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
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[Art & Entertainment](#) Today is July 5th, 2009 | Hudson Valley Press - More Than News | [Bookmark](#)
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July 1st, 2009

Play explores the price of fame

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Beacon - Passing the Torch Through the Arts will be reaching back to the entertainment days of yesteryear when it presents a staged reading of Brian Petti's new play "nobody". All the way back to Vaudeville, in fact, and it couldn't be more appropriate.

After all, this is the group's maiden effort at the Howland Cultural Center at 477 Main St in Beacon, so what better place to start than at the beginning?

Petti's original play with music, which takes place in and around the black theater scene at the turn of the century, will kick off Passing the Torch's New Playwright's Lab on Sunday July 12th from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. It is the first in what will become a regular Sunday night venue for playwrights, actors and directors to polish, hone, and perfect their work. The reading is free to the public, although donations are accepted. Call "nobody" tells the story of Bert Williams, the first black entertainment superstar in America. It traces his beginnings as part of a Vaudeville team with George Walker through his career as the only black performer in Zeigfeld's Follies. Throughout the story, issues of personal identity and racial identification are explored, as this Negro performer of West-



Michael Monasterial and Ron Morehead work out a scene in the Vaudeville-era play with music entitled "nobody". (Photo provided)

How do you believe history will regard Michael Jackson?

- The music he created
- His personality
- His personal issues (child-abuse allegations, financial troubles)
- His influence on the business of music (videos, concerts)

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Indian descent becomes famous portraying a Southern-Negro racial stereotype while in blackface.

With humor and pathos, "nobody" explores the price of fame, the struggle for racial equality in America at the turn of the century, and the dangers of moral ambiguity, all through the character of one man. Former Newburgh resident Mary Ellen Nelligar will direct a talented cast that includes Nick Butler of New Windsor in the title role, and Michael Monasterial of Kingston as his troubled partner George Walker. Musical accompaniment will be provided by well-known local musician Joel Flowers.

Brian Petti (formerly of Newburgh) has been produced in numerous Off-Off Broadway houses, most notably Masquerade at Cherry Lane Theatre. He was also the winner of the Humboldt State University National Play Contest in California for Next Year in Jerusalem. Local productions include "Hindenburg - the Musical" (with Joel Flowers), "Masquerade" (New Windsor), "Next Year in Jerusalem," "Everything's Coming Up Roses," "The Measure of a Man" (Poughkeepsie) and "On the Expectation of White Chistmas" (Hudson).

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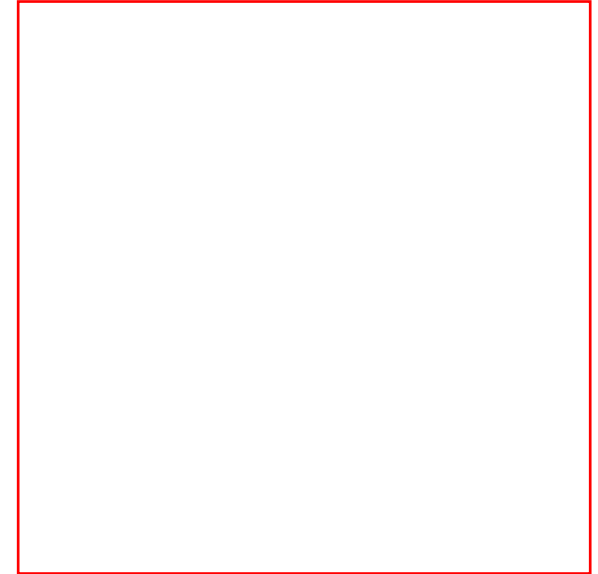


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