

# The Miracle of Modern S E X !

After Bob Baker cleared the papers from his Phoenix Theatre director's office, **Gilbert Bouchard** and **Suzette C. Chan** discovered the miracle of **Tom Wood**, former Vancouver Playhouse associate director, co-writer/actors/actresses of *North Shore Live*, star of *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You*. Wood currently plays a good-natured drag queen in the Canadian premiere of *Torch Song Trilogy*. And he wants to play something butch next.

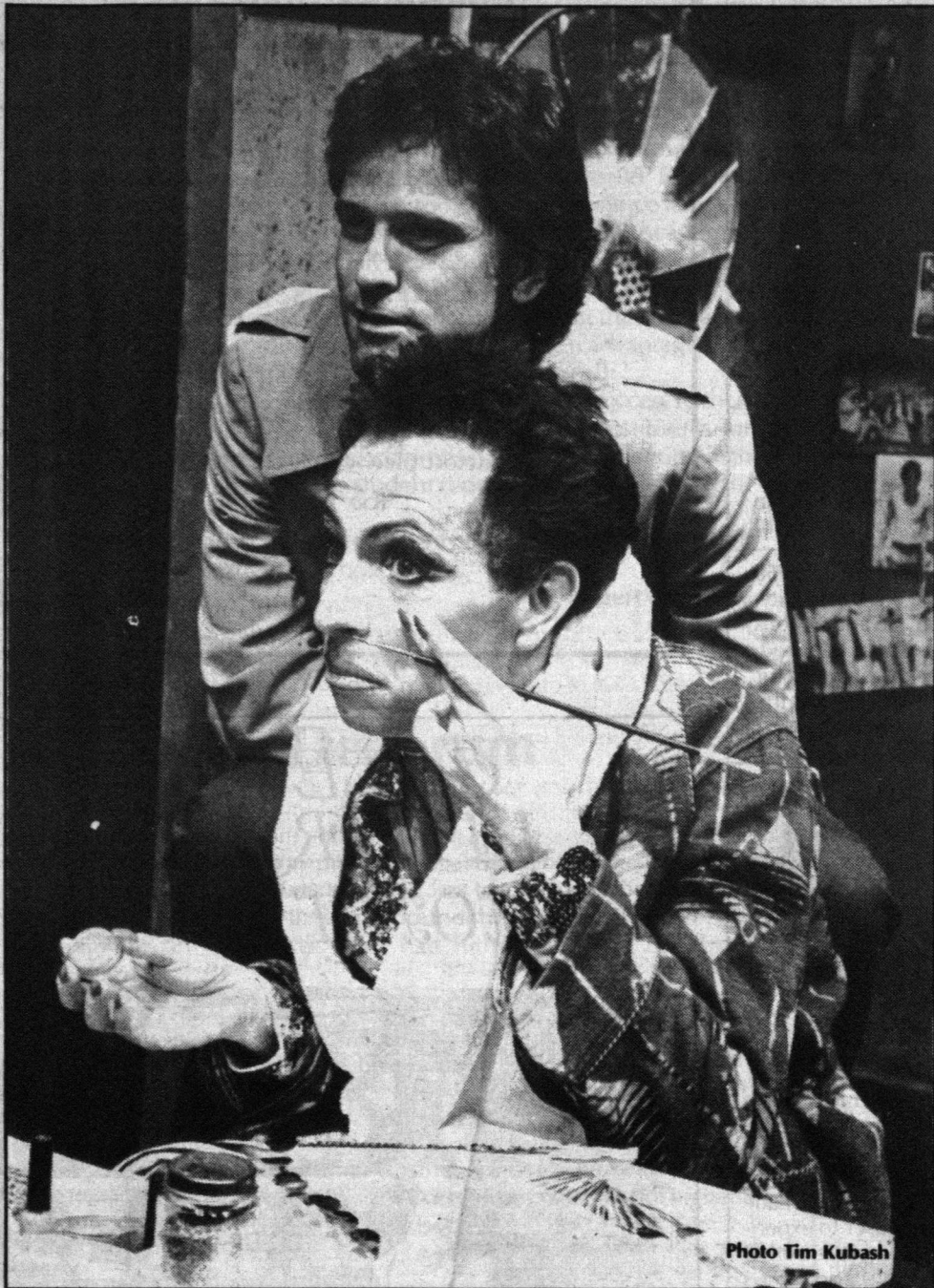


Photo Tim Kubash

## The Plot:

*Torch Song Trilogy* is three interrelated one act plays. There are two characters that travel through all three plays. In the first act, Arnold Beckoff, a drag queen, meets a bisexual man called Ed Reiss with whom he has an affair. And that ends at the end of the first act.

In the second act, Ed is married to a woman called Laurel and they invite Arnold and his new lover Allan to their house for the weekend.

In the third act, Arnold is trying to apply for the adoption of a 16 year old gay foster child, and Arnold's mother pops in for a visit. Ed is now divorced, and sleeps on Arnold's couch.

## The Theme!

I think a lot of it is autobiographical. Harvey Fierstein was a drag queen when he was 14. It is about the man. A wonderful human being as he finds out what relationships are like. It's universal. You don't have to be a drag queen to enjoy this play. It is about human beings relating to each other. Be you straight or gay you will hear a lot of lines from their life.

The play is Arnold's view of life and love. It spans seven years of Arnold's life. It is witty, funny, touching, warm and is one of the powerful plays written in the past several years. It has won a number of Tonys, including best play of 1983.

## The Phoenix!

This is the Canadian premiere of *Torch Song Trilogy*. Bob is the only person in Canada with the rights. He lobbied for the rights last year. When he got them, he phoned me up and said, "Let's do this." The show is exciting, but the Phoenix is young and vibrant. The Phoenix is the most exciting theatre in Canada. I would like to come back here and work every year. It's a labour of love. People want to work here because they respect Bob so much. I usually work for huge salaries but I make half the money here. The Phoenix is having a tremendous season.

## The Actor!

I just like acting. That's the nice thing about *Torch Song*. It's got everything from the very serious to the hilarious. People tend to slot me in comedy but I love doing tragedy. The funny thing is, when you're doing comedy, you want to do tragedy. I'm a character actor. I wrote all the characters I played in NSL and I could go on and on. There were tons you never saw.

## Typecasting!

I don't know what Edmontonians must

think about me. This was the only place I did NSL and *Sister Mary Ignatius*. A good friend of mine was doing *Taming of the Shrew* and thought one night an actress would play Kate and an actor would play Petrucio, then they would change the next night.

I believe that inside of us there are all kinds of people. Lawrence Olivier says an actor acts from his feminine side.

With NSL, I wanted to play all types. Niki wanted to play men, I wanted to play women. NSL was the first time I played a woman on stage. But we played the whole gamut of sexuality—I played everything.

*Sister Mary Ignatius* was the first play in a long time I felt I had to do. I read about 100 plays a year and not many plays do this to me. I was raised a Catholic and went to Catholic schools for 12 years. The play said everything I wanted to say about Catholicism.

## The Actors-in-Drag Complaint!

I was ready for the controversy (over being an actor taking an actress' role). There were complaints from a lot of my friends, actor's friends. But I felt that a woman would have to meet me halfway anyway. The nuns I talked to said nun's habits are designed to be asexual.

But I see their (actresses') point. There are a lot less roles for women and there's more actresses than actors. I felt that I did the job that I wanted to do. Bob auditioned a lot of women and had he found someone better, he would have used her. I was asked to play it in another city, but I said no.

The next role I really wanted was Arnold in *Torch Song Trilogy*. I want to do something very butch next.

## Conservatism in Edmonton?

I don't know about Edmonton. I always think Edmonton is going to be conservative. But *Cloud 9* (Phoenix's production of a sex romp involving lesbians and gay men) was very controversial, and the audience loved it.

By the time of the third act of *Torch Song Trilogy*, the audience gets to know and love Arnold.

I saw *Torch Song Trilogy* in New York where half the audience was elderly.

## Arnold!

Arnold's intentions are absolutely pure. The foster child he meets has been on the streets, abused, and finally finds a lovable human being who takes him in. Anyone with any objections to this play should look at themselves.

## Audience Reaction!

That's what I go for: making people think. NSL was to make people look at T.V. completely differently instead of being

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