

ENTERTAINMENT

'Thrill,' inspirational, entertaining musical

John T Stephens III
Sentinel-Voice

A gospel music production is set to take the stage at the Cashman Theatre, 850 N. Las Vegas Blvd., on Sunday, May 13, at 5 p.m. Premiering in Las Vegas, the musical stageplay is scheduled to tour nationally, bringing with it drama that is underscored by gospel music and R&B rhythms.

"Thrill: The Inspirational Stageplay," a project of FalconQuest Productions of Los Angeles, fuses the glamour, poise and poignancy of the past in a futuristic setting of the present. Legends and folk heroes of past black exploitation films such as "Superfly," "Shaft" and "Penitentiary" are brought to life in a new African-American crimelord for 2001.

"Thrill is about a gangster and his girlfriend," said the multi-talented Freda Payne, who plays Champagne, Thrill's beautiful, sultry and evil lady in the performance, and "how he is struck by a calling by the Lord to do something good for the community and himself."

Thrill, portrayed by Sid Burston, who wrote the play, is an orphan who was raised in foster homes as a child and grows up taking a liking to crime and the allure of power on the streets. Pimping and drug dealing doesn't interest Thrill, his angle is crimes of the "white collar" variety.

Despite his criminal occupation, the main character gives back to the community and helps the churches fill their coffers. His commitment to his community puts him at odds with Chance (Leon Issac Kennedy), Champagne and his other gang members, and draws him closer to his ministerial friends, Rev. Miles (Earnest "Raj" Thomas) and Rev. Lewis (H.D. Washington).

"He (Thrill) was helping the church to survive," said Payne, who is working on a film project entitled, "Rhapsody," and releasing a new CD called, "Come See About Me." "The singing is unbelievable," she said.

Entertainment Briefs

HALLE BERRY, HUSBAND ERIC BENET
SUE OVER MARITAL STORY

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Actress Halle Berry and her musician husband, Eric Benet, have sued the Star tabloid for libel for describing their marriage as "on the rocks." The couple, who wed in January, also accused the tabloid of invasion of privacy and infliction of emotional distress in the lawsuit filed in Superior Court on Wednesday. It seeks \$5 million in damages. In a statement, the couple said the article published last week was "offensive and baseless" and that falsehoods contained in it included statements that Benet had "moved out of Halle's house for a few days" with their child and "was looking for a condo of his own."



HALLE BERRY

Officials with the Lantana, Fla.-based Star did not immediately return a phone message seeking comment. Berry, who won an Emmy and a Golden Globe last year for her performance in HBO's "Introducing Dorothy Dandridge," also has appeared in such films as "X-men," "Bulworth," "Why Do Fools Fall in Love" and "Boomerang." Benet's first album, "True to Myself," was released in 1996, hits include "Spend My Life With You."

SECURITY CONCERNS POSTPONE
ONLINE HIP-HOP AWARDS

NEW YORK (AP) — Security concerns and other problems have caused the postponement of this year's Online Hip-Hop Awards. The show, which was to feature Redman, Missy Elliott and Wyclef Jean among other celebrities, was scheduled for May 3 in New York. The executive producer said she hopes to put on the awards show sometime this summer. "We've all seen what happens when show production is not on the proper level," said Felicia Palmer. "We decided it is imperative that we take a little more time to make the production the highest quality possible." Event spokeswoman Kymberlee Norsworthy said there were concerns about whether there would be adequate security for the event, but that was not the overriding factor for the postponement. This was to be the fifth annual presentation of the awards, which are determined by an online vote. It was scheduled to be televised on cable. "The postponing of the show is going to mean a better event in the end for everyone involved," said Palmer.

OPRAH WINFREY TO SHARE
LIFE-CHANGING TIPS ON TOUR

NEW YORK (AP) — Oprah is about to hit the road. Starting in June, talk-show queen Oprah Winfrey, who also has her own magazine, O, will be making a series of stops on her Live Your Best Life Tour. Cheryl Richardson, author of the best-selling "Life Makeovers" and "Take Time for Your Life," and a regular contributor on "The Oprah Winfrey Show," will be a special guest. The tour includes stops in Raleigh-Durham, N.C.; Minneapolis; San Francisco; and Baltimore. It features a one-day workshop with Winfrey. The \$185 cost of the workshop includes breakfast and lunch, according to her Web site, www.Oprah.com. According to University of Illinois professor Juliet E.K. Walker, Winfrey reflects "the extent to which the celebrity as a phenomenon in American life and culture has a voice as influential as other ideological, societal, and political institutions in impacting the global economy (as well as) transnational and cultural practices."



OPRAH WINFREY

"Nobody can argue about the tremendous positive impact (she's) had," said Lisa Gundry, a management professor at DePaul University's Graduate School of Business. "She has shown how you can use your life - and she's used hers and her business - to symbolize how to make things better."

Grant puts art in public housing

Special to Sentinel-Voice

The Nevada Ballet Theatre was one of 20 organizations to receive a \$135,000 federal grant to provide art instruction in public housing subdivisions.

The grants were awarded from a joint grant of the National Endowment for the Arts and the Department of Housing and Urban Development in conjunction with the National Guild of Community Schools of the Arts.

The initiative, titled Creative Communities, provided \$2.7 million to community schools for arts instruction. Professional artists will give free, weekly lessons to youth in public housing complexes over the next three years. Classes will be provided in music, dance, visual arts and drama.

"We are so excited to partner with the Las Vegas Housing Authority and the Cul-

tural and Community Affairs Division of the city of Las Vegas to bring quality programming to children who would otherwise never have the opportunity," theater director Harris Ferris said.

"The Creative Communities program will provide children from public housing with 30 weeks of sequential dance training at the West Las Vegas Arts Center. Beginning this September, we expect 60 six-year-olds to be enrolled in the program and this figure show grow yearly."

Program participants will receive complimentary dance attire, transportation to classes, field trips to the Academy of Nevada Ballet Theatre and a visit to the theater's production of "The Nutcracker" as well as the Academy Students' Recital. The youth will also perform their own recital.

Artist to show styles

Sentinel-Voice

Internationally known local artist, Cotti, will be exhibiting the old masters' techniques and style in a demonstration that is free to the public.

Color, light, strong contrast, paint application and broad brush strokes will be used to capture the essence and artistry of Rembrandt and Vermeer.

Jewel Jeppe, Cultural Leader of the West Las Vegas Arts Center, says the intent of the event is to "inspire and capture young artists."

"We're trying to encourage as many young artists (as possible) to attend. He (Cotti) brings the techniques of a dying art," said Jeppe.

A live model is scheduled to assist in the class, with a question-and-answer session accompanying the presentation. Saturday at 12 noon at the West Las Vegas Arts Center, 947 West Lake Mead Blvd., will be the date, time and site of the old masters' school of art.

Those interested in seeing a sample of Cotti's work can visit his website at www.cottioilpainting.com.

"It presents an opportunity to empower our youth with creative art," Jeppe said. "It's more than developing an artist, but a talent...a catalyst for learning."

For more information, call 229-4800.

FalconQuest Productions

THRILL!

SID BURSTON'S
Inspirational Musical
Stageplay

FREDA PAYNE • ERNEST THOMAS
SID BURSTON • H.D. WASHINGTON
LEON ISSAC KENNEDY

Coming to
THE CASHMAN CENTER THEATRE
Sunday, May 13 @ 5:00 p.m.

Tickets available @ Sight & Sound and TICKETMASTERS