

'Aida' is a family affair for father, son

By JOE HENDERSON
Special to The Olathe News

Although Evan Lovelace has performed in seven productions at the Theatre in the Park, "Aida," which opens Friday, is special.

His father, Marshall Lovelace, will be on stage with him for the adaptation of Giuseppe Verdi's opera, which features the music of Elton John and Tim Rice.

"Actually, I got my father into show business," Evan said. "It was four years ago when I was in 'Footloose' at the theater. The stage manager said, 'We need more adult singers in the ensemble' and suggested I ask my parents. He said, 'They sing in church. Ask them if they're interested.'"

He didn't think his parents would take the parts, but they

did — and they enjoyed it. Marshall Lovelace followed that performance with two shows at the Jewish Community Center. The Olathe father and son have had fun preparing for the latest production.

"It's always special when you get to do something with your son," Marshall said. "...Performing is my son's passion and this is a wonderful opportunity for

us to enjoy it together."

Both have prominent roles. Marshall portrays Amonasro, King of Nubia. Evan is Mereb, a servant who befriends Aida, the king's daughter. "It's always fun to be a king," Marshall said with a laugh.

Evan, 22, is a graduate of Olathe East High School. He's

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been active in community theater since he was 18, mostly in musicals. "It's not often I get to sing and dance and play a dramatic role, too," he said.

He has interned the last three summers with the Broadway Artists Alliance in New York City and now lives with his parents.

"Aida" is directed by Greg Shaw, who previously directed "Footloose" and "All Shook Up" at Theatre in the Park. Victor Gossage, who has the lead role of Captain Radames in "Aida," starred in "All Shook Up" as Chad, a hip-swiveling, guitar-playing roustabout who rode a motorcycle and sang some of Elvis's most memorable tunes.

"It's definitely a change of pace for me. Radames is a long way from Elvis," said Gossage, 29, a De Soto High School graduate who lives in Eudora. "Aida" is more challenging. I really like my character. Radames is a strong, confident person but not

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• MARSHALL LOVELACE

so confident he won't admit it when he's wrong."

This is Gossage's sixth show at Theatre in the Park. He also had a lead role in "The Wedding Singer" in 2009.

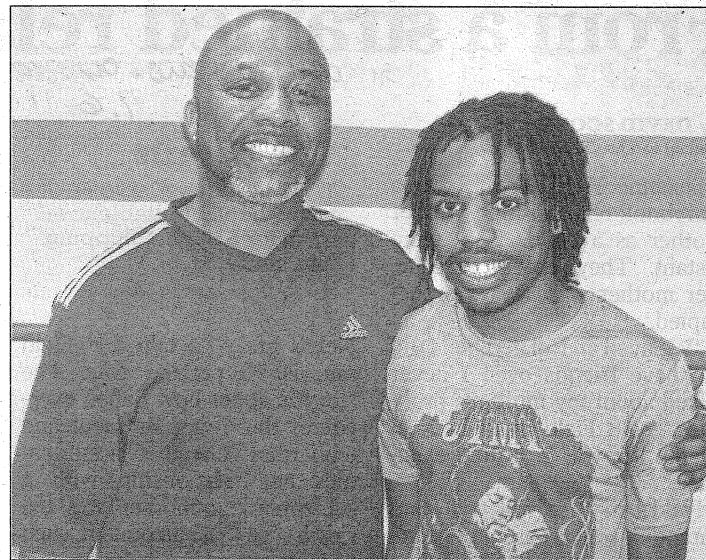
Aida, who is captured by the Egyptians and later captivates Radames with her spirit and beauty, is portrayed by Legna Cedillo, 20, a graduate of Shawnee Mission East who lives in Overland Park.

"This is my first experience at the Theatre in the Park. I always wanted to audition there but I never did because of school or working. I decided this year was the time to do it," said Cedillo, who is majoring in psychology at the University of Kansas.

"I love being Aida. It's a great, crazy ride trying to learn a beautifully complicated character," she said. "I played in musicals in high school but never had a dramatic role. I'm learning a lot."

Cedillo would like to make show business a career. "But if I don't, I'll fall back on Plan B. I'll get a master's in psychology and be a clinical psychologist."

Lindsey Jones, 27, of Overland Park, portrays Princess Amneris, who is betrothed to Radames. "It's my favorite role. I was in New York City with my mother when I was 16 years old and we saw 'Aida' on Broadway," Jones said. "I fell in love with the character."



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Marshall Lovelace and his son Evan are enjoying working together on "Aida"

Showtime

"Aida" runs Friday, Saturday and Sunday, and again July 14-17 at Theatre in the Park, 7710 Renner Road in Shawnee Mission Park. Curtain time is 8:30 pm.

For more information call 913-236-1237 or go to www.theatreinthepark.org.