

Musician teaches importance of creativity

By Paula Lavigne
Senior Reporter

Dressed in his homemade wardrobe of native African attire, 42-year-old Kahil El'Zabar stretched with ease to grasp his right foot while chatting about his recent studies in Africa.

He writes poetry. He makes clothing. He lobbies Congress. He sings, dances and plays a variety of instruments—a majority of which El'Zabar made with his own hands.

If given a form with a blank that said "Occupation," El'Zabar said he'd fill it in with "creative artist" or, specifically, "musician."

El'Zabar will be working at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln on a variety of creative projects involving students and faculty. The projects will be presented throughout the week.

"Everything I do is connected to the center of my art form. It allows me to adapt to other areas and develop my skills," he said.

El'Zabar's work focuses individual creativity and nurtures that creativity in society while promoting various foreign cultures.

"In each of us and our blessed genius, we just have to take a chance on ourselves and our infinite capacities," El'Zabar said. "Lots of times, we allow experiences that we've had stifle our creativity."

"We are all creative. Everything you see on this earth has creative genius within it," he said. "Sometimes it's misdirected, and sometimes it's held in."

Children, he said, should be made aware of this great personal resource early in life. He said they had to realize everyone was special, and people could benefit from one another's unique qualities.

"Picasso had a statement, 'As children, we are born artists. Such a shame we grow up,'" he said. "What happens on a very physical level is our bodies are supple in youth. Due to stiffening we experience as we grow up, we lose that suppleness."

He said this stiffening happened on a mental level as well. Through society's conditioning, people's creative minds are inhibited, El'Zabar said. This aging process must be stopped before the creative process is endangered.

As part of President Clinton's Task Force of Arts Presenting and Education, El'Zabar said he strived to make people realize how important this cre-

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ativity was.

"Through our educational systems we need to find the ways and the vehicles that would limit the kind of inhibitions we find at this point," he said.

The first area educational institutions look toward when facing budget cuts is the fine and performing arts, he said.

"Arts are not only for entertainment. They are also for intellectual development," he said. "People don't understand the utility of arts in our environment."

At the university level, El'Zabar said it was important to expose students to various ethnic and racial cultures.

"You can never hurt yourself by broadening your palette," he said. "You can make it in life, but you limit the potential of what you really have inside."

El'Zabar, who has worked with UNL's University Foundations program for the past five years, said several of the students had never been exposed to someone like himself.

El'Zabar said he already had seen success with the students in his program, as they were taking advantage of the creative arts on and off campus.

"Creative arts have a place in academic institutions," he said.

His role in bringing creative arts to students is one El'Zabar said he deeply valued. Instead of using textbooks and other standard teaching materials, El'Zabar uses a unique teaching tool—music.

Known as one of the most innovative jazz players to take traditional jazz and mix it with all types of new styles, El'Zabar said he had worked with artists such as Bobby McFerrin,



Jay Calderwood/DN

Artist-musician Kahil El'Zabar improvises vocally while working with students last Wednesday. El'Zabar is working with University of Nebraska-Lincoln students.

Paul Simon and many other musical greats.

When the National Endowment of the Arts declined funding for various art projects found to be offensive, El'Zabar said he took part in ensuring the First Amendment rights of all artists.

Along with serving on the NEA Board of Directors, El'Zabar founded the Campaign for the Freedom of Expression, an artist's lobbying group, and won the first censorship case against the federal government.

In order to preserve freedom of expression for the future, El'Zabar said, we must work with the technology of today to expose and advance the nation instead of desensitizing it.

"The media often deals with mediocre and mundane perspectives, lacking intellectual stimulus. We need to

create programming that would inspire our children instead of urging them to murder."

He said the media should deal with subjects that promote social harmony and respect for multicultural perspectives.

"If we take advantage of our technology, we will be a very advanced community in the next century, but if we deal with the kinds of policies we have in the past 20 years, just so advertisers can make money, we will limit the potential of the intellectual abilities of our community."

El'Zabar plans on being a strong part of this revolution. Even while El'Zabar is at UNL, his itinerary looks like a daily flight schedule for O'Hare Airport. Motivation is a key asset, he said.

"You need to have balance and a love for living and knowing how to

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take time out. I travel with my kids to reconstitute myself. I create silent time to read and exercise."

El'Zabar will be reading his poetry Tuesday at 3:30 p.m. in the Andrews Hall lounge. He and a group of UNL students will present their final project at the Culture Center at 8 p.m. Friday. Admission is free.

Chemistry brings laughs in film about first lady



"Guarding Tess"



Take one domineering, cynical former first lady, one bored Secret Service agent assigned to protect her, throw in a sprinkling of broken rules and a dalliance of humor, and what do you get?

You get a charming little concoction called "Guarding Tess." It is the latest TriStar Pictures release to hit the big screen.

Doug Chesnic, played by Nicolas Cage, has met his match in an assignment from hell. Duties call him and six other agents to a sleepy Ohio town to protect a so-called national treasure. Shirley MacLaine is Tess Carlisle, a matronly old witch behind closed doors whose design is to spark Chesnic's every

last nerve.

A rare chemistry definitely exists between the two. You'll be laughing the duration.

Tess' plight is one felt by many people under the protection of the government. She's surrounded by people who are at her beck and call, but she'd rather have her privacy. It rankles her that the taxpayers are paying for protection she despises. But the president and the American public want it that way, and she goes along with it.

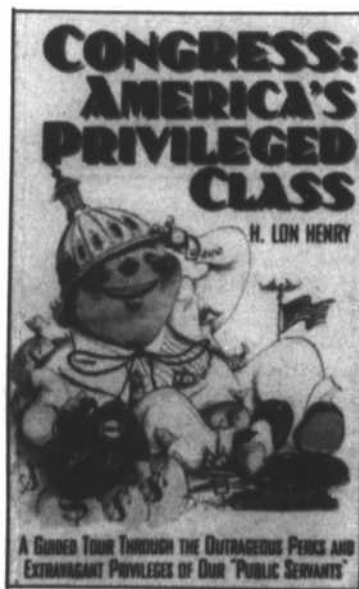
Nevertheless, Doug's three-year detail is not enough, and Tess wants him back. This is where the fun begins. Doug is Tess's equal, and they both know it. And that makes the chemistry. Tess wants to play cat and mouse with Doug, which is what makes it so difficult to fulfill his task.

The premise is good. In fact, it's excellent, but every movie needs some down-in-the-dirt action. The film tends to unravel toward the end, as the story heats up. It's a patchwork of odd events haphazardly threaded together.

All in all, "Guarding Tess" is worth your time.

— Marissa Jorgenson

Book exposes political perks



"Congress: America's Privileged Class"
H. Lon Henry
Prima Publishing

H. Lon Henry has stuffed 125 pages with information about congressional perks, privileges and waste into "Congress: America's Privileged Class."

Henry put long lists of data, usually perused only by citizens' groups, into a book any American can easily read.

It also helps any American become angry.

Before "Congress," it was hard to find specific lists of perks senators and representatives enjoy—or enjoyed before a scandal canceled or reduced them.

Henry listed not only money and free services members of Congress received, but also travel-related services, legal exemptions and seniority benefits. Much of the information he included, though not necessarily surprising, is upsetting, to put it lightly.

It may not be upsetting to anyone outside Washington, D.C., that income earned in the district by nonresidents is not subject to District of Columbia taxing, or that its federal tax-paying residents have no voting representation in Congress.

Only the tourist may resent Congress' policy of keeping its own doctor's office in the Capitol, in which lawmakers receive free treatment and drugs. An injured tourist in the building is not allowed to seek treatment.

It may upset Americans to know what sort of payment Congress gives itself, even after its members leave office. Sen. J. James Exon (D-Neb.) may receive lifetime retirement benefits totaling as much as \$1.05 million after leaving office. Rep. Doug Bereuter (R-Neb.) may receive as much as \$1.6 million.

The general populace might be

upset when they find out Congress is exempt from the Equal Pay Act of 1963, which requires all employers to pay men and women equal money for equal work.

These are only a few of many examples Henry gives in "Congress," and they are upsetting enough.

Henry wrote his book with a mixture of cynicism and sarcastic comments. On one hand, this style makes the book look like a feeble attempt at a work of humor. On the other hand, it's the only thing that makes the book different from long, cold lists of facts.

At any rate, the book is not a literary masterpiece. But then, it hardly needs to be one. Its purpose is to make the American people good and mad. Whatever bad writing the book has will hardly stand in the way of that.

One doesn't have to be a fan of either Rush Limbaugh or Gloria Steinem to be moved and angered by "Congress." Whatever the reader's political persuasion, the book is a 125-page argument in favor of term limits and the line-item veto.

Suffice it to say that those who read "Congress" will react in one of three ways. Some will be horrified and appalled at what our Congress has done to us. Some will not care. The rest will go into politics so they can be elected to Congress and live like kings at the taxpayers' expense.

— Jan Calinger