

WHO IS TOMMY MARQUEZ?

If you have ever been to a cast party here in Santa Cruz, it seems inevitable that someone will ask, "Do you know Tommy Marquez?" The mere mention of his name for those who know him means lights, glitz, dance and action. On the other hand the other question you might hear is, "Oh! Is Tommy in town?"

You see, trying to catch up with Tommy is like trying to lasso a whirl wind. But I did manage to catch him long enough to have a conversation with him and find out how it all started.

Here is what he had to say:

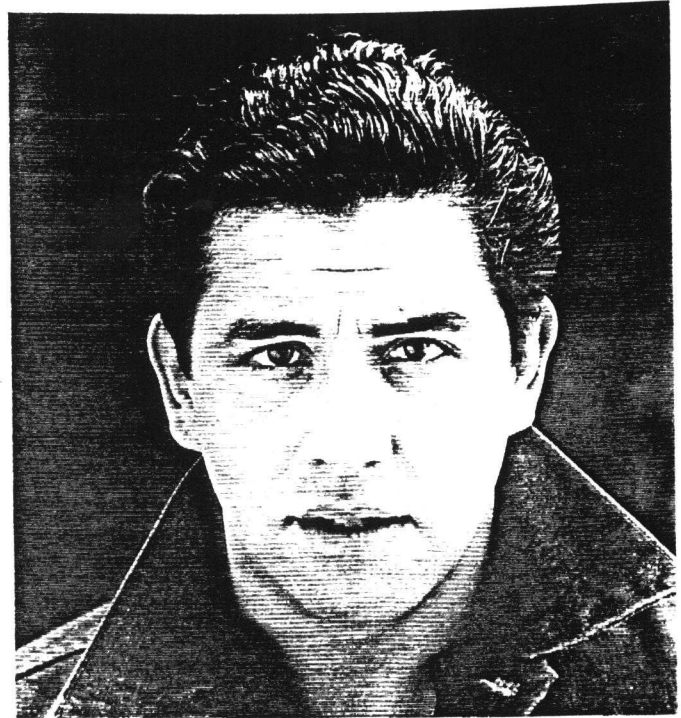
"The first show that I ever did outside of high school was 'No No Nanette' at Cabrillo in 1978. I was cast as a chorus dancer. The next year Cabrillo did 'Sugar' which I was also cast in as a dancer, but it was also sort of the start of my costuming career.

"I was never really interested in sewing although when I was a child I liked to make marble bags, troll clothes, and I would design sweaters for my GI Joe dolls which my mother would make for me. But some how I was always aware of how my mother dresses, such as how her purse always matched her shows and everything was just so.

"What I really wanted to be was a dancer. I used to love to watch the Ed Sullivan show and Red Skelton. I wanted to be one of those dancers in the glitzy costumes and ride on the carousel that went around.

"Anyway, I was doing 'Sugar' at Cabrillo in '79. I went into the costume shop one day and asked if I could help and that sort of started it all. Up until then I never really let on that I could sew because I really didn't like to. I wanted to dance. But the costumer at the time saw that I had an eye and encouraged me to take classes. So I did and ended up being hired part time during the year in the costume shop at Cabrillo. I learned and worked for a while with Gloria Stockton at Cabrillo. I also worked with her in her night club act. But she taught me about the more glitzy things like jewelry, how the stones had to match in size, shape and color.

"I then went from costuming at Cabrillo to dancing in Southern California. I moved to L.A. and started dancing for Disney in the Disneyland parades. At the same time, I was also dancing with a jazz dance company. I really liked dancing with them but never really liked what they put us in, in the way of costumes. I thought, 'this is really tacky!' It was like dance school recital stuff. So finally we were going to do this punk number back when punk was just coming out. I asked this one woman in the show if I could



do her costume and I would do my own as well. Everybody else in the show came up with ripped tee shirts and the woman and I showed up with the most outrageous costumes.

"I had drawings for more costumes which I brought in and the instructor said "Tommy, why don't you talk to everyone else and set them up too." So I did, and kept dancing.

"But I never really felt like I fit into the mold of the pretty white boys and the football player look which was before videos. So I came back to Santa Cruz and started teaching dance. That was when I did my first show for San Jose Civic Light Opera. The show was 'Anything Goes', with Chita Rivera, and there I was on stage with all these Equity dancers. I should say that I am not Equity but I am Equity eligible. I have put in enough hours and made enough money to be Equity.

"Anyway, I cant say that I had raw talent. I was a young naive boy who could watch and say I can do that and I did. I used to get into trouble because I would be talking or I would look like I was not paying any attention and an instructor or director would say, "Tommy, what did I just say?" or, "Show me what I just did," and I would do it.

"San Jose Civic Light Opera also knew that I could sew, and they hired me for the summer in the sweat shop. Eventually, I graduated up to the warehouse person, which is the wardrobe person.

"Meanwhile, Lyle Cruse of Cabrillo asked me back to costume 'Hello Dolly', which was the start of my professional costuming career at Cabrillo. I would also do costuming for Santa Cruz Repertory Theatre, Rainbow Ensemble and Chuck Largent's group, building a reputation.

"One of my favorite directors was Greg Fritch. He knew that I could save the day, which is what happened with 'Jimmy Dean Jimmy Dean'. The person who was supposed to costume the show couldn't,

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE...

TOMMY (CONT...)

so Greg called me in at the last minute. I had just finished three shows, was in the middle of 'A Chorus Line', and just finished 'Gypsy', when I came in and did it.

"Greg's biggest comment about me is "If he shows up preview night with the costumes, I'll love him because he knows what he's doing." That is the highest complement I have ever been paid, even more than a paycheck.

"The people in Santa Cruz who patted me on the back and really kept me going were, Jim Brewer, who always liked what I did and let me do what I wanted, Wilma Marcus, who is a great director who knew what she wanted and sent me out on some wild goose chases, but I would find what ever she wanted, and Greg Fritch. Those were the three people who were willing to take a chance on me. It was through these people and others around Santa Cruz that Lyle Cruse was able to take the chance on me and he calls me back. Sometimes I'm not right for the show and I feel that I can say so.

"Some people do not believe in my talent or don't think that I am talented because I don't work there method. But those directors don't work mine either which is too bad because we need a lot of creative minds to come together in order to put on a good show."

This story will continue in the next issue of the Marquee.

In part two of this story, find out how Tommy's career in dance and costuming hit the big time in Stage, Film and Television.

- Denise Pierce