

The Evening Sun

BALTIMORE, TUESDAY, JULY 16, 1991

Ancients awakened in 'Seven Stages'

By Winifred Walsh

Evening Sun Staff

THE WORLD premiere of a new performance work, "Seven Stages," based on the writings of ancient and modern Persian poets, premieres tomorrow at the Theatre Project prior to its August engagement at the Edinburgh Theatre Festival in Scotland.

Conceived and directed by Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, assistant professor and coordinator of the directing program at Towson State University, the piece is a joint effort of the Maryland Arts Festival and the Theatre Project.

In "Seven Stages" six ancient human beings are awakened from their long death-sleep and brought up to modern times.

"As they awaken they all speak different languages. Dressed in rags, they embark on a ritualistic journey through history to discover truths," said Hakak in a recent interview.

Featuring strong physical imagery, the work combines the lyrical text of the ancient 13th century Sufi poet Jalalu'ddin Rumi and the modern poem cycle of the late female Iranian poet Forough Farrokhzad.

"Sufism philosophy of the 12th and 13th centuries was — if we are created in the image of God — God has put pieces of himself in us. They believed we can go through the purification process and become God-like figures," explained Hakak.

"In 'Seven Stages' I am working with six actors and one musician, Brian Simms, who has composed the music for the work," says Hakak. "It was my idea and the student actors' in my improvisational workshop to take humans from long ago and put them through the process of enlightenment to see what would happen today," he said.

A native of Iran, where he was a noted director, actor and author, Hakak has been a resident of the United States for 14 years.

The trip to the international theater festival in Edinburgh is being sponsored by the Towson State University theater department. The troupe will play Aug. 19-24 there in a venue similar to the Theatre Project.

"Seven Stages" will play at the Theatre Project through July 28. Tickets are \$12 general admission with discounts available for students, seniors, alumni and artists. For ticket information, call the Theatre Project box office at 752-8558.