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By Charles Karel Bouley, Gay Blade

Comic and actor Jason Stuart wanted to slow down a little — maybe find a boyfriend, settle down and have a “life.” As one of the LGBT community’s busiest comics, often touring for months or roving about from this movie set to that TV show, Stuart discovered that “settling down” just wasn’t that easy.

He decided to hit the boards and concentrate on theater. The result was landing a lead in “Above the Line” by Susan Rubin and directed by Mark Bringelson. The play runs through April 24 at the Bootleg Theater.

“I get to perform with real ‘theatre’ people, with a ‘re’ at the end,” he said. “I’ve done plays before, but often it’s with people who act in between their waiter jobs. Not this time; this time [it’s with] respected people from the word ‘go,’ and that has really stepped up my game.” Stuart portrays a producer who wants to make a movie about the Boston Tea Party. The problem is he knows nothing about it. The character’s love of show business comes from being the child of a mega-famous parent, something with which Stuart relates.

“I’m friends with many children of famous people, and I’ve heard about their lives for years. So going in to the role, I was able to relate a lot more than if I didn’t know them.”

“I go to work six days a week now, either a rehearsal, and then, of course, the play,” he continued. “It’s very structured: up in the mornings, at work, home after the play. It is a complete change for me. I’m working with five incredible actors in the play. I’m the only one without a huge theater pedigree in the play, and at times it’s a little intimidating. But, comics understand an audience and that understanding is key to a successful performance including in a traditional play.

The producer was reassuring, offering a collaborative and constructive environment, Stuart added. That environment is what fosters provocative and imaginative entertainment, he said.

“In today’s world, film, TV, Web, stage — you have to do it all if you want to actually make a living,” he said. As proof, Stuart also can be seen on DVD in the here! TV network show “Jason Stuart: Making it to the Middle” and his one-man show “Comedy Without a Dress.”

Stuart will appear on May 13 with Judy Tenuta at the Laugh Factory Long Beach for “Laugh Until You Tinkle,” and on May 15 and 16 with Carlease Burke on the Long Beach Pride festival’s main stage.

“You know, when I was younger, gay was seen, well, very effeminate, when it came to [male] LGBT performers,” Stuart said. “Either you were in drag, or you were a queen basically; there’s been others, but those were the mainstream. But with the advent of the bear community larger men can be more ‘male’ in the limelight. With the mainstreaming of the entire LGBT community, our entertainers can now look and feel more organic to themselves instead of being a stereotype for performance purposes. Again, not that there’s anything wrong with any of it, but now that I’m 40, it’s nice to explore a different aspect of sexuality and maleness.”

Making people laugh is something Stuart has mastered. Like many comics, he also has a large dramatic range on which to draw and is one openly LGBT entertainer who never forgets to give back to the community while he’s entertaining it.

Although he’d wanted to slow down, he instead has shifted into overdrive, and it looks like he has no plans of slowing.