



Courtesy photo

From left, Keldon LaVar Price, Erick Pinnick and Andre Montgomery perform in "Moe" at the Weston Playhouse.

'Moe' produces thrills

BOB COUTURE

Special to the Banner

WESTON — Okay, so there are five of them. They're all named Moe, in a way, and are arriving on the scene to rekindle and set straight a guy named Nomax and put him back on the trail to popularity and service.

THEATER REVIEW

That is the premise for "Five Guys Named Moe," which has opened at the Weston Playhouse and brings us this group determined to cheer up Nomax, a young man who seems to have lost his social way.

Awakening a friend's spirit

The show — it is not really a play — has the preceding as its basis as the guys seem to appeal almost fanatically from a radio and sing, dance and tell stories to re-awaken Nomax's spirit and turn him around from his somewhat depressed state over a failing relationship with a woman.

That the prodding does any good emotionally I leave it to you to find out.

The structure of this review is relatively simple. The show is divided into two acts, with a spirited number of songs in each act used as a link to move the action along.

The songs, about 20 in all, are taken from the work of rhythm and blues jazz specialist, Louis Jordan, and pulled loosely together in book form by Clarke Peters.

The work itself is largely mid-1940s style and rivaling the musical popularity of that era. It is done with little embellishment but a tremendous amount of energy by the talented cast. The five Moes are No Moe (Erick Pinnick, also the dance captain), Big Moe (Andre Montgomery), Little Moe

(Nelson LaVar Price), Four-Eyed Moe (Jerome Lucas Harman) and Eat Moe (Korey Jackson).

They are all splendid performers with good speaking and singing voices. The unassuming but eventually enthusiastic Nomax is played with heart and soul by C. Mingo Long. This is a splendid group with great delivery.

One of the beauties of the show is its neat trick of including the audience in several of the sketches.

For example, just before intermission, the entire audience is prodded to take the stage in an impromptu conga line of singing and dancing to advance the joyful atmosphere.

In addition, in the second act three women are pulled from the audience and made to answer questions on stage in a routine that is clever but went on too long. Yet, it was a gratifying idea that kept the pace of the show moving.

As to the music, the outstanding numbers, all pretty much rhythm and blues jazz, included the title song, "Five Guys Named Moe" (banded eventually by the audience), a kind of haunting "Hurry Home" refrain, a very clever number, "There Ain't Nobody Here But Us Chickens," sung with great delight.

This number was a revelatory experience in its own right intended to open the eyes of Mr. Nomax; it also marked an opportunity to see the excellent stage band led by Ron C. Hackett.

Although this may not be a play, it qualifies well as a worthwhile experience, carefully directed by veteran Tim Fort, who kept the evening moving.

It is certainly worth a trip to see this fine show. "Five Guys Named Moe" plays at the Weston Playhouse until July 23.