

ALEXANDER, from page 10

weather? Portland has come together to do some amazing work on behalf of our populations experiencing poverty and homelessness the last two weeks. What is your experience with homelessness?

A.A.: Back in the '70s, when I was in my 20s, I had a brief period, about three months. I relocated, and I was unable to find housing for a brief period.

My experience with homelessness was in a warm climate. I didn't experience anything like that in a cold climate.

S.Z.: *You are running the show at the Clinton Street Theater at the end of the month. For those interested in attending the performance, what can we expect?*

A.A.: We have a great cast and crew. The timing of Fertile Ground doesn't give you a whole lot of time to rehearse. People are busy, and it's always happening right after the holidays and the snowstorms. But we'll be ready.

It's a stage workshop, which means it is still evolving but is ready for some sort of public presentation.

Basically we are going to do it off book. Actors have memorized their lines - you see a lot of folks at Fertile Ground will do a staged reading. This is different. We have a live band. It's a story; it's not a lecture or showcase. It is a story with

characters that have a story arc. Hopefully you will care about these characters when you get to meet them and find out who they are.

My last musical was performed at Fertile Ground in 2015. I went for the first time the year before in 2014. It is a great festival.

When I went in 2014, I was able to find out what worked and what didn't. This helped to guide our show in 2015. It was a staged reading. We sold out two weeks in advance. We were one of the first shows to sell out in Fertile Ground that year.

We realized we need a bigger venue, which is why we are at Clinton Street

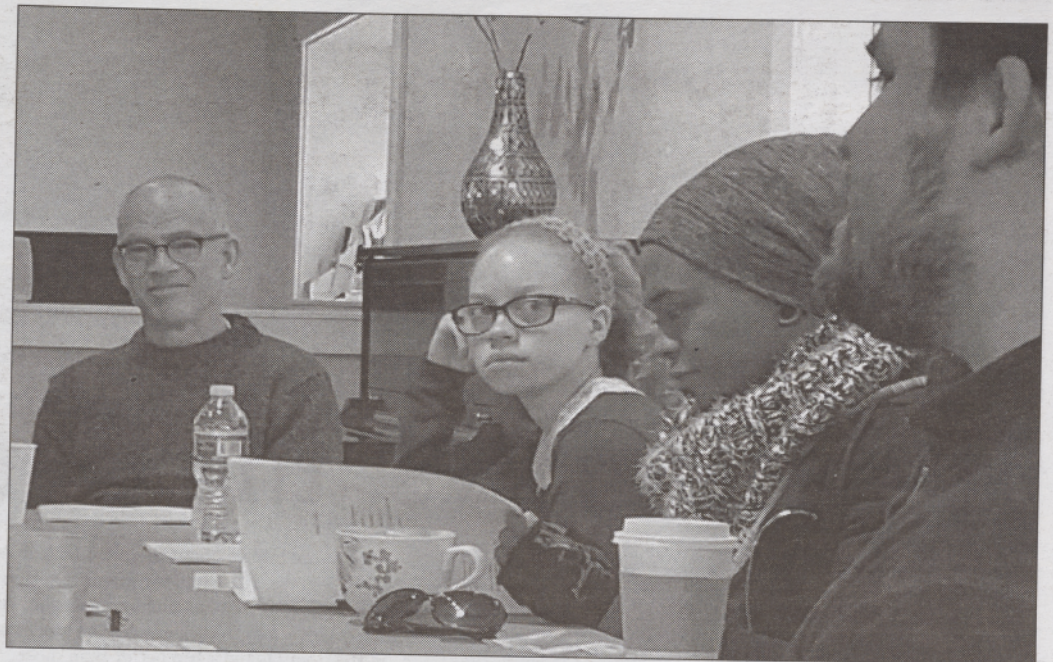


PHOTO BY MARY YACOB-ANDRUS

From left: Actors Bruce Jennings, Sami Jacob-Andrus and Myles Lawrence and director Jon Garcia rehearse "Homeless (the musical.)"

Theater this year.

I usually buy a pass and go to at least 10 to 13 events and see every musical. They have about a half-dozen musicals every year. This year, I won't see as many because I am heavy in the production mode myself, but it is a great deal. You get a pass for 50 bucks, and you can see 10 to 15 plays over the course of 11 days.

It is all original work created right here in Portland - those are the only two criteria: original and local.

People are coming from L.A. and New York now because it is one of a kind in the United States. You know, once again, Portland rules!

S.Z.: *A critical point in your musical comes with the threat of a sweep of the camp where the protagonist, Matilda, is staying. This is all too familiar to the people of Portland experiencing homelessness and sweeps.*

A.A.: We don't really address the nature of sweeps, per se. We do address the effect that it has on the campers. It is a call to action for the people in the camp.

We're not trying to offer solutions. We aren't trying to take side on any issue. This

is about people. You as an audience are there to relate to these characters and the decisions they make as individuals.

We had in attendance someone from Street Roots and someone from Outside In. We got a little feedback from the table reading, just finding out what people on the ground think about what we're doing.

S.Z.: *What changes came out of input from those folks?*

A.A.: They mostly had to do with character development. These characters represent four archetypes based on research done before the script was developed.

There are lots of reasons why people end up on the street, as you know, but drug addiction and mental illness, domestic violence, abuse, these are some of the common ones.

These characters represent some of those archetypes. In doing so, we wanted to make sure we didn't create situations where we were being two-dimensional or stereotypical in our portrayal of these characters. It was about character development and making sure these were three-dimensional people.

'Homeless (the musical)'

Producer: Dub Squad Music

Book, music and lyrics: Alan Alexander III

Additional music and lyrics: Kathryn Grimm

Director: Jon Garcia

Music director: Steve Cleveland

Starring: Barbara Passolt, Bruce Jennings, Sami Jacob-Andrus, Myles Lawrence, Lindsay Reed, Kyle Urban

Orchestra: Steve Cleveland, Kathryn Grimm, Leah Hinchcliff, Edwin Coleman III

Did you **serve** in the **Armed Forces** and are **experiencing** or at **risk** of **becoming homeless?**

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