

Andrea Gibson

Performance poetry inspiring change & hope

"Jellyfish"

"A doctor once told me I feel too much
I said so does god
That's why you can see the grand canyon
from the moon
we are a telescope a riverbed
we are empty lockets melting into gold
we are hearts breaking bread..."

By Holly Hatch

The words comprising Andrea Gibson's poems are only a component of what you get when you experience her performance. There is power in her voice, a vehement enunciation of language that transforms into a rhythmic dance. Her body language engages the audience, as she becomes the poem; her vocal echoes scratching at the human core. Yet she is able to remain quite humble. "I only hope that my poems are heard … hoping they might change some things for the [greater] good."

Attending a Gibson spoken-word performance, like the one she's headlining at 8 p.m. on April 29 at the Mercury Café alongside poet/activist Carlos Andrés Gómez, is thrilling because she is a well-known hero in our local community.

Her poetry moves in and out of controversial themes whether it is gender norms or politics, shedding light on the struggles our world communities face today. Unafraid to bare it all, her poetry, according to poet Gómez, is both "deeply haunting and profoundly inspiring."

Performance poet and activist Gibson is a YouTube and live hit wonder for those hoping to catch a glimpse of the power and intensity of her artistic work.

"Andrea Gibson is a spiritual leader. She is an inspiration to everyone who hears her … she promotes community and a conscious spiritual way of living and looking at life. [Andrea is] an uplifting and magical spirit, she's a hero in our community," said Mercury Café's owner Marilyn Megenity. Andrea Gibson is a compelling live performer, poet and activist who Colorado locals feel lucky to call one of their heroes. Although she is a local resident, she manages to make waves all over the continent with over 180 tour dates every year.

Gibson is the winner of the 2008 Women's World Poetry Slam and has placed third in the world on two International Poetry Slam events. She has rightly earned her colossal fan-base and worldwide recognition.

As an LGBT advocate, Gibson came out in 1997 – identifying as queer – opening doors for LGBT youth countrywide making artistic success seem more possible.

One of her biggest goals as a performer and writer is to convey a message of hope. "I hope to remind people that their voices need to be heard … I hope to remind GLBTQ youth that their lives are valuable and important. I hope to dismantle some of the shame that quiets our community … to write poems that make people feel less alone."

For Gibson, writing poetry and performing it on stage is a way of life. She acts as a vessel and discusses how, "we live in a culture that doesn't tell people the truth. I believe our culture is full of people with kind hearts. I believe kind hearts make kind decisions for the world when they are told the truth. For me, when I'm writing and performing, I focus on telling the truth in a way that will speak to people's hearts."

You won't find Gibson sitting at a desk creating what has been called her tour de force. She finds that in order to write she has to be in communion with her surroundings.

(continued on page 14)

(continued from page 13)

"When I write I walk around. I jump up and down. I whisper to the walls and scream at the trees." In constant connection with her work, she spoke about how she doesn't simply wait for the "writing bug" to come to her. "I never feel more connected than when I'm writing. There is never a time I feel closer to the heartbeat of the world. It's a practice that has to be nurtured and committed to and there is always something to write about."

As a member of the LGBT community, Gibson believes "it's so important that that we constantly remind people that no matter what they are feeling, they are not alone." After her own bouts with depression and anxiety she feels a responsibility to heal through "giving a voice to what's strumming inside of us." As a political activist many of her poems tear at the seams of what she calls the system. It is this system or culture that "keeps trickling shame and fear into the hearts of our youth." Gibson works, through her poetry and performances, to offer hope and encouragement by getting people to ask questions and challenge our culture and system but above all, she focuses her energy on the greater good and making it better.

Gibson performs at numerous events across the country including: Take Back the Night, LGBT events, PrideFest events, Trans events, peaceful anti-war rallies, as well as her role in the traveling performance group Vox Feminista, whose political messages have made waves across the nation.

In 2008 Write Bloody Publishing Company published *Pole Dancing to Gospel Hymns* which won the DIY Poetry Book of the year and was nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Her Discography includes the release of four CD's with *Yellowbird* (2009) being the most recent.

Gibson is a sought after performer as she has been featured on news programs and television shows around the globe. She is excited to be back, performing at the Mercury Café, the venue she got her start in during "slam" competitions in 2000 when she moved to Colorado. This event on April 29 is particularly exciting for Gibson because it is the first time she has had the opportunity to be one of two headlining performers in this venue. The Mercury Café is her favorite venue to perform at as she admitted: "I can't walk into the Merc (even for dinner) without my stomach filling with butterflies."

Gibson attributes her success to a variety of individuals and groups including: all of the members of Vox Feminista, each Denver Slam team member, the GLBTQ and various activist communities in Denver and of course the audience members and supporters who host shows for her around the country. A humble and shy personality, off-stage, she admitted that she is still surprised by the scope of her work. Being recognized around the country "fills me up with gratitude." ●



Event

What:
Spoken Word Poetry Performance

Who:
Andrea Gibson & Carlos Andrés Gómez

When:
8 p.m. Friday, April 29

Where:
The Mercury Café: 2199 California St., Denver

Contact:
303-294-9258, www.mercurycafe.com

How Much:
$10-$20