

Black Repertory Theatre presents two plays

By Nyewusi Askari

Beginning July 17, and continuing through September 7, Portland Black Repertory will present its summer theatre of two plays in repertory. The plays, directed by Rosemary Allen, represents a new movement within the Black theatre in the State of Oregon, as well as, an introduction to the high degrees of Black professionalism that exist within the Theatre itself.

Play one, "For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When The Rainbow Is Enuff" written by Ntozake Shange, is an orchestrated, choreographed presentation of poems and prose pieces for eight Black actresses. The show is designed to "Sing a Black girl's song," and it does with sadness, pain, humor and hopes. Ntozake Shange (pronounced "En-tow-zok-aye" and "Shawn-gay") studied the mythology of women from antiquity to the present day, and it helped her to develop her sense of the world, her new and liberated sense of herself and also her penetrating insight into what she calls "women's language."

Shange writes, "sing a Black girl's song...sing a song of life, she's been dead so long." Women, for Shange, speak in a kind of tribal symbolism; for women have been made into what is most often a cruel world apart.

Some critics suggest that sister Shange's "For Colored Girls" is merely an angry women's lib message erasing Black men from life. Others suggest that it merely confirms the doctrine of racists who, for centuries have tried to prove that the intimate world of the Black man and woman, is a world of constant pain, sadness and violent movements. Not true. Sister Shange's message is that Black women, like other women, experiences their joys, pains and is now able to speak about it, share it

as an act of love. Her message is actually a description of "some of the things" Black women go through, on their way to other more beautiful things.

Called a "Choreopoem" by Shange, the movements capture the many moods and often the different kinds of situations Black women find themselves in with their men. However, one must also view the "Choreopoem" from a historical context. Against the brutal whip of slavery, the Black man and woman, has struggled for intimate survival; survival against death, separation by slave masters, prisons, wars, frustration and human nature. Yet, they have survived, and in many ways, Shange explains much of the madness in the methods.

The cast consist of eight local and visiting Black actresses, both professional and amateur. All of them have personally experienced many of the triumphs and errors of the women in "For Colored Girls."

The second play, "Red Beans & Rice" is an original musical production created by Janice Scroggins, Thara Memory, Rosemary Allen and Ruby Burns. Rosemary Allen wrote the script.

The play is a triumphant and powerful story about the roots of Jazz in America. The story unravels in a collage of dramatic scenes about the lives of the people who made the music, and transports the audience across the ocean to Africa where the spirit of gospel, blues and jazz originated. The title, "Red Beans & Rice" symbolizes what music has meant to black Americans. Often it was the music, blues, gospel and jazz that gave Black Americans the will to keep on struggling to survive.

Portland Black Repertory Theatre boasts a talented and experienced production staff. Producer/director Rosemary Allen; musical director, Thara Memory; Choreographers, Ruby Burns (Red



For colored Girls' cast members. "Lady in Purple" not shown. (Photo: Judith Rafferty)

Beans & Rice), and Sagirah Banks ("For Colored Girls..."); Vocal directors, Janice Scroggins and Willie Binns ("Red Beans & Rice"); Costume Designers, Chonita Henderson ("Red Beans & Rice"), and Fie Wash & Patricia Trice ("For Colored Girls"); Hair Designer, Melvia Wilson ("For Colored Girls..."); Make-up Artist, Deborah Hicks; Lighting designer, Jim Clark; Graphic Designer, Issac Shamsud-Din; Stage managers, Vernon Ambus ("For Colored Girls..."), and Ricky Dance ("Red Beans & Rice"); Business Manager, Lois Berry; Program designer, Cheryl Wilson and publicity director, Rose Washington.

"For Colored Girls..." will be performed for the general public on Thursdays and Fridays, and "Red Beans & Rice" on Saturdays and Sundays, both starting at 8:15 p.m.,

at the Cabell Center for Performing Arts, located at 8825 S.W. Barnes Road. Reservations can be obtained by calling 281-5658, 9am to 5pm. Ticket outlets are; Budget Tapes and Records, House of Sound and Stevens & Son Jewelers.

We congratulate Rosemary Allen and Portland Black Repertory Theatre for bringing to us, "Its own Rainbow." But this is not unique. The theatre has dedicated itself to the building of the theatre, into a solid cultural/ARTS/theatrical institution we all will be proud of. However, to reach this point, the Theatre needs people support. And as a dedicated supporter of the theatre, I urge all people to see the Repertory production of "Red Beans & Rice," and "For Colored girls..." You'll walk away with your own "Rainbow."

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Lonnie Harris dies in Reno

Lonnie Benjamin Harris died July 9th in Reno, Nevada.

Lonnie Harris was born in Hemphill, Texas July 30, 1927. In early life he was a member of Bethel AME Church. He later joined Hughes Memorial United Methodist Church.

Harris attended Elliot Grade School and Jefferson High School. He received All State recognition in baseball during his junior and senior years at Jefferson High School and was voted into the softball Hall of Fame. He was the recipient of Portland Baseball Amateur Association's Man of the Year Award.

Harris attended Vanport College and Portland State University while working full time at Northern Pacific Terminal Co. He worked as a counselor at the Donald E. Long home. While employed by Federal Electric Corporation he established five new centers in California, Utah, Oregon and Washington. He also worked for the Timberline Job Corp Center in Estacada, Oregon. He was senior counselor at Clearfield Job Corp Center in Utah, as well as Assistant Director of the Community Action Program in Vancouver, Washington.

His last job was Director of Educational Opportunities at Oregon State University.

Harris was a member of Corvallis Rotary Club; chairman of the Human Relations Committee of Corvallis; was on the Board of Directors of UGN fund; Board of Directors of the Boys Club of Corvallis; was representative of the Review Board panel of the Corvallis Police Department Review Board of the ROTC. He was a member of the NAACP, Corvallis Branch.

He was married to Mae Francis Winters on September 28, 1948. Two daughters were born to this union, Rita Sharon Harris and Barbara Jean Harris. There is one grand daughter, La Shonda Elizabeth Marie Harris. Other survivors include sister, Mrs. Christine Wilson, Portland; Mrs. Jeannette Newman, Seattle; Mrs. Bessie Leacock, Los Angeles; brothers Loomis Harris, Jr., and B. Leonard Harris both of Los Angeles; and Lawrence Harris of Chicopee, Massachusetts, and many neices and nephews, great neices and nephews, uncles and aunts.

Services were held on July 14th at Vann's Mortuary, with interment at Rose City Moseleum.



Marian Anderson medal

Marian Anderson on the gold

WASHINGTON - Marian Anderson is featured on one of the first two gold medallions to be minted by the U.S. Treasury in 1980, to be available for public purchase July 15.

The one-half ounce Anderson medallion marks the first time American citizens will have the opportunity to buy American gold in any size other than the 400-ounce gold bars sold periodically by the Treasury at auction.

"To this day, millions of Americans can hear the echo of Marian Anderson's inspiring rendition of 'He's Got the Whole World in His Hands.' But in reflecting on her lifetime of contribution to God, country and the American people, it is no less true that one can say of Marian Anderson: 'She's got the whole world in her hands,'" said Rep. Jim Leach, author of the American Arts Gold Medallion Act, who selected Anderson and nine other artists to be honored in the medallion series over the next five years.

"The message of her autobiography, 'Oh Lord, What a Morning, is a message for all time,' Leach said. "She wrote: '...My mission is to leave behind the kind of impression that will make it easier for those who follow...In life, if you have a purpose in which you can believe, there's no end to the amount of things you can accom-

plish.'"

In 1939, fifteen years before the Supreme Court ruled that the Little Rock schools should be integrated, Marian Anderson made history when she mesmerized a crowd of 75,000 singing on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. The concert was held outdoors after a controversy over racial discrimination flared when the Daughters of the American Revolution banned Anderson from singing in Constitution Hall. Eleanor Roosevelt resigned her membership in the DAR in protest.

Last year Americans bought approximately \$900 million worth of foreign gold coins and medallions containing an ounce or less of gold, primarily from South Africa.

"It strikes me as irrational if not immoral for Americans to subsidize through gold purchases the repressive government of South Africa when we have the capacity in our own country to make gold available to the public in an affordable form," Leach said.

Order forms and instructions will be available at all post offices. The daily price of the medallion will be based on the previous day's closing spot price of gold on the New York Commodity Exchange, plus a premium to cover production and distribution costs. The toll free telephone number to obtain the daily price is 800/368-5510.

Black American Lemuel Haynes, who later became a distinguished minister, joined the American Revolutionary expedition to Ticonderoga to stop British General Burgoyne's northern army.

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