

EXTRA FEATURE

One Mann's mission to Mars

David Mann launches the astronomical task of mounting his own musical

By [ANDY ZEFFER](#)
Friday, February 17, 2006

COMPOSER DAVID Mann may have a soft-spoken manner, but don't let that fool you. The man has tenacity. After all, mounting an original full-scale musical is not an easy task.

He describes his musical, "Beware the Eyes of Mars," as "Star Wars" meets "Hairspray." But there also are hints of influences from other pop culture classics, such as "Hair" and "The Rocky Horror Picture Show."

Mann first put on "Mars" at the University of Miami in 1991, when he graduated as a music major. In the fifteen years since, his creation has gone through many changes and incarnations.

"It took a while to find itself," Mann says. "Sort of like how it takes a while for an individual to find him or herself."

Mann wrote and composed the music for the original show. In the beginning of the show, the music has a futuristic sound, when the audience first meets the central character, who is an alien living years into the future.

But when his spacecraft crashes onto Earth, it is the late '60s, the height of flower child movement. Consequently the tunes take on a groovy "Strawberry Fields" sort of sound.

"A lot of people ask me if it has a gay storyline," Mann says. "My answer is always that is as gay as 'Phantom of the Opera.' What is captivating about the story of the 'Phantom of the Opera?' Well, the phantom is an outcast, and that is something many gay people can relate to."

The word "alien" takes on a double meaning in "Beware the Eyes of Mars."

The most obvious meaning is that the lead character is an alien. But there is also the fact that he feels alienated when landing on Earth, until he is taken in by some kind-hearted flower children. In that sense the show is like "Wicked" or "Hairspray," in which both Broadway hits have characters who are ostracized.

"Beware the Eyes of Mars" has a cast of twenty-four actors. The crew numbers around half a dozen. So the show is no small undertaking. Mann proudly says audience members can expect high production values and a Broadway-style show.

IN ORDER TO PULL OFF the show, Mann is taking off of work and living off of savings to dedicate himself full time to the production. Otherwise, he says, there wouldn't be a way for him to get the show done.

For years, Mann was a pianist and vocalist on cruise lines. He has a home studio where he composed and recorded his score from scratch.

The process Mann has gone through to get his play on stage says a lot about being persistent. For example, simply to cast



David Mann says his musical, 'Beware the Eyes of Mars,' will appeal to gay and lesbian audience members because it deals with people feeling alienated from society.

MORE INFO

'Beware the Eyes of Mars'
March 3 -12
Broward County Library Theatre
100 S. Andrews Ave.
Fort Lauderdale
www.marismusical.com

 [Sound Off about this article](#)

 [Printer-friendly Version](#)

 [E-Mail this story](#)

 [Search Express](#)

the show, he held six casting calls.

"I would sit there for six hours a day, often times listening to people with no talent," Mann says. "But once in while we would get that one person who shined. Then we had problems with Hurricane Wilma, and we had a lot of cancellations. It was hard."

Mann's hope is to take the show forward with larger productions in the future, and to have other larger venues pick it up. He has a VIP list of guests from such organizations as The Actors Playhouse and the Broward Center, with hopes one of them will bite.

In the meantime, this production will serve as a fundraiser for the charity Kids In Distress, which houses abandoned and abused children. The charity is just a stones throw from where Mann lives. He wanted to choose a charity to benefit, and had added incentive to choose Kids In Distress from filmmaker Liza Trainer, who will be filming a performance of "Beware the Eyes of Mars."

"Liza said she would come on board if proceeds from the production went to benefit Kids In Distress," Mann says. "I went over there and as soon as I saw one of their videos, knew I found a great cause."

In order to be able to raise funds, all of the cast and crew on "Beware the Eyes of Mars" are volunteers.

Though it has been a long time and a lot of hard work to get his original show on the stage, Mann is optimistic this is just the beginning of the process for "Beware the Eyes of Mars," not the end point.

South Florida and its artists are the source of many musicals that go on to bigger stages. Mann points to his friend South Beach resident David Sexton, the creator of the musical "It's a Fabulous Life," which has grown and improved with each year's performance. A production of "Fabulous Life" was mounted in Chicago last year as well.

South Beach author and performer David Leddick is also a model for Mann. Leddick used his real life friendship with Quinton Crisp to collaborate and perform in the one-man musical "Quinton and I," another well received show with original music.

Mann hopes to have similar success. One day, he hopes, the musical spacecraft that is "Beware the Eyes of Mars" will even land on Broadway.

