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A Light of His Own

Ezra LeBank comes home with original show.

Ezra LeBank graduated from South Eugene High School in 2002, is now entering his senior year at SUNY Purchase's Acting Conservatory, and is spending the summer producing and performing a play he's both written and directed.

He's not wasting any time.

Following on the heels of its critically acclaimed Los Angeles premiere at the Lee Strasberg Institute, *A Light in the Dark* comes to Eugene next weekend and will run July 29, 30 and 31 at the Lord Leebrick Theatre.

LeBank, who performed throughout Eugene while he was in high school, at ACE, LCC and South, also acted professionally in Los Angeles at the Will Geer Theatrical Botanicum when he was only 15. He brought this experience with him to New York and this past year, during his studies at the Acting Conservatory, he and three friends decided to form their own production company, The Lynx Company, in order to stage socially and politically conscious works.

"Theater is a necessary force in society, it aims to find the heartbeat of our culture," says LeBank.

He and his friends pored over scripts, looking for just the right combination of relevance, vibrancy — and viability. "We couldn't find anything for four guys to do," says LeBank, "some plays were too extravagant, with too many production demands."

One morning he was sitting on the subway heading into Manhattan, reading a script and

suddenly felt he "couldn't take it anymore." His epiphany came when he realized "I could do this," meaning, he could write not only a script that said what he wanted, but also write it to be easily produced.

Wanting to draw on the work of Gratowsky, the breaking down of the fourth wall so that theater becomes a shared experience between actor and audience, he searched for a setting. "What setting, what place exists," LeBank wondered, where we are all connected, where there is an experience we must all share, that cannot be denied?

"You can't duck out of death," he says. "It's inevitable, it's scary, you can't get out of the moment." *Light in the Dark* chronicles that moment as death occurs: "You don't know what's next, you have to find some purpose, some closure, some life."

While LeBank says he doesn't try to answer the question of the afterlife, the play takes the actor/audience through several stages, including dealing with the politics of the present day, the poetry and the underlying need for rhythm, beat and music as a vital life force, the celebration of life, the "breaking of the shell" and finally, acceptance.

'You can't duck out of death, it's inevitable, it's scary, you can't get out of the moment.' *Light in the Dark* chronicles that moment as death occurs: 'You don't know what's next, you have to find some purpose, some closure, some life.' -Ezra LeBank

"In this moment, grappling with the complexities of life, love, liberty and language itself, we give way to see the many faces of a single person in a single moment, and realize the vital importance of ourselves and the people around us."

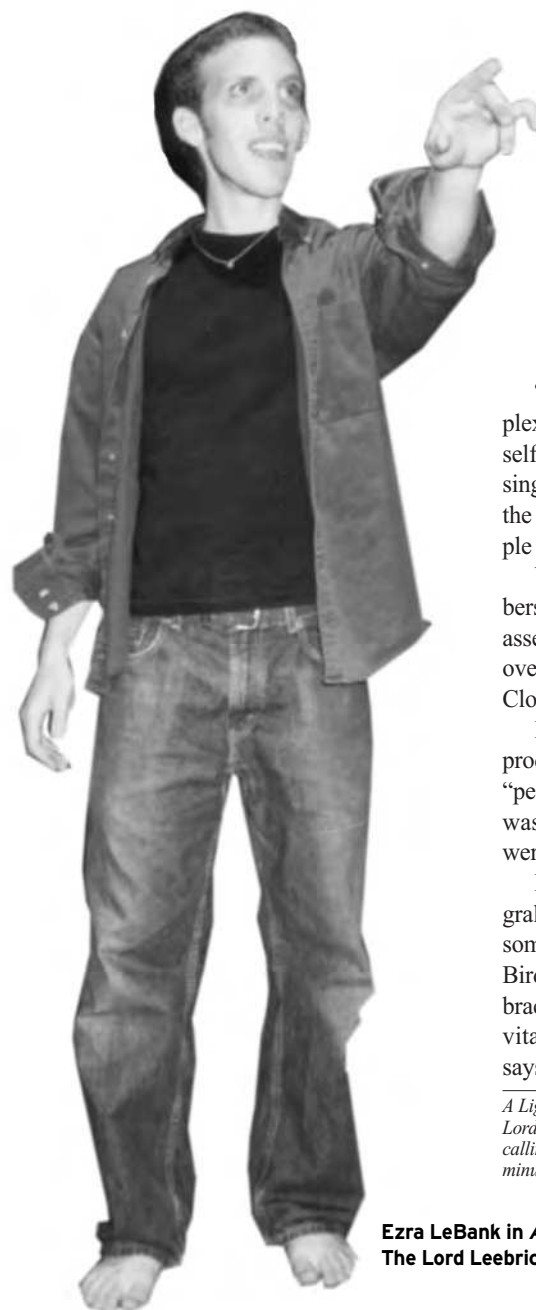
While the rest of the original cast members could not come to Eugene, LeBank has assembled a cast of local actors he's known over the years, including Jessie Hawley, Brett Close, Celina Hess, Joan Levine and himself.

LeBank says he's put his heart into the production and says after the L.A. premiere, "people came out of the theater all saying this was something completely new and they were amazed it worked."

Because LeBank views theater as an integral part of the community, he is contributing some of the proceeds of the show to the White Bird Clinic Crisis Center. "It's crucial to embrace those around us to develop strength and vitality so our community can thrive," he says. **EW**

A Light in the Dark runs July 29, 30 & 31 at 8 pm at The Lord Leebrick Theatre. Tickets available at the door, or by calling 465-1506. \$12, Stu/Srs \$5. Running Time: 95 minutes

Ezra LeBank in *A Light in the Dark*. July 29, 30, 31, The Lord Leebrick Theatre.



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