



Vogel's *The Oldest Profession* follows a group of aging hookers facing the Reagan years.

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Seasons of love

Celebrated playwright Paula Vogel talks about her own celebrations—a New York theater season devoted to her work, and a wedding with her longtime partner **By Gerard Raymond**

It may be the worst of times, but it's also the best of times for Paula Vogel. In September the Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright married professor Anne Fausto-Sterling, her lover of 16 years. And New York's Signature Theatre Company is in the midst of a full season devoted to Vogel's work. *The Oldest Profession* ended its run at the Signature in October; *Hot 'n' Throbbing*, a disturbing look at domestic violence, concludes the season next spring. Beginning in November the festival presents her landmark AIDS play, *The Baltimore Waltz*. Vogel spoke to *The Advocate* about her milestone year.



Paula Vogel

So you got married in your new hometown in Massachusetts.

We had a really nice party in Truro, in Cape Cod, which is one of my favorite spots on earth. We each had a glass of champagne, and I'm still floating. I'm very glad I didn't do it when I was, say, 20 or 22. My partner and I are both middle-aged. When we say till death do we part, we are very much thinking

about that. We are thinking of the years ahead that are left to us of writing and of watching the younger generation. It's fantastic—both looking back and looking forward in life.

Did you decide to marry because it's legal in Massachusetts?

We've been together for 16 years, and we are already accepted within our community and embraced within our family. What is surprising is the emotion of it being legal—to realize that marriage is not just a personal commitment. It's a commitment from a larger community to embrace a couple. I must tell you that I would rather that the Massachusetts supreme court had waited another year, because this marriage issue will bring out more Republicans than would have otherwise gone to the polls.

Do you see your marriage as a political act?

I just don't think there's a difference between the political and personal. I think it makes a political difference to the chil-

dren in the room to see these older women who are aunts getting married.

Is there a difference between your marriage and a traditional heterosexual marriage?

We are both seriously committed to a radical redefinition of marriage. Neither of us will be emulating heterosexual marriage, a religious marriage. But there comes a point when you really want to have the powers of attorney recognized. I will, in some ways, miss my partner's mother calling herself my mother-in-love or my mother-out-law.

Let's talk about the plays in your Signature season. You wrote *The Baltimore Waltz* in memory of your brother Carl, who died of AIDS in 1988.

There was a breakthrough moment for me when I realized that you can use theater to talk to the dead. The moments of the purest grief and emotional intensity are when we feel pure joy, accompanied with a high degree of humor. I had an emotional urgency to write, and that has remained in every play since then. I also wrote the play a short four months after I fell in love with my partner, who I met a year after my brother's death. In every play I write there is a valentine to Carl and there's a valentine to Anne.

You've described *Hot 'n' Throbbing* as your most difficult play.

To a large extent I am asking us to spend 90 minutes looking at what is happening in front of our eyes across America. No one is paying attention to domestic violence at a time when the very techniques we used in Abu Ghraib are being used in our living rooms. Maybe the thing that makes the play dangerous is that it is funny and sexy as well.

What do you wish for most in your life right now?

There is only one thing. It's not money or prizes—it's simply more time with Anne. She is a very remarkable person, and I have been happy every day of my life living with her. ■

Raymond writes on the arts and lives in New York City.

OLDEST PROFESSION: CAROL ROSEGG; VOGEL: NYT