

# DAILY VARIETY

85 CENTS

FRIDAY

MARCH 5, 1993

## Hysterical Blindness

(The Hudson Theatre, Hollywood;  
99 seats; \$15 top)

Blumsack/Debreceni/Reilly & The Hudson Theatre in association with Prank Prods. Inc. present a musical comedy in one act by Leslie Jordan; music and lyrics, Joe Patrick Ward; directed by Carolyn Barry; exec producer, Tom Price; associate producer, Reic Von Besser; musical staging, Mark Knowles.

Leslie Jordan ..... Himself  
With: Ann Walker, P.B. Hutton, Newell Alexander, Rosemary Alexander, Joe Patrick Ward, Dan Livingston, Noreen Reardon, Gregory Webb.

**C**haracter actor Leslie Jordan's one-act musical comedy about a lunatic Southern Baptist family is semi-autobiographical, bittersweet and hilarious. His endearing stage presence is supported by a chorus of seasoned professionals and a slew of toe-tapping tunes.

"Hysterical Blindness and Other Southern Tragedies That Have Plagued My Life Thus Far" traces Jordan's life in Chatanooga, Tenn., complete with a palette of colorful eccentrics.

After college, the out-of-step hick heads to Hollywood in search of fame and fortune. His cynical Southern mother who is talked about repeatedly, but never seen, once said, "You can achieve anything, as long as you're attached to

mama's apron strings."

The show's title stems from an ailment Jordan's mother had for two years. The show's anecdotes demonstrate how his mother survived this and other experiences with amazing grace.

Jordan's love of family is contrasted by the deep shame of many boyhood experiences. Jordan is a likable actor. As his first foray into writing, he shows a flair for character nuance while capturing the inner voice and pain of someone leaving home to take risks in a new place.

In some ways the show is a bit too specific in details regarding his

life, rather than a Southern boy surviving in Hollywood. But his use of entertainment insider asides is universal enough for everyone.

Enhancing Jordan's script are the rousing, humorous music and lyrics of Joe Patrick Ward. One shockingly amusing song about racial prejudice would do Lenny Bruce proud. Mark Knowles' musical staging is well-conceived and the ensemble of singers/actors adds new meaning to the term "supporting cast."

The end product shows the care and creativity of director Carolyn Barry.

—Arlene Schindler