POZ Picks

August 1, 1997

PICK OF THE LITTER

Self-reflection can be a bitter pill to swallow, and for this reason, *Life Outside*, Michelangelo Signorile's cool and incisive dissection of the '90s gay male, may not go down easily. Particularly since he delineates how extensive recreational-drug among gay men contributes to the spread of AIDS by encouraging sexual promiscuity. Signorile also exposes the painful paradox that in a community riddled with plague, the appearance of health is paramount and drives many to behaviors that are actually debilitating -- steroid abuse, for example. He exposes the misogyny and self-loathing that has driven so much of homosexual culture into a cycle of self-destruction. Unlike many cultural commentators, Signorile does offer possible solutions. For continued survival, every gay man who looks to a vital future must read this trenchant and important work.

-- Dominic Hamilton-Little

MUSIC

Fairy Tales

Cast Recording
Firefly Records

A brand-new talent has emerged on the musical theater scene. Eric Lane Barnes, with his witty and charming musical review, *Fairy Tales*, has given us an engaging view of contemporary gay issues, including family, bigotry and AIDS.

Particularly great on the Chicago cast recording is Jennifer Bradley's searing rendition of "The Ballad of Tammy Brown," and Keith Anderson's version of "A Hummingbird," about a man facing his lover's approaching demise.

Barnes is at his best when his music is ensconced in a situation, and only occasionally does he venture into the merely sappy with numbers like "Keepers of the Light." The really refreshing thing about Barnes' work is his ability to tell a story and evoke empathy from the listener without feeling the urge to rely on the generic pop sound all too common in contemporary musicals.

To order the CD, call Firefly Records at 312.409.4514, or write them at P.O. Box 60903, Chicago, IL 60660-0903.

BOOKS

Things Shaped in Passing

Edited by Michael Klein and Richard McCann
Persea Books

The challenge to poets confronting AIDS is a difficult one: "How is AIDS poetry different from other poetry?" This exciting follow-up to the highly successful *Poets for Life* -- subtitled *More "Poets for Life" Writing from the AIDS Pandemic* -- answers the question simply: It isn't. The 42 poets compiled here treat HIV not as an issue or a plague, but rather as part of their expanding view of the world. These are not AIDS poems -- they are life poems. HIV has affected each of these poets in different and easily distinguishable ways. Jean Calentine writes "ghost letters"; Richard Tayson gets tested; Tom Andrews deconstructs the language of hemophilia; Mark Doty writes a fugue for a friend living with HIV. The combined result is overwhelmingly revealing, alternately confused and peaceful. Through every poem in this vastly appealing new collection wander strains of remembrance -- the indelible impressions made by those who have passed on create for us new ways of looking at our surroundings.

-- Manjula Martin

THEATER

God's Heart

by Craig Lucas
Lincoln Center Theater, New York City

In *God's Heart*, Craig Lucas strives to break new artistic ground, straying from his usual clever and entertaining style. *God's Heart* explores coping with loss while buried in a technological nightmare -- a society increasingly governed by machines. This is the first new play Lucas has written since the loss to AIDS of both his lover and Norman Rene, his longtime collaborator and the original director of almost every play and movie Lucas has written (including *Longtime Companion*). The always engaging Julie Kavner returns to the stage after a long tenure in television that includes playing Brenda Morganstern, Tracy Ullman's sidekick and the voice of Marge Simpson. Kavner plays a caregiver, tending to her ailing female lover, who upon her death becomes a computer chip floating around in cyberspace. Hmmm. Joe Mantello's (*Love! Valour! Compassion!*, *Blue Window*) direction at first feels like a technological multimedia show. Soon, however, we understand his -- and the playwright's -- intent in focusing on the consuming nature of technology in our modern culture, and how it can devour the most basic human emotion.

Men on the Verge of a His-Panic Breakdown

by Guillermo Reyes
Playwrights Preview Productions, New York City

The versatile and skilled actor Felix A. Pire dances off the silver screen from such films as *12 Monkeys*, *Dear God* and *It's My Party* to make his New York debut in Guillermo Reyes' delightful comedy *Men on the Verge of a His-Panic Breakdown*. Throughout what is a very enjoyable evening

in the theater, Pire transforms in front of us to portray six different characters, ranging in age and experience from the adorable Fredrico -- “the gay little immigrant that could” -- to an HIV positive drag queen recalling from his hospital room his former years of beauty. But why is the specific and profound effect that HIV has had on the Latino community given such cursory treatment?

FILM & VIDEO

The People vs. Larry Flynt

Directed by Milos Forman
Columbia Pictures

To quote a line from *The People vs. Larry Flynt*: “Opinions are like assholes... everyone has one.” This is mine: *The People vs. Larry Flynt* pits the pornographer against the Religious Right’s assault on the First Amendment. Flynt is depicted as prickly and eccentric, but always open-minded -- especially in the way he cares for his beloved wife, Althea (portrayed by Courtney Love), as she slowly succumbs to AIDS. Ironically, Larry Flynt plays a judge in the movie, sentencing the on-screen Larry (Woody Harrelson) to jail. The real-life Larry obviously has a sense a humor. People for the American Way has a nice slogan: Freedom of religion. Freedom from religion. Freedom of choice. But freedom isn’t free. We must work to make it work, and that is the message of the film. Well, I remember meeting Larry Flynt in 1974. He was launching a magazine called *Chic*, and I was a nude model. But I was never exploited. I chose to be a nude model. And as much as I like it, *The People vs. Larry Flynt* is only a movie. Yes, it left me feeling free from censorship for about a minute -- that’s how quickly you can lose your freedom if you let the government decide what’s right for you. Now, you choose. Do you see *The People vs. Larry Flynt*? Or not?

-- Robin Byrd

Edited by Phil Geoffrey Bond

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