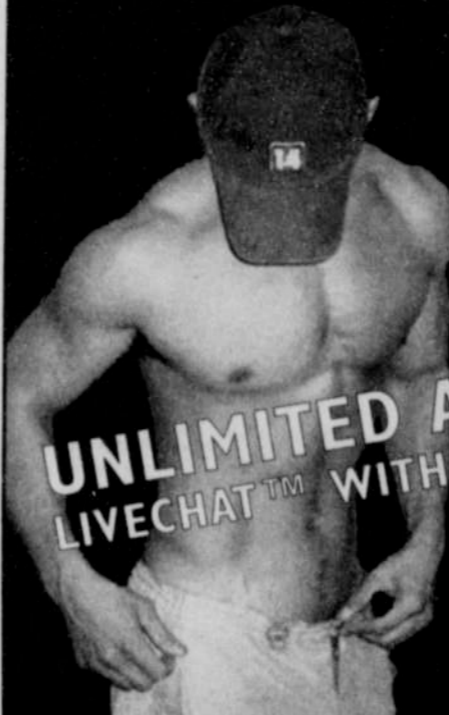
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