

# Georgia, Georgia directed by black woman

Tall, stately and handsome, carrying herself with the dignity derived from centuries of a proud African heritage, Maya Angelou is the epitome of beautiful serenity. But the serenity actually is just a cloak for a sensitive, intelligent and eloquent woman who speaks lyrically with vigor, wit and fire.

Maya Angelou's convictions are clearly evidenced in "Georgia, Georgia", the scenario of which she wrote to state the case of the Black woman in this culture. She also wrote songs for the film, including the song which marks Diana Sands' singing debut, "I Can Call Down Rain."

Maya Angelou's "Georgia, Georgia", starring Diana Sands, was directed by Stig Bjorkman on location in Stockholm, Sweden. This Kelly-Jordan Enterprises production presents Minnie Gentry and Roger Furman as support cast, and introduces Dirk Benedict. Distributed by Cinerama Releasing, "Georgia, Georgia" premieres March 10, 1972 at the Forum Theatre.

A lady of many talents is Maya Angelou. With just a high school education, she has been a singer, educator, dancer, author, historian, lecturer, actress, producer, editor, song writer and playwright. And she speaks six languages fluently. She was an editor for such diverse publications as the African Review in Accra, Ghana, and the Arab Observer in Cairo, Egypt. But impressive as these achievements are, it was her striking command of poetical expression that prompted Gerard W. Purcell to produce "The Poetry of Maya Angelou" on his GWP label.

Maya's busy lady. Last year Random House published her autobiographical novel, "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings", the title of which is a line from a poem by Paul Laurence Dunbar. She later



DIANA SANDS

completed the writing and production of a critically acclaimed 10-part series of educational films for television, which are concerned with the positive Africanisms prevalent in current American life.

Her background is as complex and interesting as the lady herself. Born 40 years ago in St. Louis, Mo., Miss Angelou spent most of her early childhood with her grandmother in Stamps, Arkansas — "a town that's a bit difficult to find on a map." In 1940, she and her family moved to San Francisco, where Maya finished her schooling.

"Jobs were difficult for a 15-year-old girl looking older than her years", Maya became San Francisco's first Negro cable car conductor. Even at this early age she discovered that writ-

ing poetry brought surcease from the problems of ordinary living. Determined eventually to carve out a stage career, Maya studied dance and drama at night, while working at a variety of jobs.

It was in 1952 that she received a scholarship to study dance with Pearl Primus in New York. Returning to San Francisco early in 1954, Maya made her first professional appearance at the Purple Onion, as a singer.

She then joined the European Touring Company of "Porgy and Bess", sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. She sang the role of "Ruby" and was the lead dancer in the production that, during 1954 and 1955, was presented in 22 countries in Europe and Africa. Between times she taught modern dance at the Rome Opera House and conducted classes

in modern dance technique in the Habima Theatre in Tel Aviv.

Night clubs and movies were taken in stride by Miss Angelou. In 1956 she sang at the Blue Angel and Village Vanguard in New York City and at Mr. Kelly's in Chicago. She had a featured role in Columbia's "Calypso Heatwave" in 1957, and one year later was signed for a role in the screen version of "Porgy and Bess".

In collaboration with Geoffrey Cambridge, she produced, directed and performed in "Cabaret for Freedom", a satirical revue presented at New York City's Village Gate. Concentrating on the theatre at this time, Maya took over the female lead in Jean Genet's "The Blacks" — long running hit at the St. Marks Theatre. In 1964 she rejoined the original

company, by invitation, for request performances at the Berlin Volksopera and the Venice Biennale.

While working on "Cabaret for Freedom", Miss Angelou was requested to take over the position of the Northern Coordinator for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, headed by the late Dr. Martin Luther King, for whom she has a feeling of reverence. Through the years she had been cognizant of the many problems that beset the relationship between the Black and White communities and at this time a growing awareness of the rapidly increasing tensions caused a radical change in the direction of her career. While not wholly abandoning her stage activities, Maya devoted herself to more serious endeavors.

She lived in Africa for a time and became the Associate Editor of The Arab Observer in Cairo, Egypt — the only English language news weekly in the Middle East. She was a reporter, rewrite woman, and editor, and in addition to supervising an office staff of 11, she helped with layout and production. Literally — a newspaper woman for all seasons.

Returning to the U.S., Maya joined The Theatre of Living in Hollywood where, under the direction of Frank Silvera, she played a major role in Jean Anouilh's "Moiety".

In collaboration with actress Abbey Lincoln, she has written "The True Believers" — a book of poetry, and is the author of "All Day Long", a collection of short stories depicting various aspects of Negro life. She has also produced an album, "The Poetry of Maya Angelou", for G.W.P. Records. Maya has written two other books, "Just Give Me A Cool Glass of Water - Fore I Die" and a children's book, "Little Leo's Mind Castle".

"Georgia, Georgia" will be playing at Alameda Theater beginning Wednesday, July 26.

# Ossie Davis directs Black Girl

Black Girl, which will star Leslie Eggs and will be directed by Ossie Davis, will be distributed world-wide by Cinerama. It was announced today by Joseph M. Sugar, President of Cinerama Releasing and producer Lee Savin.

Based on the long running off-Broadway play by J.E. Franklin, production is scheduled to begin in Hollywood Monday, July 17th.

The film will mark Miss Eggs' motion picture debut, a new peak in a career that has already carried her to the top in television, night clubs, in concert, and on Broadway. Ossie Davis' most recent film success was his direction of "Cotton Comes to Harlem."

Black Girl centers around a 17-year-old, growing up in Texas, who terms and seeks her own identity and maturity.

She wants to break away from her small town existence to become a ballerina. Along the way, she faces up to the realities of family relationships, class, color and sex. Striking her own path, she strikes her own path as the over-ventured girl contends with those who would steer her away from the dream of tomorrow. Miss Franklin has adapted the screenplay from her stage success.

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