

Leading ladies of the Bible on center stage

Actress's one-woman play takes a look at the lives of five prominent figures in Scripture

By J. LOUISE LARSON / Special Contributor to The Dallas Morning News, Friday, August 10, 2007



MIKE STONE/Special Contributor

Groundbreaking actress and Christian performer Naima Lett is determined to give five biblical women their 15 minutes of fame.

Naima Lett says modern-day women see themselves in her play *Shattered Silhouettes*, which portrays biblical women. Combining music, theater and dance in compelling new ways, the Irving resident's original work shines at her home church, Irving Bible Church, where her one-woman play will debut next week.

Eve, Jezebel, Leah, Tamar and Mary, the mother of Jesus, get a fresh look in *Shattered Silhouettes*, which weaves together the modern issues of love, abuse and hope.

"I want the audience to feel the very thoughts and emotions experienced by these women as they deal with, are defeated by or overcome some of the same types of problems we deal with in our everyday lives," Ms. Lett said.

The accounts strike a chord with her audiences, Ms. Lett said. "Women have said they saw themselves in my play, that it spoke to them," she said. "I've heard from women who came up and said, 'I was a Tamar,' and they've never told anybody, just carried the weight of it around for years. They say, 'I may need to deal with this,' and that's what I encourage them to do. ... It impacts our lives until we're able to deal with it."

The Augusta, Ga., native and Howard University graduate is represented by the Suzanne Horne agency; her recent parts include roles on *Inspector Mom* and *Prison Break*. She has acted in various film and commercial roles, earning a Best Actress nomination in Dallas' 2005 EDOC Film Festival. But her unique combination of writing, producing and performing holds a special place in her heart.

"I keep writing and producing my own plays – it keeps me traveling and doing what I love. As an artist, you continue to create so you can live and breathe and do what you love to do," she said.

Her husband, Kevin Lett, is president of Lett's Rise! production company. The pair has started a new annual award, the Lett's Rise Starlet Award, to help a young actress starting out. This year's winner will be announced at the Aug. 17 performance in Irving.

Ms. Lett recently had another starring role as the first graduate to obtain a master's degree in media and communications from Dallas Theological Seminary in 2005. Her dedication to her craft and disciplined application of dramatic theory, coupled with an informed theological interpretation, set her apart in the world of redemptive art, said Reg Grant, director of the seminary's masters in media and communications program.

"Her excellence shines through in preparation and in performance. ... It's her attention to detail – the glance of an eye, the gentle lift of a hand, or a smile that would stop a train – that separates Naima from the pack of less dedicated dramatic artists. Naima sweats the small stuff, and it shows," he said.

Irving Bible Church senior Pastor Andy McQuitty said that Ms. Lett's extensive work with the women's ministry of the church has been powerful. "She captures the tone and the heart of a lot of women's issues in our day," he said. "She gives some insight and some hope to women especially. The arts shouldn't take a back seat in worship", he said. "We believe the arts are the expression of the human soul, and what better venue than to have that expression in church?" Mr. McQuitty said. "We need to recapture the arts and bring them into the church to serve the cause of spirituality."