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It's a modern Hawaiian story set in ... Missouri!

By **Mike Leidemann**
Advertiser Staff Writer

Frank South says his new play, "The Night Talkers," has been a long time in coming, but he's proud of the way it has shaped up. It premieres at The ARTS at Marks Garage tonight.

South, a former television director who came to Hawai'i as part of the "Baywatch" TV series team some years back and stayed when the show ended, says the play grew out of an old script of his that found new life when he made friends with local actress Margaret Jones.

"I've been working with Margaret as an acting coach, and we got to be good friends," South said. "Hearing her talk about her Hawaiian family really got me interested in working new ideas into the old script. The old play never worked, but there was this character there that I thought would be perfect for Margaret to play."

The result is a three-character, two-actor play that takes place in Missouri — with touches of Hawai'i and Washington state.

Jones plays two roles: registered nurse Connie Johnson, a troubled woman with a Hawaiian background living in Missouri; and 10-year-old Melody, a child out of her past.

When Connie wakes up one night to find a man talking in her living room, she has to come face to face with the ghosts of her past, including Melody, in order to free herself to finally go home.

"Connie is like the walking dead, coming face to face with the 10-year-old girl out of her past," South said.

"This might be one of the most challenging roles I've ever faced," said Jones. She also had the lead role in last year's Hawaii International Film Festival hit "Pele O Ka Foodmart," about a modern Hawaiian woman in an abusive marriage who awakens one day believing she is Pele.

The man talking on her couch is Frank, an inept loner in Connie's adopted Missouri town who is smarter than most people think. He's played by South, who's making his first stage appearance in almost 20 years.

Ultimately, the play is about faith, perseverance and discovering your true self. But that makes it sound heavier than it is, South



Margaret Jones and Frank South offer a study in facial expressions as they rehearse their play, "The Night Talkers," premiering tonight at The ARTS at Marks Garage.

Photos by JOAQUIN SIOPACK |
The Honolulu Advertiser

'THE NIGHT TALKERS'

Written and directed by Frank South

With Margaret Jones and Frank South

8 p.m. today-Sunday and Nov. 17-19

**The ARTS at Marks Garage,
1159 Nu'uuanu Ave.**

\$20 general, \$15 students

**550-8457,
www.honoluluboxoffice.com**



South, left, and Jones, who are friends, act out the story of a Hawaiian woman who confronts the ghosts of her past.

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said.

"We have a serious intent," he said, "but as a piece, it's entertaining, funny and maybe even a little ludicrous. Because in the end, that's how we all are," he said.

Since his "Baywatch" experience, South has been working in Honolulu as a teacher, author, television director and leader of a nonprofit community group working with young actors. He senses something in the Hawai'i theater community that takes him back a long time to when he was an aspiring actor.

"There's a tightness in the creative community here that reminds me of what we were doing in New York 20 years ago," he said. "The energy is there, and people are taking risks, doing things their own way just for the sake of the art. No one is trying to use that as a stepping stone."

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