

# Three cheers

*Lesbian theatre is alive and well in TO*

**T**hree cheers to this year's Queerculture 4-Play Festival for demonstrating that lesbian theatre is alive and well and thriving in Toronto.

Although over-capacity crowds at The Actor's Lab Theatre had me glancing nervously about for fire-exit signs, it was gratifying to see so many women and men out to support and enjoy two works by local lesbian playwrights Audrey Butler and Marcy Rogers.

Butler's one-act play, *Black Friday*, recounts 24 hours in the life of Terry (Kate Johnson), who has returned to her mother's home in Cape Breton with her Toronto lover, Spike (Marcia Johnson). Terry is hoping to find evidence to clear her father's name. Did he really abscond with the union's cash?

Spike (also known as Sophie — but don't tell her I told you so) divides her time between sorting out the various union and family scandals of the past 50 years and getting Terry out of the closet (and into bed). If you've ever been taken to meet your "room-mate's" family and spent the weekend stealing kisses behind potted palms, you'll identify with Spike's predicament and admire her forthrightness.

Butler's dialogue is right-on. "Suit yourself," declares Terry's mother petulantly, "you always did." And I'd like to commend director Bryden MacDonald's innovative use of the

cramped space at Actor's Lab. Kate Johnson, recently arrived from the west coast, was outstanding as Terry. And, finally, my best-actress-in-a-supporting role award goes to Marguerite McNeil who played Terry's Aunt Effie; her rendering of the line "Storebought" brought down the house.

Marcy Rogers' *Lesbians Who Wear Lipstick: The Musical*, features Rogers herself, as a variety of lesbian characters, and Jana Reid as Sappho, the legendary Greek poetess reincarnated as a bluesy nightclub singer. Rogers' characters range from Punk Marlborough, who likes to hang out in the financial district and watch secretaries and boss-ladies at lunch time, to Constance Sasha-St Clair, the world's richest, most cultured lesbian.

The show follows Marcy and her other personas through a number of short sketches chronicling their search for Ms Right. The sketches are interspersed with songs celebrating lesbian sexuality. In *I'm not Looking for Captain Penis*, Sappho tells us that she's not a lesbian because she's been mistreated by men, but because "...a man just can't arouse me like women in black lace." In *St Jo's Girls* she laments the fact that she's "...too old for an all-girl high." *Straight But Curious* recounts the all-too-familiar tale of the lesbian who falls in love with a straight woman.



***Lesbians Who Wear Lipstick: The Musical.*** *The kind of show where you leave the theatre humming the tunes.*

The crowd hooted in approval as we recognized parts of ourselves in Marcy's characters.

Music for the show was composed by Jean Emerson (lyrics by Marcy Rogers), who, along with Gadi Foltys, provided musical accompaniment for the songs. Filomena Guarasci and Wanda Underwood appeared as the Poptarts, Sappho's backup singers. This is the kind of show where you leave the theatre humming the tunes, and Jana Reid did a terrific job as the blues-singing Sappho.

*Lesbians Who Wear Lipstick* pro-

vides an hour and a half of solid entertainment and my only reservation is a political one. Rogers is on solid ground when celebrating the joys of being a lipstick lesbian. Some of her sketches, while humorous and thought-provoking, come dangerously close to being putdowns of dykes and radical feminists. Lesbians are a diverse group and we should respect and enjoy our differences.

Although the two lesbian plays exceeded my expectations, the Lesbian Sex Art Show was a major disappointment. Billed as a show that included works by 15 artists from

London (UK), San Francisco, Vancouver and Toronto, the exhibit consisted of approximately 15 photos by four photographers with the majority of the photos illustrating S/M rituals and costumes. I know that curator Ruth Ann Tucker had difficulty bringing works across the border and had to pay fines. However, for the next festival, I hope the lesbian sex art display can be expanded, better documented and include a variety of erotic perspectives.

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