

Evergreen Players and Aurora's Vintage Theatre Team Up for "RFK"

By Penny Randell

Evergreen Players in conjunction with Vintage Theatre presents "RFK: A Portrait of Robert F. Kennedy" for two weekends beginning this Friday evening. Although Evergreen will be experiencing this play for the first time, it has been running continuously throughout the state for the past four years.

Professional actor James O'Hagan-Murphy of Denver enthusiastically continues to portray Kennedy and has established quite the reputation for doing so. In fact, author Jack Holmes was so moved by his performance that he sent him an autographed copy of the play, applauding him for his efforts.

O'Hagan-Murphy says, "The play is overwhelmingly factual and accurate. Every time I deliver a line, I find something I didn't pick up on earlier. I treat each performance as if it's my first. Bobby's compassion for mankind is stirring and I find it easy to portray."

The actor of this one-man show believes it tackles countless issues that are central to today's political environment and says, "It is proof that history repeats itself. From civil rights, health care and poverty to the environment, the play allows the viewer to capture true insight into the mindset of Bobby Kennedy."

Expressions of rigid beliefs giving way to agonizing vulnerabilities humanize the character throughout the story. Loathing Lyndon Johnson and yet loving Greek Tragedies adds to the script with fetching theories, as well as quotes from a litany of those Kennedy held in regard. Open examination of notions from Martin Luther King, Fidel Castro, coal workers and American Natives...to name only a few, give constant evidence of the thinking that ultimately shaped the man who many consider a hero.

"The conceptions encased in the words give light to the introspective nature of Kennedy and encourage the audience to open their minds to another point of view," says O'Hagan-Murphy.

The play dives deeply into the personal life of Kennedy. His rare devotion to his brother's political success was the foundation for his own political career. Believing his wife Ethel to be the essence of his very being, he is portrayed as a faithful husband as well as a dedicated father of ten, with another on the way at the time of his death.

"This drama is produced as a direct address," said O'Hagan-Murphy, "and I am conversing with the audience throughout. I see the faces. I see the surprise as youth look on and discover the similarities of today and the 60s."

The pairing of O'Hagan-Murphy and the role of Bobby Kennedy seems intuitive to the actor. Growing up in New York, he was taught Kennedy history and appreciation early on. And, too, at 38 he is prime for the role and even looks the part.

O'Hagan-Murphy proudly delivers his lines and says, "I am blessed to have this opportunity. Being inside Bobby's head has changed my life."

In addition, the actor strives to stay in the moment as he recalls the play's beloved director Terry Dodd, also a playwright, who recently passed away.