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Entertainment News & Notes: 'Lion King' actor happy to be back in Omaha

An Omaha encore

A Nebraska Theatre Caravan veteran who performed on area stages in the early '90s has been back in town this past month as resident director of "The Lion King."

On Broadway, Thom Warren has played Scar, Zazu, Timon, Pumbaa and Ed the Hyena over the past few years. On the road, Warren is charged with maintaining the artistic integrity of the show, along with rehearsing understudies and rotating in new cast members.

Warren, 37, was with the Caravan, the Omaha Community Playhouse's professional touring arm, from 1993 to 1995. He calls playhouse associate artistic director Susan Baer Collins one of the best directors he has ever worked with. His Caravan roles included Jesus in "Godspell," the baker in "Into the Woods," and Orville Wright in "Take the Sky."

Just back from New York City, where he worked with "Lion King" creator/director Julie Taymor on fine-tuning the show, Warren said Taymor is still refining, reinventing and focused on what works and what doesn't about "The Lion King," nine years after its Broadway debut.

As for being back in Omaha, Warren said it's "great to have a chance to go to dinner with friends like Susie and revisit haunts in the Old Market."
- *Bob Fischbach*

Coming to Brownville

Nearly two decades after the Brownville Concert Series began presenting artists from all over the world in a tiny, renovated church in small-town Nebraska, the series is gearing up for another year of classical, jazz and cabaret performances.

During 2007, the Brownville Concert Series will host such artists as cabaret star Andrea Marcovicci, singers Klea Blackhurst and Billy Stritch, and jazz vocalist Giacomo Gates with the Joe Cartwright Trio.

The 17th season schedule: pianist Alexandre Pirojenko, March 11; Gates and the Cartwright Trio, April 8-10; violinist Timothy Fain, May 6; Blackhurst and Stritch, June 22-24; harpist Julie Ann Smith, July 15; Tom Michael and Beckie Menzie, Aug. 10-12; baritone Evan Hughes, Sept. 16; the Amedeo Modigliani String Quartet, Oct. 21; Marcovicci, Nov. 9-11; Christmas gala concert, Dec. 7-9.

Performances on Friday and Saturday evenings will begin at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday matinees begin at 2 p.m. Single cabaret tickets are \$20; single concert tickets are \$15 and \$10 for students.

The Brownville Lyceum Café will be open for lunch, dinner and desserts prior to performances.

Call 402-825-3331 for reservations or more information.
- *Ashley Hassebroek*

Albee to return

The Great Plains Theatre Conference has awarded scholarships to four playwrights to attend the 2007 event, scheduled for May 26-June 4 on the Fort Omaha campus of Metropolitan Community College. Three-time Pulitzer-winner Edward Albee will again work with playwrights at the conference.

The regional scholarships went to Sarah Schmitz, University of Minnesota-Duluth; Whitney Rowland and Tim Macy, University of Kansas; and Leslie Sedivy, Normandale Community College in Bloomington, Minn.

The scholarships are in partnership with the Kennedy Center's American College Theatre Festival, bringing college students and faculty to the attention of the professional theater through the conference. Three national-level scholarships will be awarded in April.

For more information on the conference, visit the Web at www.mccneb.edu/theatreconference
- *Bob Fischbach*

Artists needed

The Associated Artists of Omaha need artists to take part in a benefit art show. The show will feature artists from Omaha and the surrounding area, with 25 percent of sales donated to a local charity.

The event is scheduled for April 7 at the Field Club of Omaha, 3615 Woolworth Ave.

Those interested in taking part should mail two photos of work samples and an application form to: AAO/Field Club Charity Art Show, c/o Joe Liebenritt, 16455 Burdette St. Omaha, NE 68116.

To request an entry form or to submit your samples online, e-mail joelieben@yahoo.com. Entry forms are due by Feb. 28.

Each artist can enter two works. Two-dimensional artwork must weigh less than 15 pounds. Providing an easel is encouraged. Three-dimensional work must stand on its own or be accompanied by a proper stand or base, and be well-balanced and free of sharp or jagged edges.
- *Dane Stickney*

Playing the Capitol

RESPECT, a nonprofit educational theater troupe that takes its message against bullying and violence to area schools, gave a breakfast and performance for state government officials at the Capitol in Lincoln last weekend .

About three dozen state senators and government officials attended the event, sponsored by State Sen. Gwen Howard of Omaha, the Kim Foundation and Omaha Steaks.

A bill sponsored by Howard would require schools to have policies in place to prevent bullying. RESPECT's founder, Dr. Patricia Newman, said she hoped the presentation would make a difference in how school violence is perceived and prevented.

- *Bob Fischbach*

Auditions "You Can't Take It With You," Omaha Community Playhouse, 7 p.m. Monday and Tuesday at the playhouse, 6915 Cass St. Enter through the west stage door. Show runs April 6 to 29. Information: 553-4890, ext. 110.

Omaha Metropolitan Handbell Choirs, seeking bronze-level ringers as full-time members or substitutes. Information: director Joyce Miller, 333-0715 or on the Web at director@omahametrohandbells.org.

- *Bob Fischbach*
