



OBSERVATIONS

FROM THE SIDELINES
by Kathryn Hall Bogle



Northwest Afrikan American Ballet

THEATRE curtains parted on Sunday evening, December 19 for the premiere public performance of the Northwest Afrikan American Ballet as presented by Bruce Smith. An expectant crowd of light-hearted well wishers filling the small auditorium on the Cascade campus of the Portland Community College had predicted a rewarding evening. They were not disappointed.

The presentation showed its professional class right from the opening number. Costuming was pleasing—showing a variety of Afrikan garments in style and usage—colors were fresh and clear and were combined attractively. Some of the tie-dye work was done by the cast. The drums spoke. Authoritative in every way, the drummers were headed by Bruce Smith himself.

Afrikan villagers presented a glimpse of their domestic life, the women depicting it through the ancient rituals of sowing, cultivation and harvest. Six little girls from The Talking Drum furnished the sweetness and innocence of childhood as play in music of the flute and in dance. Ruby Burns led the accomplished and artful cast of beautiful female dancer.

A bit of Afrikan mysticism was permitted to show itself when two shrouded and hooded male dancers entertained at an interlude. Applause for individual dancers and for effective drumming came frequently but the finale brought the audience to standing with cheers and calls as the drummers and dancers worked themselves into a fast, rhythmic, controlled frenzy fed by the audience who loved the pride the ambience and the ecstasy.

Say Hello to Broadway, Bruce.

MANY in the audience hurried away after the curtain came down on the Afrikan American Ballet to join parties set up for the telethon on Channel 12/KPTV—the

Riley; Delta Sigma Theta Sorority through Addie Jean Haynes; the Multnomah Women's Club; New Hope Baptist Church through the Rev. Devers and Hughes Memorial Church. Tektronix headed the list for size of gift from the business sector.

Working in front and behind the scenes were many individuals who are frequently connected with good causes for the public benefit. Among them were: Gwen Gamble, Commissioner Charles Jordan, Rick Forester, Ken Boodle, and of course, John Stelges, Gene Brendler of KPTV—and Budweiser Corporation.

NOW an open secret can be told. Bruce Smith, producer and director of the Afrikan American Bal-

let, is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Cleophus Smith who were among the audience at the premiere. Many predict a glowing future for Bruce and congratulated the parents on their talented son.

In the Smith party at the premiere were their friends Harold and Lloyd Gaskin and an augmented section of the large Gaskin clan. Harold accompanied his two lovely daughters, Joyce and Kathleen, home in Portland for the holidays. Both young women are living in New York City. Joyce is a struggling young actress and is in sight of her goal on Broadway—or, off-Broadway—whichever materializes to her satisfaction. Kathleen Gaskin, 11 years in the Big Apple, combines her artistic interest in the dance with a practical business attachment. Kathleen holds a

buyer position with a clothing boutique in Greenwich Village.

Two other beautiful young ladies with Harold were his granddaughters, Natasha and Nadja. The charming matron with Harold was Roberta Blackburn, pleased as anything to be with her granddaughters and her great-granddaughters.

SUNDAY, December 26, promises to be a busy day—or evening. At least three major affairs

are scheduled that evening. The AKAs are having their annual holiday dance out at the Airport Holiday Inn. Kwanza begins at sunrise of the 26th according to the BEC. City Lights presents a variety show at the Old Town Saloon on N.W. 6th Ave. Cora Smith and Gene Diamond with Aries are collaborating. Time is 8:00 p.m. Invitations are out to the Les Femmes Debutantes and Cavaliers Cotillion on the 26th, at the Jantzen Beach Re Lion.

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