

ENTERTAINMENT

New theater company aims high

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Hoping to open avenues for frustrated performers looking for a break, a local trio has formed a new theater company.

Earl Harrison, Rick Davenport and Alexander Mervin formed the Ensemble of Rising Artists, or E.R.A. Productions, to give local writers, actors, directors and others a forum to show their talent. It didn't take long for them to get some play.

"Long Time Since Yesterday," a P.J. Gibson creation that took home the Audelco Award, is the company's biggest gig to date. The play probes the issues six black women faced in their lives.

"She's a dynamic writer who deals with women's issues and relationships," Mervin said of Gibson.

"We feel that women — especially black women — need to identify with her work and her characters. We hope that men and women will leave the theater identifying with some of the issues brought out in this play."

Mervin honed his acting skills in New York City, working major stage venues and spending several seasons with Actors' Repertory Theater, a prestigious theatrical organization that tours the country.

He left New York's vibrant performing arts culture for Las Vegas but became discouraged because he wasn't getting enough roles.

"I thought of Las Vegas as the 'entertainment capital of the world,' but I had a rude awakening"

— Alexander Mervin

"I thought of Las Vegas as the 'entertainment capital of the world,' but I had a rude awakening," he said.

He got his first major film opportunity here, a principal role in "Top of the World" with Dennis Hopper and Tia Carrera, and is now rehearsing for the role of Theseus in a production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" opening next month at Hillpointe Park in Summerlin. Still, he felt dissatisfied with the range and scope of work available.

So he teamed up with some friends and formed E.R.A.

"The members of the board

of ERA Productions share a common goal: to provide the best theater possible and invite the community — and the community's children — to participate," Mervin said, adding that company officials hope to get the children off the streets and provide them with opportunities for self-expression.

Further, they hope to develop the talent of future actors, directors, film makers and production crews.

The company also wants to provide a meaningful and provocative experience for the audience.

Play explores test of friendship

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Dazzling audiences in the United States, Europe and Africa, P.J. Gibson's "Long Time Since Yesterday" gets its chance to wow Las Vegas, beginning Friday, May 8.

The play, which begins at 8 p.m. May 8-10 and 15-16 and starts at 2 p.m. May 17, will run at the West Las Vegas Library Theater, 951 W. Lake Mead Blvd.

The plot revolves around six beautiful and successful women, friends since college, who are reunited 27 years later and share tormenting tales of how their lives have changed.

Trasie Fuller, Patrease Ashley and Faith Fields play the lead roles in the directorial debut of E.R.A. Productions' Earl Grant Harris.

Tickets are \$10, or \$8 each with a purchase of 10 or more. They can be purchased at the Sight and Sound Center, 811 W. Owens, or Valentino's Zoot Suit Collection, 906 S. 6th St., or by calling 440-0532.

Foster Care

(Continued from Page 1)

that case plan within a specified time span and then the child can possibly be placed back in their home."

A 7-year employee of the division, Robinson enjoys his job, though it can be stressful. To help foster parents enjoy their experience, Robinson said the agency tries to match foster families with children they are compatible with.

Children with severe physical or emotional problems are placed in special foster homes licensed and designated "therapeutic" and are helped by other agencies and services specializing in treating "attention deficit disorder", fetal alcohol syndrome and other ailments.

But most children are healthy. Their biggest concern is finding a home.

Adults who can't open their homes can open their hearts and become mentors or volunteer in other capacities. Child Haven welcomes volunteers and Clark County Family Youth Services has a program called CASA — an acronym for Court-Appointed Special Advocate — that accepts outside support.

Except for a god-daughter she raised from 1 month old, Estelle Kline is childless. In 14 years as a volunteer, she has housed 15 foster children. Last year, she got a license to open a group home. Her god-daughter helps her run the facility, which is home to six foster children ages 3 to 8 years, and teenagers who

have been with Kline since they were little.

"They're lovable," Kline said of the children. "They aren't responsible for what they're going through. I do the best I can to let them know that they're accepted in society and they are loved."

Kline recalled her experience with a young girl who refused to take a bath. She used the girl's clothing allowance to buy her some nice new clothes, then told her she was not permitted to put clean clothes on a dirty body. Kline and her daughter each took one of the girls' hands and together walked her to the bathroom. "Now she understands that she has to bathe," Kline said, chuckling.

"I like to give the children some of the things that all children need and these haven't got. They mostly need attention that they haven't had. Some of them also need academic help; they've been deprived of education. I feel that academic help will enable them to make good choices.

"You have to be dedicated to the children and have an interest in their well-being," Kline concluded.

Kimmie Runsewe is an eight-year veteran of foster care. The 15-year-old, who has lived in four foster homes and three group homes, hasn't seen her mother since she was in fifth grade, and only recently began communicating with her biological father, who was located via the Internet.

Runsewe said she has had more good (See Foster Care, Page 16)

try transit week...



event schedule

MONDAY, MAY 11

Clean Air Day

Clear up our skies by carpooling to school or work with a friend.

TUESDAY, MAY 12

Transit Awareness Day

Encourage others around you to try public transit, carpool or ride a bike to work or school one day a week.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 13

Employee Appreciation Day

Ride CAT and thank those who make transit work for us.

THURSDAY, MAY 14

Free Ride Day on CAT

Come aboard and enjoy free rides on CAT all day on all routes.

FRIDAY, MAY 15

Economic Impact Day

Transit provides a healthier way of life and a healthier local economy through employment opportunities and support services.

Make a difference May 11 - 15, 1998

There's a lot each of us can do to clear up the air in Las Vegas, conserve resources and make road traffic more manageable. Whether it's taking the bus, riding a bike, or carpooling - every contribution helps make our community a better place. And to help out we're offering you free rides on CAT all day on Thursday, May 14. So, join us as we make the commitment to preserving our environment. Try Transit Week - every week!



CAT... Let's Ride.
Hablamos español

for more information call
CAT-RIDE 228-7433

