

t h e a t e r

# Searching for David

Christopher Eaves confesses he has much in common with the late artist and activist David Wojnarowicz, whose work Eaves has adapted for the stage **By David Bahr**



## Pose to the knives

The *Truemyth* cast (standing, from left): Marni Penning, Eric Rasmussen, Gabriela Fernandez-Coffey, Wyatt Batty, and (in mask) Thom Sibbitt; creator Eaves (above)

The first time Christopher Eaves read David Wojnarowicz's memoir *Close to the Knives*, he sat on his kitchen floor, riveted by the book, shaking and crying until the sun came up. "It was like a missile hit me," says Eaves from the Blue Heron Studio Theater in New York City, where the 33-year-old writer and director is now presenting (through August 19) his new play, *Truemyth*, based on the life and writings of multimedia artist Wojnarowicz, who died of AIDS-related causes in 1992.

"It underscored and reinforced everything I had ever felt as an adoptee, a gay man, the lover of someone who was HIV-positive, and a citizen of the United States," Eaves adds.

Like Wojnarowicz's work, *Truemyth* is nonlinear, provocative, and intensely challenging. Performed by five actors, each representing a different aspect of the artist's psyche, the play comprises excerpts of Woj-

narowicz's blistering prose—from *Knives*, *Memories That Smell Like Gasoline*, *In the Shadow of the American Dream*, and other published works—and recontextualizes them via movement, sound effects, and visual images.

Yet Wojnarowicz's artistic themes—sexual debasement and liberation, the empowering aspects of emotional trauma, and the politics of homophobia—remain wholly recognizable as *Truemyth* unfolds.

A trained mime with a degree in theater and movement, Eaves has worked with New York-based experimental theater troupes the Adaptors and Pink Inc. and is drawn to work that pushes limits.

"Like David," he says, "I find if something elicits a response, even an unpleasant response, I want to go there, because eventually I'll come out of it with more information, and it won't frighten me anymore." ■