

October 17-30, 2008

**RANDOM LENGTHS**  
HARBOR INDEPENDENT NEWS

# AGE >> curtain call

By Gene Warech

## *Gem of the Ocean at Fountain*

This play, which covers the first decade of August Wilson's saga of African Americans in the 20th century, is overwhelming, beautifully cast and pungently directed by Ben Bradley.

The elders are former slaves, as one of them says, "Ain't nothing worse than slavery." That specter hangs over the play. Dreams of freedom are still strangled by the man, personified here by a tragically twisted black man (Rodney Gardiner), an implacable enforcer of the ruling race's law (Jim Crow included).

Adolphus Ward, is a joyous half prophet, half con-man mythical figure full of fun and not so incidental wisdom. Juanita Jennings is powerful as Aunt Ester, as old as US slavery. Jeris Lee Poindexter is the nominal family head who bubbles over with joy each time the itinerant prophet arrives.



Adolphus Ward (Solly Two Kings) and Jeris Lee Poindexter (Eli) in the *Gem of the Ocean* presented by the Fountain Theatre.

A strangely submissive young woman, Tené Carter Miller, learns to stand up for herself (it's about time) and a young man (Keith Arthur Bolden) seeks the powers of Aunt Ester. A ferocious exorcism disgorges the horrors of the slave passage. The design goes a long way to supporting the mystic goings on.

Stephen Marshall is a white peddler who shows up for good business and lively company. As will you. Don't miss this.

Through Nov. 16 at 5060 Fountain in Hollywood. Call (323) 663-1525.

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