

Nathan Ross Freeman makes himself heard with a quiet art form

By KAREN M. HANNON
Chronicle Staff Writer

Mime artist Nathan Ross Freeman has used his experience in the theater to articulate his ideas in an art form that he says probably dates back to a time before recorded history.

Formerly of Philadelphia, Freeman came to Winston-Salem from Wilmington, where he performed and taught mime for the city's Department of Recreation and in the county school system.

While in Wilmington, Freeman formed Montage Mime Company, made up of five professional mimes. The troupe performed at the Community Arts Center in Wilmington and at other civic functions.

Freeman says he often uses his talent in therapeutic cases. He has conducted mime seminars and workshops in movement therapy for special populations, including special education classes for socially and emotionally disturbed adolescents.

"Mime is not just good for

those who are inhibited physically. It's also good for people who are inhibited emotionally," he says. "Mime is a very articulate art form. It has influenced ballet and other art forms. It's a form of discipline."

Freeman says that mime has educational, cultural and entertainment uses and that it teaches and develops communication, physical conditioning and discipline.

"Most of my exercises deal with isolation, coordination and manipulation techniques," he says.

"Many people think a mime is a clown with a white face that juggles on a street corner," Freeman says. "A mime isn't always a clown. A mime isn't a mimic. A mime is an actor who takes a situation and acts it out with full use of body language and facial expressions."

"A mime must be able to create an entire world within the space where he stands," says Freeman. But creating an en-



Nathan Ross Freeman, playwright in residence for the North Carolina Black Repertory Company, demonstrates the magic of mime.

tire world in mime is not something new for Freeman.

He says he originally came to Winston-Salem to enjoy the opportunity of being the first resident playwright for the North Carolina Black Repertory Com-

pany, where his job is to create entire worlds.

"I use mime as another form of authorship," Freeman says. "It's an opposite spectrum of playwriting, where I write using body language instead of words."

"As a playwright, mime helps me write plays that use body language as non-verbal dialogue. It develops my awareness of the importance of the body for communication. As an actor, mime helps my self-awareness, and I'm better able to communicate in everyday situations. It's also good physical conditioning. Mime makes you feel less inhibited."

Each part of the body, Freeman says, is an expressive element in mime, and he says, "When I teach mime, each part of the body has to be independently expressive."

Trained at the Bushfire Theatre Company in Philadelphia, Freeman believes that mime is more than an art. He calls it a power.

"Imagine that in the space that you occupy, you can go anywhere you want to and experience anything," he says. "It's portable. I call it an art form without additives and preservatives. A mime has to be able to create

everything in the scene, including a wall, a glass, a door. There has to be a relationship between the body and the emotions that is intense and direct."

Looking ahead, Freeman has plans to make mime more popular in the Triad area. His plans include starting a mime troupe in this area.

"I would love to develop a professional mime troupe for individuals who are seriously interested and want to work hard," he says.

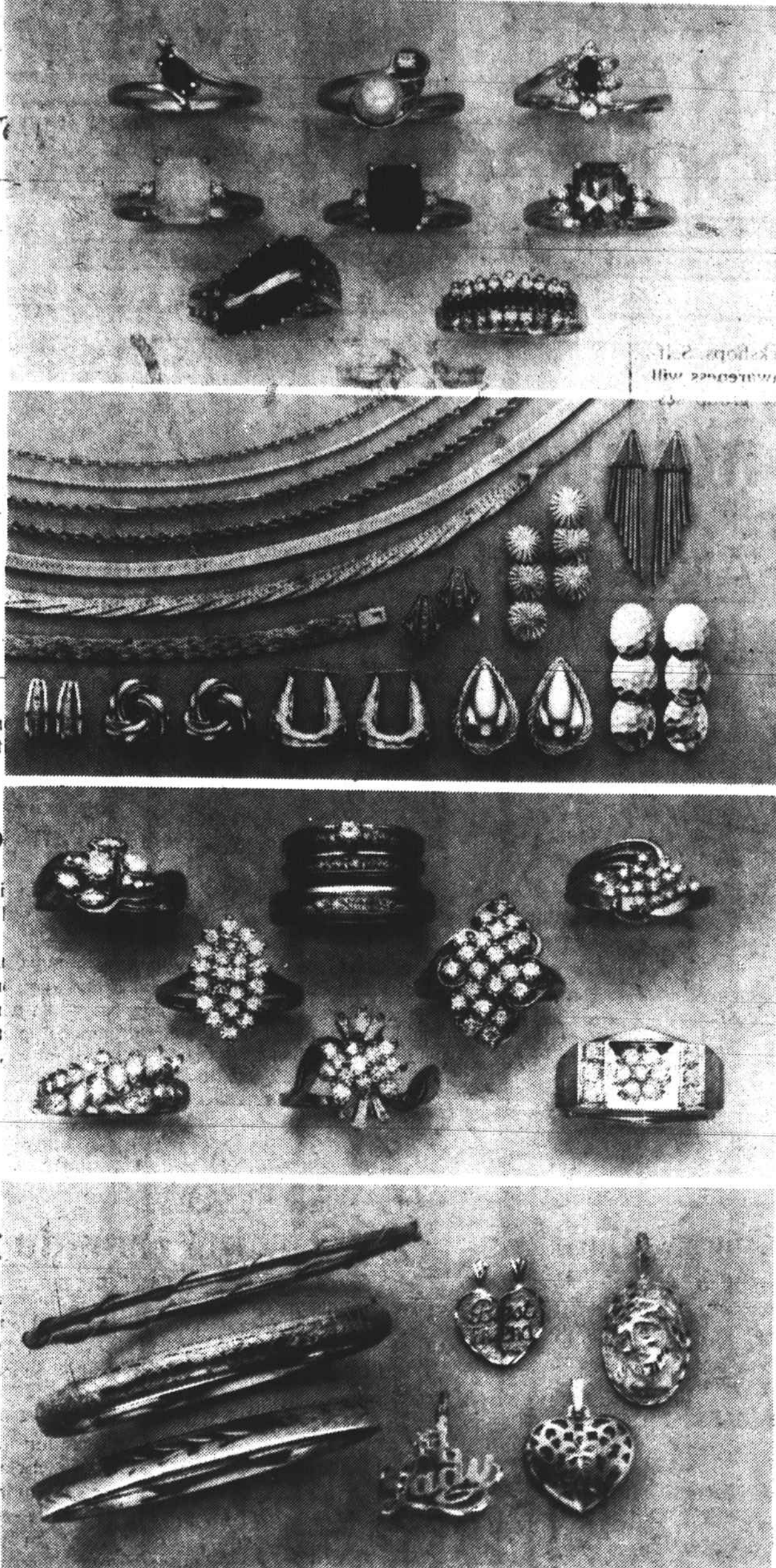
Meanwhile, he says, he will continue to perform at all types of cultural affairs for churches, organizations and individuals, and he hopes to perform at festivals and concerts.

Freeman will also teach individual and group mime classes for children and adults. The artist notes that he is available for dance and theater, commercial campaigns, parties, exhibits and all other cultural events.

Freeman says mime is not Please see page A12

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