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Focus

MURDEROUS Yet Charming

The man behind the killer plant

BY JAYMEE R. CUTI
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Michael Leslie has brought smooth class and charm to his role as the voice of Audrey II, the murderous plant in "Little Shop of Horrors."

The show comes to Keller Auditorium from Oct. 19 through 24 as part of Fred Meyer's Broadway in Portland series.

Leslie, a New Yorker, is touring with the show straight from Broadway.

Bringing a puppet to life for an audience is a challenging role for an actor, but Leslie has lots of practice. He was chosen by Howard Ashman, the original writer and director of "Little Shop of Horrors" and Alan Menken, the original composer of music in the play, and was instructed by them on how to play the part.

"I have a long history with the role," said Leslie, who also toured

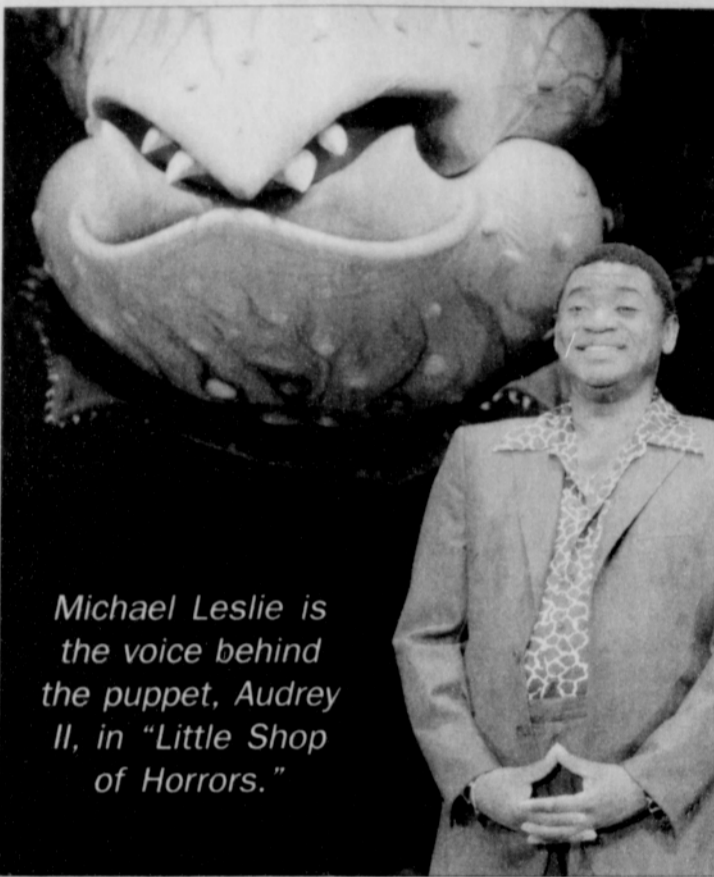
with "Little Shop of Horrors" in London and Los Angeles.

Leslie says he approaches it like an actor, not a voice over, and actually practices with the actors onstage at rehearsals.

"You have to make the audience believe that what is onstage is actually coming from the stage and not me in a sound booth offstage. I do everything the puppet does, twirling around and doing things in the booth, so I'm a sight for the crew and stage hands," Leslie says.

He adds, "I'm actually an actor, not just someone standing in a booth and doing a voice over. It takes on a lot of hue when you are an actor besides being a singer."

"Little Shop of Horrors" runs Tuesdays through Fridays at 7:30 p.m., Saturday at 2 and 7:30 p.m. and Sundays at 1 and 6:30 p.m. Tickets range from \$23 to \$64. For tickets, call 503-241-1802 or visit www.portlandopera.org.



Michael Leslie is the voice behind the puppet, Audrey II, in "Little Shop of Horrors."

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HIP-HOP HITS ON POLITICS
Talent and elections mix it up

Northwest hip-hop and local political speakers will create an atmosphere of vigor and awareness at POH-Hop, Portland's ninth annual hip-hop festival.

Themed "Politics as Usual," the three-day event will come through with steady local talent and topics for discussion unique to this year.

Both mayoral candidates Jim Francesconi and Tom Potter are confirmed to participate.

Festivities are on Friday, Oct. 22 at Ash Street Saloon, 225 S.W. Ash St. and Saturday, Oct. 23 at Berbat's Pan, 231 S.W. Ankeny. Events start at 8 p.m. for \$10 at the door and \$15 for both nights.

For details, visit www.pohhop.com.



Siren's Echo will perform Oct. 23 at Berbat's Pan as part of the POH-Hop, Portland's 9th annual hip-hop festival.

Jackson Prosecutor Bias Charged

(AP) — Prosecutor Tom Sneddon and his entire office should be removed from the Michael Jackson molestation case because he "is motivated by personal animosity" toward the singer, according to newly released court papers.

Filed by Jackson's lawyers, the motion claims Sneddon's handling of the investigation has revealed a conflict of interest that prevents the singer from obtaining a fair trial.

It alleges Sneddon has a vendetta against Jackson dating to a 1993 molestation investigation that did not result in charges being filed.

"Mr. Sneddon did not hide his anger that he was not able to charge Mr. Jackson," the motion said. "This failure fueled Mr. Sneddon's zealotry in this matter."

Jackson's lawyers also allege Sneddon displayed his bias at November 2003 news conference announcing that an arrest warrant had been issued for Jackson.

Sneddon welcomed reporters with a joke and he "bantered with reporters and drew chuckles as he poked fun at Mr. Jackson and his music. He smiled and smirked throughout the conference," the motion said.

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