

'The Good Times' coming to rock the Coconut Grove Playhouse this summer

From July 18 to 30, the stage will light up with youthful exuberance, '60s music and a burst of energy as the Coconut Grove Playhouse Young Actors' Performance Ensemble presents writer-cartoonist Lynda Barry's "The Good Times Are Killing Me."

The surprise off-Broadway musical hit took New York critics by storm with its young cast and fast-paced humor. *New York Newsday* called it "As delicious as floating in an inner tube on a roasting summer day!" *The New York Times* declared the show "A happy occasion. Funny and engaging!" ABC TV said simply, "This is great theater!"

If you're an avid reader of local alternative newspapers, you've already been introduced to first-time playwright Lynda Barry. Best known for her syndicated comic strip "Ernie Pook's Comeek," which appears in New York's *Village Voice* and more than 55 other newspapers

throughout the country including Miami's *New Times*, Barry has made her mark with vividly bittersweet childhood memories and perceptions, wrapped in a wonderfully warped sense of humor.

"The Good Times Are Killing Me" tells the story of Edna Arkin, a pre-adolescent girl growing up in the mid-1960s, and her friendship with Bonna Willis, a young girl who lives on Edna's integrated block in a lower-middle-class neighborhood. The show uses a generous selection of music from the '60s, and through music and lightning-fast scenes, develops and follows their friendship as the neighborhood changes.

"Good Times" was originally written as a novel, a slim 70 pages called by Barry her "novelini." Nevertheless, the small volume was selected as an Editor's Choice by the American Library Association.

Adapted by Barry for the stage, the

show enjoyed a successful run in Chicago at the City Lit Theatre. A new adaptation opened at New York's Second Stage, then moved to off-Broadway's Minetta Lane Theater, where it had a surprising four-month run.

Barry's half-Filipino, half-Irish mother and half-Irish, half-Norwegian father raised their three children in a funky, interracial neighborhood in Seattle. "My own childhood happened to be poor," says Barry.

"My mother worked at a crab cannery, then as a janitor in a hospital. My dad cut meat at a grocery store before he left. I heard my parents argue about money. I know what it feels like to drive through rich neighborhoods, yet live in a poor one."

Barry knows racism first-hand. "'Good Times' is about a changing neighborhood. [It's] about a loss of innocence, how adults are responsible for their actions, but children aren't."

The special summer production, with a cast of 18, is an outgrowth of the success-

ful Young Actors' Performance Ensemble of the Playhouse. In its nine-year existence, the program has grown from a junior-high- and high-school workshop into one of the most respected summer theater programs for students from junior-high to college level in the country.

Education director Judith Delgado selected the play as the focus of this year's intensive six-week summer program. "This is a play that connects with kids and adults," said Delgado. "Few live theater pieces can accomplish that feat. And the story is one that kids can relate to immediately. Unfortunately, race relations in this country continue to be strained. 'Good Times' talks to our inner selves with music, humor and dead-on perception."

Performances of "The Good Times Are Killing Me" are at 7:30 p.m. July 22, 23, 29 and 30 with 2 p.m. matinee performances July 20, 21, 26, 27 and 28. Tickets are \$18.50 for adults and \$5 for students 24 and under. For tickets and information, call 442-2662.

THEATER & THE ARTS

Kravis Center Community Relations Committee presents Gospel Gala '94

Featuring performances by seven local gospel groups and church choirs, the Kravis Center presents its second annual gospel concert, Gospel Gala '94, on Sunday, June 26, at 4 p.m.

Gospel Gala '94 is among the long list of community outreach events presented by the center annually to provide the entire community access to the best in the arts.

Scheduled to perform at the concert are Shirley Green and the Sensational Spann Sisters, the Tabernacle Gospel Chorus, Pleasant Heights Baptist Youth

Pope Theatre Company brightens up summer season with 'The King of the Kosher Grocers'

Pope Theatre Company brings warmth and humor to the South Florida