
Arts

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Children's Theatre Company: *LETTING FREEDOM RING*

By LAUREL GRAEBER

Although politics is practiced by adults, it always has effects on children. Young performers from the Children's Theatre Company are exploring those realities now in a production that draws on the writings of sages ranging from Dr. Seuss to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Created in honor of United Nations Human Rights Day (Dec. 10), the show draws on the talents of New Yorkers ages 4 to 15. Mehr Mansuri and Karida Griffith, the company's artistic directors, lead the children in a 90-minute show that includes dance, rap, poetry and music.

The program begins with the youngest thespians acting out David Kirk's picture book "Miss Spider's Tea Party," which, the



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children point out, does have a political point: "learning to accept each other, no matter what background or bug you are." They also present "Yertle & Myrtle" a pithy statement on the abuses of power.

Performed with hilarious music by Lory Lazarus, it includes a country-western ode by Mack and Jack, the turtles who are literally at the bottom of society.

The second half of the program, which is geared to older children, includes a civil rights medley, several rousing songs by the group's music director, Eric Dozier, and a dramatization of Langston Hughes's poem "America." Interspersed throughout are quotations from historical figures like King, Harriet Tubman, Helen Keller and Gandhi — mature words that sound all the more stirring when uttered by young voices.

The Children's Theater Company, through Dec. 30 at the **Baha'i Unity Center, 53 East 11th Street, East Village, (212) 633-6629**. Tickets: \$12.

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