

# Musical features Tony Award-winning actor

by Chuck Foley

When Lewin Goff accepted an invitation to direct "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas" for the UNLV Theatre Department, an old friend came to mind to play the role of Sheriff Ed Earl Dodd.

So he called Henderson Forsythe, who originated the role on Broadway and won the prestigious Tony Award for Outstanding Performance by a Featured Actor (Musical) in

1978.

"I guess when I called him, I didn't sound too serious," said Goff.

Forsythe concurred. "I thought he was kidding," he said.

The last time Forsythe had performed the role was in 1981 at the Drury Lane Theatre in London. He was nominated for Best Actor in a Musical for that performance.

When Forsythe told his wife about the offer, she told

him he ought to think about it.

One thing led to another and Forsythe agreed to join a talented UNLV cast for a two week-run at the Judy Bayley Theatre beginning tonight.

Soap opera fans will remember Forsythe for his role as Dr. David Stewart in CBS's "As the World Turns," whom he portrayed for 31 years.

He has had numerous appearances on Broadway, including "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?," "Harvey" and "Texas Trilogy."

It was in the latter play that Peter Masterson, who co-wrote and directed "Whorehouse," saw Forsythe.

"He figured I'd make a good sheriff, and asked me to do the role," he said.

That he did, and the musical ran for 1,576 performances on Broadway after its debut on April 17, 1978. Larry King and Masterson wrote the book, with lyrics and music by Carol Hall.

For decades, a "respectable" little brothel called The Chicken Ranch operated with the consent, if not the wholehearted cooperation, of notable politicians and one Sheriff Dodd.

Miss Mona (Linda Pierson, winner of the Most Outstanding Graduate Student Creative Arts Award) operates her es-



photo by Wray Halterman

Tony Award Winner Henderson Forsythe appears in The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas.

tablishment as a kind of community service; a madame with a heart.

But "Watchdog" Thorpe (Bobby Glenn Brown) has a different viewpoint. A self-glorifying, regional television preacher, he takes aim against Miss Mona and her girls.

Based on a real incident, the show features a lively score and dancing, with sharp wit and a keen ear for Texas speech.

Director Goff is directing at UNLV for the first time. He is currently an adjunct professor at the University of Kansas.

Through the international exchange program at Kansas, he has directed plays in Belgium, Poland and the former Yugoslavia—in their languages.

"Belgium wasn't a problem because I speak a little French," he said. He used an interpreter in the other countries.

"I've always enjoyed working with a music director and choreographer, and Jackie (Jaeger, choreographer) and Lynn (Trippy, music director) have been a lot of fun," he said.

Paul Truckey, understudy for Forsythe, will play Sheriff Dodd in the first matinee.

Performances run tonight through Saturday at 8 p.m., and Sunday at 2 p.m. The musical continues May 5-8 at 8 p.m., and concludes May 9 at 2 p.m.



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