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Ethel's cookin' show simmers

■ Melissa Ballard's rendition of 'Cookin' with Aunt Ethel' offers a look at what's inside a black person

By Serena Markstrom
Oregon Daily Emerald

Aunt Ethel shows the audience how to bake a "batch of Negroes" in freshman Melissa Ballard's interpretation of "Cookin' with Aunt Ethel" as part of the Black Student Union's Kwanzaa celebration.

The monologue is part of "The Colored Museum," a play by George C. Wolfe, and Ballard has performed it at her high school in Portland and most recently at the Nov. 21 celebration.

The scene is like a cooking show, with Aunt Ethel standing behind a pot and stirring in the ingredients that go into a black person.

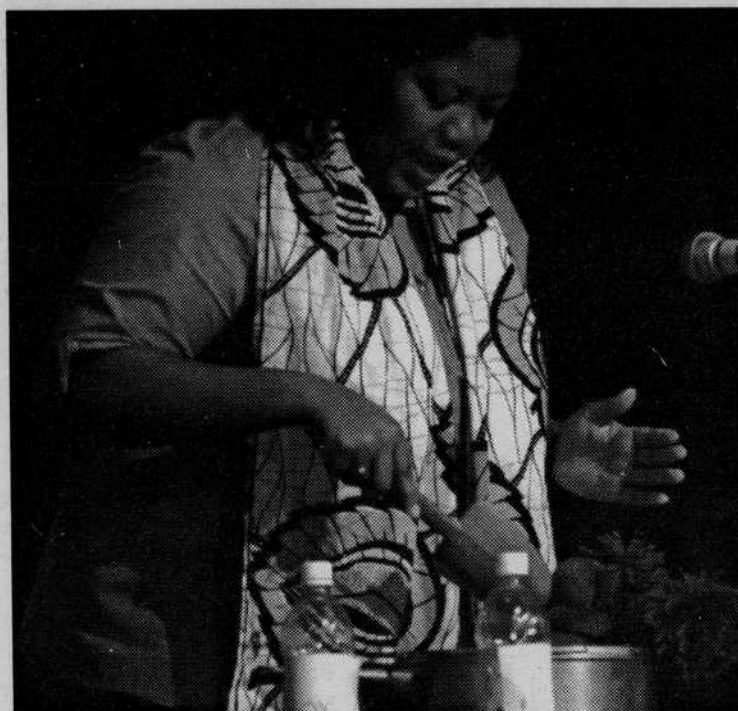
As Aunt Ethel, Ballard adds "a pinch of style," then a "dash of flair." Other ingredients are pizzazz, rage, survival, humor and a "box of blues."

"I hope [the audience] understands just a little bit where some black people are coming from," Ballard said.

The director's notes on the piece call for the actress to wear a bandanna on her head. Ballard opts against wearing one because she thinks it reinforces the "mammy" stereotype of the servile, docile and jovial black woman.

To Ballard the piece is a funny way to convey what she called "complete truths" about black people. Her personal favorite line is: "Add some attitude. Oops! I put too much."

She first found the monologue when she was in an acting class at Grant High School in Portland. After that she performed it at a black



Laura Smit Emerald

During the Kwanzaa celebration, Melissa Ballard, as Aunt Ethel, shares her special cooking recipe with the audience, stirring imaginary ingredients into a pot.

history month assembly in front of more than 2,000 people.

"At first I didn't get it," Ballard said of her first read of the piece.

She read it again and realized it was both funny and profound.

"It actually has a serious meaning — a subtext," Ballard said.

Because the subtext may be lost on some, she usually asks people if it offends them. She has found its good message and educational qualities outweigh the risk of someone missing its point or thinking it reinforces stereotypes.

Her goal in performing the monologue is "maybe just to have a little

understanding."

Just finishing her first term at the University, Ballard is already involved in the Black Student Union, InterVarsity, a Christian student group, and is taking acting classes.

When asked about her combination of a public relations major and a love of acting, she laughed and said she knew it was an odd combination.

"Acting is a release," Ballard said. "I can just come alive on stage."

As for public relations, she said she likes the idea of making "some company look good."

She said she also enjoys reading, talking with friends and shopping.

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Michael Coleman <i>Do Your Thing</i>	Oysterband <i>Granite Years</i>
Cuong Vu <i>Pure</i>	John Pizzarelli <i>Let There Be Love</i>
Jimmy Hangout <i>Pepper's Hangout</i>	Mikey Spice <i>Harder Than Before</i>
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FATBOY SLIM
Halfway Between the Gutter and the Stars, Astrelwerks/Skint, by Steve Lichtenstein

While not as sonically engaging as his million-selling predecessor, *You've Come A Long Way, Baby*, largely due to lack of the surprise factor and freshness, Fatboy Slim's latest still packs a punch bouncy enough to be more than used CD bin fodder. Despite some missteps, like the spacey Jim Morrison vocal track "Sunset (Bird of Prey)," *Halfway* manages to keep the party going with standard-feeling Fatboy fare like "Star 69" and "Mad Flava." But what carries the album are the guest vocals, especially Macy Gray's two gravelly dynamos, the gospel tinged, "Praise You" -esque "Demons," and the funkified "Love Life." All in *Halfway* is a solid party effort that leaves you wanting to see Slim get all the way there next time. GPA: 3.1 - Take time to "Praise": "Demons," "Talkin' Bout My Baby," "Love Life"

FEEDBACK:
HOW DO YOU THINK SLIM SHADY IS SPENDING THE HOLIDAYS?

Starring in remake of <i>It's a Wonderful Life</i>	9%
Caroling at the old folks' home with Dr. Dre and Kathie Lee Gifford	20%
Offending/Selling millions	7%
Baking cookies for the neighborhood children	14%
Standing up, standing up, standing up	23%
Swapping egg nog recipes with Martha Stewart	18%
Riding in the Teletubbies float at the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade	16%

Results based on the liner notes of *The Marshall Mathers LP*.

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