



CURTAIN UP

A Theatrical Work to Do Good Works

By KATHRYN SHATTUCK Published: December 2, 2007

JOEL EHRLICH hated to admit it, but the Broadway stagehands' strike may have worked to his advantage.

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Last week, while the strike was still on, he said he was "suddenly popular." Idle actors were calling about "Hear Our Song," a production that merges theater and charity, presented at the Edgemont Theater in Scarsdale this weekend (Dec. 1 at 7:30 p.m.

and Dec. 2 at 3 p.m.). Tickets are \$50 and \$100, with the entire proceeds benefiting the Children's Brain Tumor Foundation.

"Hear Our Song" uses 17 songs by Leonard Bernstein, George Gershwin, Stephen Sondheim and others, weaved into a book by Susan DiLallo. It tells the story of five women, ages 20 to 60, coping with the different stages of their lives.

The cast includes Melanie Vaughan, who played Celeste in the original production of "Sunday in the Park With George"; Toni Seawright, who performed in the touring production of "The Wiz"; Sonia Perez, whose résumé includes national tours of "H.M.S. Pinafore" and "Carmen"; Trisha Rapier, who understudied the role of Liza Minnelli in "The Boy From Oz"; and Karissa Staples, a 19-year-old former Miss Maine. Students from Edgemont High School will work as production assistants.

Mr. Ehrlich conceived the idea for "Hear My Song" after attending a fund-raising dinner for the ailing daughter of friends, where he sat next to a medical researcher.

"He was telling me how he was close to a cure for many of these different, horrible diseases and what was stopping him was money," Mr. Ehrlich said.

When his friends' daughter died, Mr. Ehrlich, who had worked for Warner Brothers/D.C. Comics and Marvel Entertainment and also acted, decided that it was time, he said, "to give back to the world."

He founded the Harmony Entertainment Group to help foster his dream of creating a production that could be performed for charities, which in turn would receive all the proceeds.

Aided by a single donation from Kent Swig, a real estate developer, Mr. Ehrlich covered the remaining expenses himself. With the exception of six instrumentalists, all the people associated with the show have donated their talents. Publishers and composers and in some cases their estates have relinquished their royalties in exchange for credit in the playbill.

"I remember the day I got a two-page letter from Disney allowing me to use a song from 'Aida,'" Mr. Ehrlich said, still incredulous. "I never thought in a million years that could happen. I knew then that this was truly a miracle."

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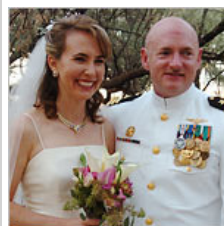
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