

## Welcome To Homo Holler

Sexual outrageousness, fireplay, juggling madness, and comic relief will arrive in town when the Eggplant Faerie Players present their play, *Welcome To Homo Holler*. The Faeries will bring their magic to Ann Arbor on Saturday, April 10th, 7 pm at the Friends Meeting House, 1420 Hill Street. Tickets \$10, students \$6—call 994-4937 for more information. The Tennessee based theater troupers are now touring the Midwest hot on the heels of their successful tour of last year's *Next Year In Sodom*.

*Welcome To Homo Holler* boldly goes where no theater has gone before, as the internationally acclaimed touring troupe explores the realms of queer liberation, science fiction, AIDS satire, and simple country living with this collection of songs and sketches. The show spoofs a struggle for power between a mega-pharmaceutical corporation and a radical activist group; lampoons umpteen new age and gender bending figures from MaxZine Medicine Hawk to Pussy James and her gang; and takes the audience for a ride on *The Mothership*—the ultimate answer to the Why2K problem. An audience favorite features a hot race for County Coroner which makes the sexual politics of Bill and Monica look like a children's sandbox game.

*Welcome To Homo Holler* features original songs accompanied by mandolins and guitar. Songs include the true ballad of the Big Girl, the outrageous *Mothership Rave*, and the dreamy *Utopia*. When the voices quiet down, the Stil-tovsky Twins take the stage with their aerial ballet.

*Welcome To Homo Holler* is performed by actors MaxZine Weinstein, cofounder of the nine year old Eggplant Faerie Players; Tom Foolery, a renowned juggler who appeared in the TV miniseries "Tales of the City;" and Delilah Schweitzer, an Israeli dissident and folk music teacher.



Delilah, Tom, and MaxZine

# FAERIE THEATER

## (PART 2 OF 2)

by MaxZine Weinstein

In 1996, I and two other Jewish members of the Eggplant Faerie Players theater troupe arrived in Israel with our play, *Next Year In Sodom*, an irreverent satire of Jewish tradition, religion and politics in the holy land. When a national newsmagazine television show invited us to perform a scene from the play, we chose a love scene between Moses and the Pharaoh. We wanted to send a message that everything is possible, including lewd historical interpretations. So, we went to the studio, put on make-up, wigs and costumes, and paraded down the long hallway in scantily clad outfits. We don't know what those in the studio (including cameramen with yarmulkes, the Mayor of Tel Aviv, the cabinet minister) thought when they saw us performing the scene. But a few days later we knew we had successfully slaughtered a sacred cow. Two young men approached us on the street to tell us that they had seen us on TV and encouraged us to "keep fucking with the world". With public support for radical political theater lower than low, these kinds of supportive comments give us the energy to continue creating and performing.

While touring Israel, we visited a peace camp in support of Bedouins who were being forced to relocate from their land to make way for Jewish condominiums. Some Palestinians who were supporting the Bedouins invited us to their home for lunch, and shared their horrific pictures of friends killed by the Israelis.

Socializing with "the enemy" is considered treacherous by many Israelis. Later that night we related what we'd learned to two Israeli friends and a huge argument erupted. Our friends refused to feel empathy for the mutilated and murdered because they were not from "our side". Their nationalistic fervor was frightening to witness, but we knew it would make for good drama. We were thus inspired to write a new scene for *Next Year In Sodom* which featured a cross-cultural love relationship between an Israeli and Palestinian, a situation ripe with satire.

Half a world away from Israel, and a year later, we performed *Next Year In Sodom* at our home theater in Nashville, while a Jewish war veterans' conference took place at a nearby hotel. A Jewish WWII veteran came to see the show one night. I guess he'd read about a Jewish play in Nashville and decided to come, not knowing what it was about. He sat in the theater, dressed in his military garb, and watched us ridicule Israeli military exploits (*Crazy Uzi*, our door-to-door arms salesman, brags about how he "sold nuclear warheads to the Israelis and rocks to the Palestinians"). The veteran stayed for the whole play and came to thank us afterwards.



Troupe members at Atlanta Pride Festival 1997 photo credit Ken Kelly

Comedy has a way of disarming people's defenses and opening up their minds to differing opinions. Comedy also helps soften the impact of desperate conditions we encounter, which don't appear to be laughing matters.

Religion—like politics—is ripe with satirical possibilities. When we created an S&M pope character for our play *Dial M For Mothership*, we were surprised that one of our friends was offended by our blasphemy (which included the pope torturing Jesus on a cross). We were not aiming to disturb our friend, but realized that everyone has their political blind spots, and theater serves to challenge them. The people we really expected to offend, however, were our Jewish mothers, who came to see the show on opening night. We especially wondered how they would react to a scene where two Jews came out in Christian garb singing about how we can learn to love Jesus through suffering. Ironically, our mothers clapped along and laughed at that part of the show. They even got up and danced with us when the show ended. Go figure. We're happy our moms

joined us.

The visitors who come through our farm in Tennessee inspire us to create more shows. If we want our theatrical endeavors to encourage social change, we need to accept change in our community as well. We also need to nourish the potential within the community members. A couple years ago, a nine year old girl from Maine, who occasionally visits here with her dad, got involved in a performance we did for a gay and lesbian student activists conference. Part of our anarchistic theatrical process is that we each decide what roles we want to do. And so, she happily cast herself into a wild sex scene in the play. We mature adults had no problem with her in that role. We did realize that other mature adults might be upset with a young child in an S&M skit, but it was her decision and everyone respected it. The show (and especially that particular skit) were a hit, and students still talk about it to this day.

Political theater lives. Addressing social ills with a clever wink and an irreverent laugh is an old tradition of which we are proud to be a part. Yet, our theater is not just a response to the painful political reality around us. What we do on stage is a reflection of how we choose to live our lives. Our theatrical end-result is a testimony to the process that produced it. It's created by consensus, is empowering, and thrives in community. It's organic. Try it yourself. Get together with friends, throw on some dresses, wigs, lipstick, and tons of glitter. Then, walk down a crowded street and you'll know what I mean. ☑

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