

A SPECTRUM OF STORIES:

Bare Bones Press & Productions promotes transgender, queer narratives

By JENNY FURNISS

As they envision the future of their recently established publishing company, Bare Bones Press & Productions, Twig Deluje' and Erin Malus embrace the term "queer" and the gender and sexual fluidity it entails. They want to focus on the stories that don't easily fit into gay or lesbian categories, the ones that fall along the merging range of sexuality and gender, such as transgender, gender queer and intersex.

"Queer representation on a broader spectrum is so necessary," says Deluje'.

"We're interested especially in showing kids that not feeling comfortable in a particular gender, that's okay, and that you don't particularly need to be another gender," says Malus.

Bare Bones' mission is to "de-marginalize the marginalized" through literature, music, dance, film and theater. That's a bold vision for a fledgling company. Right now, it's more of a compass than a reality for Deluje' and Malus, who discussed the concept of a queer-focused publishing company for years before launching Bare Bones last summer.

"Our specialty is in literature," says Deluje', "but we're trying to find other folks in film, theatre, dance and music—incorporating a team of people, coming together as a whole company."

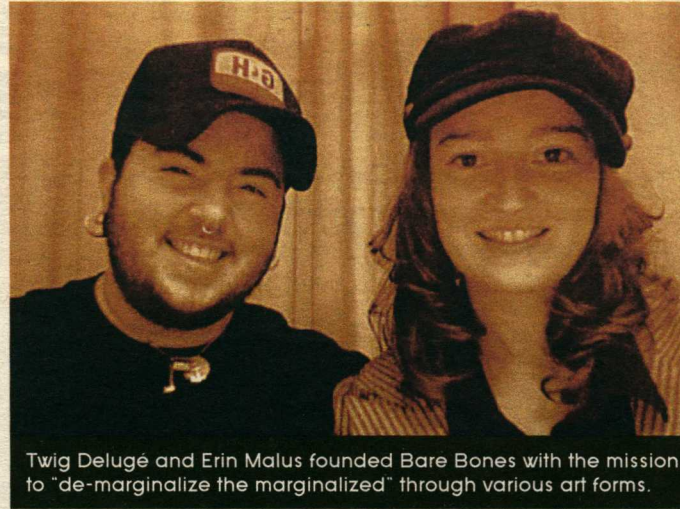
Right now, Bare Bones is devoted to

participating in and starting community events. Along with special workshops, they've organized a queer youth reading and writing group at the Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center (SMYRC) every other Wednesday evening from 7-8 p.m.; the next date is December 2. Additionally, Bare Bones is participating in Raphael House of Portland's annual holiday book drive.

They're also focusing on consulting to raise capital to fund future publishing projects. Through their consulting, they demystify the publishing process for clients.

Their one requirement is that the project's focus, author, or both be queer. "Whether someone's work gets published through us or through another publisher, either way we're going to be happy to get that bookshelf a little more diversified," says Malus.

Though they direct some clients to other publishing companies, they're currently considering several titles for publication. Raising enough capital to actually print books is a challenge. The company has considered e-books, but is determined to print actual books within two years. Their five-year plan includes




Twig Deluge and Erin Malus founded Bare Bones with the mission to "de-marginalize the marginalized" through various art forms.

the main elements that influences people's social interactions, and challenging gender norms can be as simple as playing with pronouns. Deluje', who is trans, is generally referred to as "he" but answers to "she" as well. His lack of attachment to either pronoun sometimes makes people uncomfortable. "It bring up personal things for other people," he says.

An example of a literary protagonist without a defined gender can be found in Jeanette Winterson's novel *Written on the Body*. Though the narrator's love interest is a woman, Winterson never reveals the narra-

tor's gender or name. (Kathryn Martini reviews the book on p. 20.) "*Written on the Body* is such a good example of voice and representation," says Deluje'. "It's one of our bibles."

The body's most elemental basis is the concept behind the company's name, though Deluje' admits they'd played with the image of an actual grizzly bear. "Everybody is human, everybody has a main core, here's the variations of what that core looks like," says Deluje', "but everybody's the same deep down." 

Learn more at www.barebonespressandproductions.com.

Malus points out that gender is one of

working with representatives of other forms of media besides literature, having three physical titles published and collaborating with sister presses and universities across the country.

Though Deluje' and Malus seem uncertain about the financial future of their new company, their passion for queer experiences is palpable. They discuss issues that could be explored on the page, such as being considered male or female but not identifying that way, and whether or not to get hormone therapy or gender reassignment surgery.