



Like
Uniforms?

Wear One.
Join LAPD

Domestic Partner Benefits
\$46,771-\$50,571 Starting Salary
Full Medical and Dental

Start by taking the entrance test
THURSDAY, APRIL 24, 6 P.M.

Gay and Lesbian Center
1125 N. McCadden Pl., L.A. 90038

866.444.LAPD

www.LAPDonline.org



t h e a t e r

No stranger to controversy

Gender outlaw Kate Bornstein returns with *Strangers in Paradox*, an outrageous new play about death

By Gerard Raymond

“What can you do when you are a total freak, but make the freak show more fabulous than it ever has been?” asks Kate Bornstein, smiling disarmingly. Those familiar with the transgendered author’s book *Gender Outlaw* may be surprised to meet a tall, thin 55-year-old blond with Frida Kahlo eyebrows and a gentle, soft-spoken manner. But Bornstein’s world is one of discovery and change. According to the writer-performance

artist’s own bio, “ze” (to use “hir” preferred gender-free pronouns) was born male and raised as a boy and underwent a gender change during adult manhood to become a woman. A few years later Bornstein “stopped being a woman and settled into being neither.”

“Boy, oh, golly, I wish someone had written *Gender Outlaw* when I was growing up,” says Bornstein. “I see the effect it has on preteens who are young trannies: *Oh, wow, someone knows*. But I wouldn’t call it my mission to proselytize on behalf of a newly emerging minority; I’d like to be the aunt I never had.”

But while Bornstein self-describes jovially as a “tranny Martha Stewart,” *Strangers in Paradox*—the author’s new play, which opened March 15 at San Francisco’s Rhinoceros Theater—is bound to bother some and even anger others. The dark comedy imag-

ERICA BEGEMAN

ines a television special on a pair of lesbian serial killers named Casey and the Kidd, and it doesn't pull any punches when it comes to blood and violence. Bornstein's outlaw grrrls are on a spree—mostly killing people who desire to die.

"The whole play is embarrassingly autobiographical," Bornstein says. "I'd always been fascinated with death since I was a tiny kid, but I had never really examined the notion of causing death. *Strangers* started out as a play about murder and evolved into one about suicide. I don't know about you, but there have been quite a few times I've come really close."

It was the harassment she experienced that drove Bornstein to the brink: "I think [considering suicide] is a common experience that goes beyond queer to freaks of all stripes—people who get picked on." But Bornstein believes that "if it is that common, my theory is, it's probably a healthy urge, the same way anger is—it's how we act on those urges that makes the difference. So *Strangers* ultimately became a play about killing off parts of ourselves that need to die."

For those familiar with Bornstein's past work, *Strangers* reveals a darker side to her identity: "I think, [as for] most queers, it has been a process of unveiling myself: Could you love me if you knew this about me? OK, fine, then could you love me if you knew this?"

Despite advocacy against two genders, Bornstein concedes a continuing pragmatic need for the binary. "There are still places in the world, even within the borders of the United States, where two genders form the basis of economy. I spend most of my time walking around the world looking like a woman because I don't want to be killed."

But if binary thinking rules on the material level, Bornstein draws sustenance from the myriad possibilities on the philosophical level. *Strangers in Paradox* revels in that ambiguity: The serial killers do terrible things, but they are cuddly and lovable. "I'd like people to say, 'I hate violence; I love them,'" says Bornstein. "If one person can feel that heavy weightlessness of paradox, I'd be really, really happy." ■

Raymond lives in New York and writes on film and theater.

OUTFEST

Proudly Announces
the Nominees for the

3rd Annual SCREEN IDOL AWARDS

HONORING THE BEST PERFORMANCES OF 2002
IN LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND
TRANSGENDER ROLES.

PRESENTED BY



MAJOR MEDIA SPONSOR



VOTE AT
outfest.org

Be
part of
queer
movie
history.

VOTING ENDS
APRIL 15TH, 2003

**NOMINATED FOR THE BEST PERFORMANCE BY AN
ACTRESS IN A LEADING ROLE:**

- Salma Hayek, FRIDA
- Heather Jurgensen, KISSING JESSICA STEIN
- Bernadette Peters, BOBBIE'S GIRL
- Meryl Streep, THE HOURS
- Jennifer Westfeldt, KISSING JESSICA STEIN

**NOMINATED FOR THE BEST PERFORMANCE BY AN
ACTRESS IN A SUPPORTING ROLE:**

- Fanny Ardant, 8 WOMEN
- Janeane Garofalo, THE LARAMIE PROJECT
- Alison Janney, THE HOURS
- Queen Latifah, CHICAGO
- Christina Ricci, THE LARAMIE PROJECT

**NOMINATED FOR THE BEST PERFORMANCE BY
AN ACTOR IN A LEADING ROLE:**

- Stefano Accorsi, HIS SECRET LIFE
- Shawn Hatosy, BORSTAL BOY
- Eddie Izzard, ALL THE QUEEN'S MEN
- Shane Meier, THE MATTHEW SHEPARD STORY
- Ian Somerhalder, THE RULES OF ATTRACTION

**NOMINATED FOR THE BEST PERFORMANCE BY AN
ACTOR IN A SUPPORTING ROLE:**

- Nestor Carbonell, THE LARAMIE PROJECT
- Jeff Daniels, THE HOURS
- Ethan Embry, SWEET HOME ALABAMA
- Ed Harris, THE HOURS
- Dennis Quaid, FAR FROM HEAVEN

OUTFEST is a leading showcase for diverse, international gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender film and video. In addition to the Screen Idol Awards, OUTFEST is the proud presenter of the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Film Festival (since 1982), OUTFEST San Diego, the OUTFEST Screenwriting Lab and OUTFEST Wednesdays, the only weekly queer-themed screening series in the country.