

Najee coming to Huntridge Theater for one show

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Jazz sax man Najee will perform in Las Vegas before an audience of 500 in one show only March 27 at the Huntridge Theater.

For almost a decade, Najee's trademark melodic phrasing and lyrical tones have set a standard in the music industry.

His ascension to stardom began with his debut "Najee's Theme"

His ability to fuse jazz riffs with lush production, and reinterpret R & B standards such as Anita Baker's "Sweet Love" made him an immediate favorite.

His next two albums, "Day By Day" and "Tokyo Blue" quickly went gold and his fourth, "Just An Illusion" featured a memorable rendition of Color Me Badd's "I Adore Mi Amore."

Since the release of "Just An Illusion," Najee has been jamming, touring and recording with jazz's hottest performers, including Quincy Jones, Stanley Clark and Larry Carlton.

Born in Manhattan and raised in Queens, as a teenager, Najee played with veteran R&B acts like Ben E. King and The Main Ingredient. After a world tour supporting Miss Black America in 1976, Najee attended the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston where he lived for nearly four years.

During that time, he studied jazz and played in bands led by two of his professors, George Russell and Jaki Byard.

He returned to New York and to his R&B



NAJEE

roots in 1982. A brief engagement with the Fatback Band led to an offer to join Chaka Kahn's post-Rufus group in 1983 and 1984.

After the tour, one of Kahn's backup singers, Melissa Morgan, hired the band for a six-month run at a New York club. That's when Charles Huggins first heard Najee, the rest is history.

Advance tickets for Najee's performance are on sale at all four Mr. Bill's Pipe and Tobacco Stores, Vesley Music, Artemus Ham Box Office Nellis Air Force Base Ticket Office and The Upper Ear. Doors will open at 6:30 p.m. at the Huntridge Theater located at the corner of Charleston Blvd. and Maryland Parkway.

ENTERTAINMENT

Black gospel theater presents Unequally Yoked

By Sharon Y. Savage
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The mission of the Las Vegas Black Gospel Theater is "to enhance and enrich cultural awareness and appreciation for black gospel musical plays" said Mary-Etta Sayles Clinton, executive director and a playwright.

Her play, "Unequally Yoked," about a young dancer who finds more than comfort and peace of mind when she escapes from an abusive boyfriend will run March 13-16, at the West Las Vegas Library Theater.

"We take current issues to develop and solve on-stage from a biblical or Christian point-of-view," Clinton said.

It is also the aim of the LVBGT to motivate young people to believe and trust in God in all aspects of their lives, said Clinton.

"The Lord works through these plays which is a ministry, and it is our whole desire to minister to people," commented Clinton who added that the Lord inspires her to write.

The entire gospel company finds it gratifying when someone writes a note expressing the hope they have as a result of a LVBGT

performance they attended.

Clinton was born in Phoenix, Ariz., but spent all of her school age years in Las Vegas.

She was a member of the first group of African-American students to attend all four years and graduate from Bishop Gorman High School. She also earned a degree in psychology from the University of Nevada Las Vegas.

Clinton started as a youngster telling "tall tales" in school and bedtime stories to her sister and next door neighbor. Little did she know that she would write plays. Her dream was to become an actress.

According to Clinton, during Black History month in 1980, she went in search of a play that gave God credit for bringing black people out of slavery. To her dismay, no such play existed.

What she found doing research she put together a skit entitled "Lest We Forget Look How Far He Has Brought Us From." That was the beginning of her gospel playwriting.

The original plays are based on inspiration from a conversation, word, poem, or song.

For example, Clinton was initially going to write "Journeys." When she started writing, the song "Hallelujah Anyway" kept ringing in her ears, and she completed the play in just two hours.

The LVBGT provides opportunities for Christians and local actors to showcase their talents on-stage and behind the scenes. Some of the members of the company have performed professionally in movies, on network television, on and off Broadway, and in community theaters.

Lanyard Williams, former husband of black playwright, Judy Mason is a director for the LVBGT. Local designer, Artis Williams is designing the costumes for the company.

Providing family-centered entertainment through drama, music and dance is a focal point for the LVBGT. The company tries to encourage, inspire and uplift people while communicating God's love to them. Gospel music is the catalyst they use to accomplish these goals and with each production, community interest and support increases.

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(See Play, Page 16)

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