

theater

Shakespeare Shakeout

The Tempest inspires Insight Out to *For:Give*

by Timothy Krause

Given the choice, Tony Fuemmeler would just as soon shove Shakespeare for 20 years, letting rest academic pre-occupation in favor of rediscovery. "Just let it sleep a bit and then come back to it with fresh eyes, instead of everyone having to do some Shakespeare all the time," he suggests. Ironically, this gay 32-year-old theater artist (who recently designed puppets for *Lily's Purple Plastic Purse* at Oregon Children's Theatre) now finds himself returning to the Bard as director of *For:Give*, a new project from Insight Out Theatre Collective inspired by Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

"Shakespeare in general has such a particular place in the theater community and society at large. He's really talented, taken for granted and so many people talk about how great his work is, but there are very few productions that manifest those things that are so great about him," Fuemmeler asserts. "Because I had this feeling, I wondered what I would learn."

Like all of Insight Out's undertakings, *For:Give* began as a collaborative process to encourage public dialogue around challenging themes, here hinging on enslavement and liberation, rites of passage and evolution of the spirit. With a \$5,000

Access to Artistic Excellence grant from National Endowment for the Arts, Fuemmeler, playwright Cindy Williams Gutiérrez and a cast of seven women use *The Tempest* as catalyst and criterion, revisiting the source text as often as unraveling new threads.

In Shakespeare's saga, Prospero, a sorcerer and Duke of Milan, is exiled along with daughter Miranda on an enchanted island where they are served by Ariel, a spirit, and Caliban, a slave. Prospero creates a storm to maroon his usurpers, who split into factions with rebellious and romantic intents. It's outwit, outplay and outlast—an Elizabethan game of *Survivor* replete with tricks and trysts befitting an exploration of compassion and pardon.

In Insight Out's evolution, several women are drawn to a different kind of island in a storm—a seemingly abandoned warehouse—where they come face to face with personal demons. "There are ways the characters manifest aspects of Prospero, or a person's dark side and light side," says Fuemmeler, "and there are different opportunities toward understanding how you might look at this material through dance and movement, heightened language, song and multimedia projection."

Fuemmeler's research included educational outreach to DaVinci Middle School and Franklin High School, asking point-of-view questions: Who is forgiveness for? What is the biggest barrier to forgiveness? What is the hardest thing to forgive?


"In *The Tempest*, there are many times when the characters seem to be caught by a spirit, or a certain emotion, overtaken by grief, caught up in rage and working with that dynamic in which something in everyday life all of a sudden overtakes you. It's you and isn't you at the same time, especially in terms of how you deal with other people," Fuemmeler says. "The advantage of this show is that we have a lot of requirement and permission to explore the show in a variety of avenues."

That includes bringing together a cast of all women, although Fuemmeler attributes this choice to a preponderance of female talent rather than a political statement. That the characters of Miranda and her suitor, Ferdinand, both are played by women is not an issue for him; in fact, he prefers audiences not think of the show as specifically feminist or lesbian. "It's about the relationships that do exist. If people are falling in



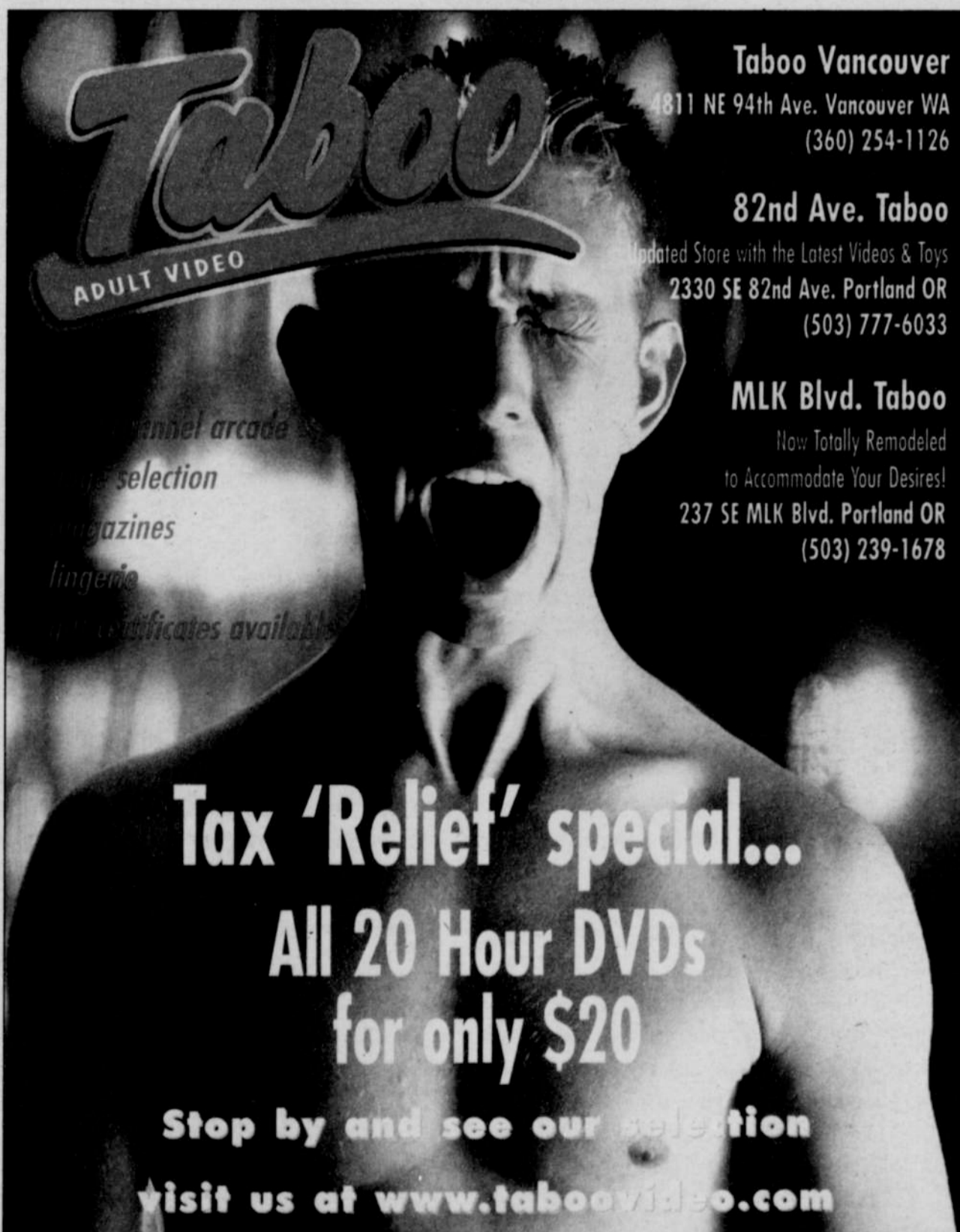
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Several women find themselves face to face with their personal demons in the midst of a powerful storm in *For:Give*.

love, they fall in love.... We are concentrating on what the characters are doing rather than the fact that they are a woman or not a woman.... Hopefully audiences will see the complexity in everyone." 

INSIGHT OUT THEATRE COLLECTIVE presents *For:Give* through May 17 at Mississippi Ballroom, 833 N. Shaver St. Tickets are \$15 from 503-493-8070 or www.insightouttheatre.org.

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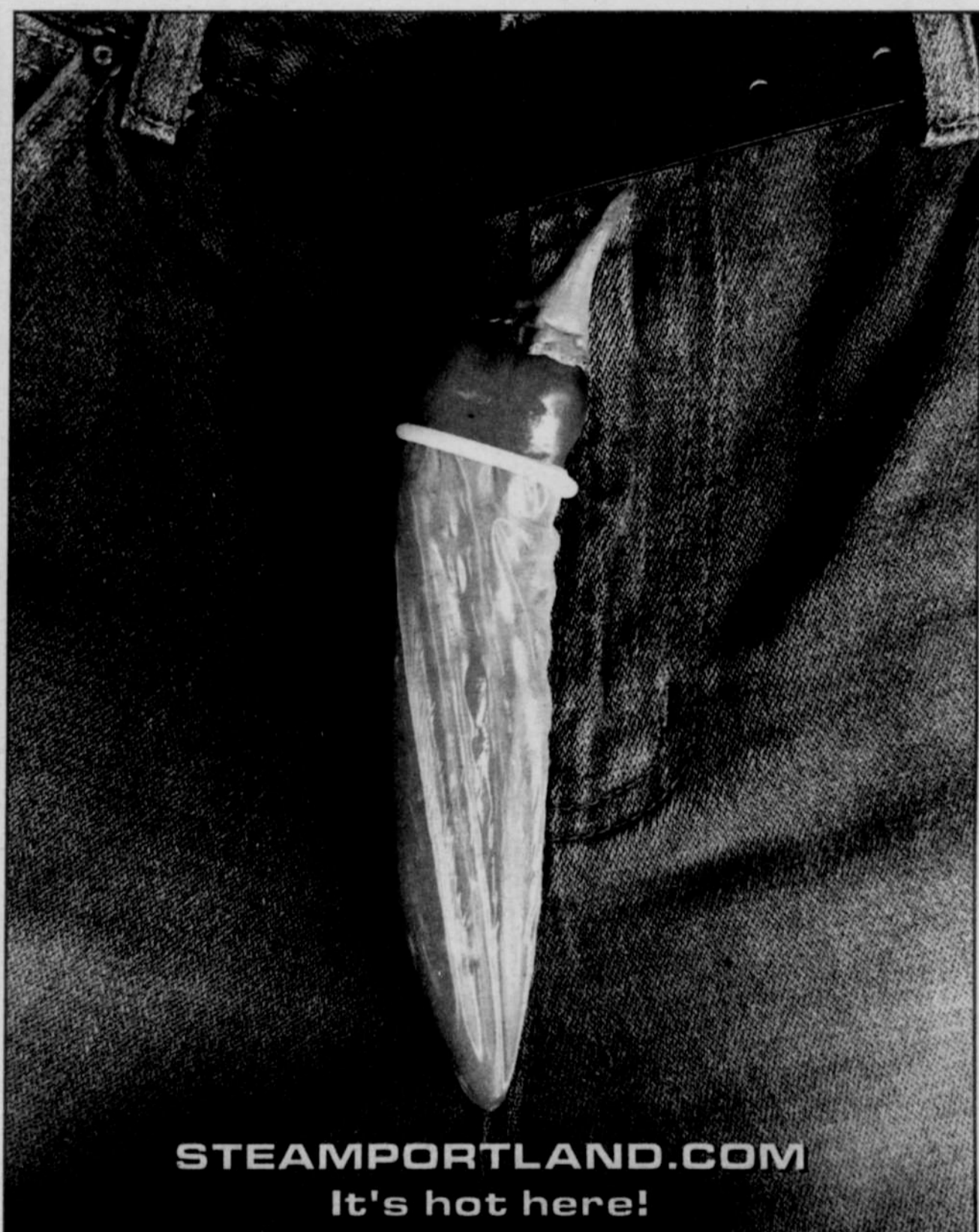
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