



OBITUARY

Norman Rene

NEW YORK — Norman Rene, the founder and artistic director of the off-off Broadway group the Production Company, has died. He was 45.

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A friend, Debra Kletter, said Rene died May 24 of AIDS at New York University Medical Center in Manhattan.

Rene was known for his skill at eliciting finely detailed, naturalistic performances from actors, and for his mastery of an intimate ensemble style.

Born in Bristol, R.I., he started college at Johns Hopkins University with the intent of getting a degree in psychology, but transferred to Carnegie Mellon University to study acting.

He moved to New York City

in 1974 and founded the Production Company three years later. For the next 12 years, the company presented an average of 12 theater and cabaret productions a year.

Rene also directed the 1992 movie version of "Longtime Companion," one of the first films to deal with the AIDS epidemic.

He is survived by his companion, Kevin McKenna; his mother, Margaret Rene of Cherry Hill, N.J., and a sister, Claudia Karrot of Annapolis, Md. ▼

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GAY-RIGHTS

From P. 1

Cummings of Elmer, N.J.

It is scheduled to be heard June 28 by the Third Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia.

Cummings declined to comment for this story.

His lawyer, Thomas Neuberger, said Cummings and the church are not seeking to nullify New Jersey's gay-rights law.

"We just want to eliminate the portions that are too broad and violate a person's right to

freedom of speech and religion," he said. "It's a pretty broad-based statute that can be used to harass people."

Neuberger said the law goes too far because it penalizes people for "aiding and abetting" a discriminator, boycotting a minority-operated business and failing to post the non-discrimination posters.

State deputy attorney general Williams Lorentz said his agency has voluntarily agreed to postpone enforcement of the poster provision until the lawsuit is resolved.

He said Cummings, in his capacity as a minister, would not have to comply with the provision, even if it were being enforced.

"That's what's so strange about this lawsuit," Lorentz said. "The plaintiff keeps telling us that he'll be prosecuted for some type of wrongdoing, and we [keep] saying he won't be."

But Lorentz said he is not willing to offer blanket immunity to anybody who would challenge the new law due to religious reasons.

"We can't let people become a law unto themselves," he

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