

Lancaster actor finds enrichment with 'Wind'

By **JULIE DRAKE**
Valley Press Staff Writer

Lancaster resident G. Smokey Campbell stars in 'Disinherit the Wind,' a complex courtroom drama that provides a different take on the evolution versus creation argument.

The production is at The Complex in Hollywood beginning Friday, March 3, and continuing through Sunday, April 9.

Jerome Lawrence's 1955 play "Inherit the Wind," and the 1960 film by the same name, was a fictionalized account of the 1925 Scopes "Monkey Trial" that challenged the right of schools to teach evolution.

"It's not a parody but just another twist on the same theme: how religion is being brought, or introduced, into the collegiate academic studies," Campbell said in a telephone interview.

Directed by Gary Lee Reed, "Disinherit the Wind" stars Matt Chait (who also wrote the play) as Bertram Cates, a University of California microbiology professor who challenges Campbell's character Dr. Jared Brown, the chairman of the Microbiology Department.

Cates "introduces the idea of spirituality or religion as a means of examining what we are and who we are versus microbiology cells and molecules," Campbell said. "And things go awry because he's done what he should not do: mix oil and water."

"Disinherit the Wind" was last produced in November.

"It was received very, very well, especially by the scientific community. They were really able to get into it and latch on to the same kinds of controversy," Campbell said.

The play asks an age old question: where do we come from and what proof do we have?

"We know religion has us

If You Go

WHEN: 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, March 3 through April 8; 3 p.m. Sundays, March 5 through April 9.

WHERE: The Complex, 6476 Santa Monica Blvd., Hollywood.

COST: \$25, general admission, or \$15, students. Use discount code TP55.

DETAILS: (323) 960-4420, or www.plays411.com/disinherit.

answering those questions just relying on faith alone. I mean, there is no answer, so just have faith that's just the way it is. But the pragmatic scientists, they're digging deeper and they want to know where is it from and is it a big bang," Campbell said.

Campbell described his character as a hero/anti-hero. Cates challenges Brown, an old friend of at least 25 years, "that blue and yellow does not make green."

"What attracted me to the role was the ability to portray someone as astute and as intelligent and with the verbiage that the writer has provided," said Campbell, a professional actor for about 20 years.

Brown is a former professor and researcher relegated to an administrative role.

"Until this case presses a button, turns on a light for him, that allows him to be rejuvenated by the idea that there's new information, there's new assumptions to be considered," Campbell said.

Campbell was born in Philadelphia and raised in Brooklyn. He studied and performed with the Negro Ensemble Company of New York. He came to California in 1981 to continue his acting career. He graduated from Los Angeles City College with a de-



gree in Radio/TV Broadcasting. He graduated from the University of Southern California with degrees in Dramatic Arts and Cinematic Arts. He is also a graduate of Second City Training Center.

He recently retired after 22 years as a lighting technician, a job that provided steady pay to support his family.

"And now I'm returning back to acting, performing, full time," Campbell said.

Since 2014, when Campbell returned to acting full time he has done several theatrical performances, a couple of commercials, and some short films.

"I'm enriching myself with the tools that I need to be very successful now," he said.



RELIGION, LAW & ORDER — Top, Lancaster resident G. Smokey Campbell (seated) rehearses a scene with other actors from the new production of Matt Chait's socially conscious play, "Disinherit the Wind." The play is a new take on the Scopes Trial, which was made famous in Jerome Lawrence's own 1955 play "Inherit the Wind." Bottom, Chait (standing) also stars in the play.

Ed Krieger photos