

# Local talents band for beautiful sound

by Lanita Duke

GRASSROOT NEWS, N.W.—Two Portlanders have combined their religious beliefs and musical talent to form a local recording group called Tellis and Abel.

Melvin Abel and Ray Tellis joined together two years ago to expand their musical training and disseminate their commitment to their spiritual awakening. "We direct our music to people who can understand it and to those who need to hear it the most," Abel said.

Tellis and Abel used contemporary gospel as their vehicle. This lively, upbeat gospel sound has had its critics among traditionalists who say it sounds too "worldly". But Tellis said he believes, "Traditional gospel is not going to reach certain people. We can reach them, whereas those who like traditional gospel will be reached by those artists that Mel and I can't reach."

They are currently in the recording studio composing and arranging. The fruit of their labor is reflected in three high-quality tunes: *The Harvest*, *The Best in Life* and *I Love you Lord*.

"All the tunes that we have come up with are inspired by someone or something higher. Sometimes I'm asleep at the piano and I will wake up playing," Abel states.

Tellis comes from a traditional



Ray Tellis and Melvin Abel have teamed up to produce an upbeat modern gospel sound.

(Photo: Richard J. Brown)

religious background and Abel has paid the dues of life prior to getting "saved". "It took the power of God to turn me around 180 degrees from shooting narcotics to being a manager at the Bantu Cleaners and

Laundry-Mat."

Abel said his life experience has reinforced his commitment to his religion. Their talents have not gone unnoticed. In the studio, a producer overheard their skills and approached them about recording for Motown. But Tellis and Abel resisted the pressure because, "Motown wanted to use our music to put other types of worlds to them. We were flattered, but we wanted to produce and sing gospel."

Soon, Tellis and Abel will shop around for a gospel recording contract. They will bring other local talents to shine along with their light: Linda Tellis, vocal lead; Ruby Tellis, vocals; Mike Hall, vocals; Shari Bantly, vocals; Len Russell, drums; Jeff Miniweather, drums; Mike Andrews, guitar; Ray Tellis, keyboard; and Melvin Abel, bass.

Their advice to other talents developing in the basements and churches in Portland is, "Do it. If you really want to you can."

## Play examines working relations

The Columbia Theater Company presents *Killing Time at the End of the Shift*, an original play by William Scott Whited which is directed by A. Nannette Taylor. The curtain will go up at 8:00 p.m., May 22nd through June 26, Tuesday evenings at the Chateau 'L Bamm, 235 NW Savier.

*Killing Time at the End of the Shift* is a powerful character study

revolving around Larry and Mortimer, two security guards who on the surface have little in common. As their workday comes to a close, they find themselves engaged in a conversation that ultimately tears away the layers and bares their true personalities.

Tickets are \$3.00. For reservations call 232-9901 or 228-5544, after 6:00 p.m. evenings.

## Community Profiles

by Linda L. Thompson

As you go down NE Union Ave., you cannot help but observe a new and much needed addition to the area between Russell and Fremont. It is known as Union Square. Located in this square is the Convenient Food Mart owned by Larry Willson.

A native of Branchville, South Carolina, Larry moved with his family to Seattle, where he completed Garfield High School. He later received a B.S. in business administration from the University of Washington.

Mr. Willson worked in the managerial arena while in Seattle and continued this work after he moved to Portland. He was employed at 7-11 Corporation in retail sales. Larry decided to take the big plunge and try his treading power in the sea of business as an independent food mart owner. Only beginning this venture last September, it is evident that his ability, intellect and personality have made him very successful.

A Gemini, Larry is also getting another kind of experience. He is currently a single parent raising his nine-year old daughter Felicia. To

him, this is a very challenging and rewarding experience and way of life.

A Southern Baptist, he visits the New Hope and Morning Star churches.

When not busy at the store or being a parent, he enjoys racketball and computers.

Larry enjoys the smallness of the City of Portland and his life here.

When asked what advice he would give for success in any career, especially business, he said, "Learn everything you can in school, especially in the areas of math, science and business. It all comes in to play when you are doing it for real. Whatever you do, use common sense—everyone has it, but very few people use it. It plays a big role in the success of any chosen career."

"Always listen to advice. You don't have to take it all, but listen. You'll never know when you might need it."

The Convenient Food Mart is just what the name says—it is convenient because of its location as well as its content. Larry loves working for himself. He is doing something he really likes.



LARRY WILLSON

(Photo: Richard J. Brown)

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