

Earl Robinson at 75

by Robert Lothian

*The ink is black, the paper is white,
together we learn to read and write,
to read and write;*

*Now a child can understand,
this is the law of all the land,
of all the land."*

This popular tune, "Black and White," was first performed by Sammy Davis, Jr., in 1959, and became famous in 1977 when recorded by the rock group, "Three Dog Night."

Earl Robinson co-wrote the song with David Arkin in 1954 to celebrate the Supreme Court school desegregation decision.

Over 30 years later at age 75, Robinson is still going strong. He will treat Portland to a medley of his musical creations, which span five decades, Thursday, June 13th, 7:30 p.m. at the P.S.U. Campus Ministry, 633 S.W. Broadway.

Robinson is of the generation of Paul Robeson, Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger, whose music combines social protest with a celebration of America.

Several of Robinson's songs, including "Joe Hill," "Ballad for Americans" and "The House I Live In," were popularized by well-known singers.

The celebrated Black bass Paul Robeson made "Joe Hill" world famous in the late 1930s. The song celebrates a labor activist and songwriter of the early 1900s. It was also performed by Joan Baez at Woodstock, and immortalized in the movie of the same name.

"Ballad for Americans," a 12-minute musical history of America, was performed by Robeson on the CBS radio network. "The House I Live In" was sung by Frank Sinatra in the early 1940s and later became the theme for a movie of the same name.

Robinson and Robeson worked together professionally, both were members of the Communist Party in the 1930s, and both were black-listed for their political views.

Robeson once told him that he felt freer in Russia than in the United States, said Robinson.

"He loved the U.S., but he was black-listed because he talked here as a good American against racism and because he talked abroad about how American Blacks wouldn't fight against Russia."

Robeson once performed "Ballad for Americans" at Hollywood Bowl. But even though Robeson was "the only person that could fill the Hollywood Bowl with his voice," he wasn't invited to a breakfast reception for the artists the next morning, said Robinson.

Los Angeles hotels wouldn't accept Blacks then, according to Robinson, but Robeson's agent finally tracked down a fancy downtown hotel that would allow Robeson to stay on the condition that he keep a low profile.

But instead, Robeson sat in plain sight in the lobby. "This was to insure that the next time Marion Anderson or Ron Hayes or other Black artists came around, they would have a place to stay. And it proved to be true."

During their collaboration on "Ballad for Americans," Robinson said Robeson "was cooperative in every direction but pitch. He insisted on moving the range down four and five steps."

Robinson said his early stridency has given way to an interest in reincarnation and "the inner revolution." His social protest themes have evolved into dance/music productions about dolphins and an upbeat tribute to Christ called "Thinking About J.C."

He describes his current work as an addition to, rather than a rejection of, the past.

Police problems topic of forum

Connie Allen of the Young Socialist Alliance and member of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Local 128, and Jim Miller of the Socialist Workers Party will present the socialist view of the police bombing in Philadelphia, the choke-hold killing of Lloyd Stevenson in Portland, and the significance of police repression as a problem to be solved by working people in the U.S.

The forum will take place Saturday, June 15, at 7:30 p.m., at the Militant Bookstore, 2732 NE Union, Portland. A \$2.00 donation is requested, or \$1.00 for unemployed.



Aerobics class at Olympian Fitness Center. (Photo: Sara Ross)

Olympian Fitness Center

Grand opening Sat.

by Robert Lothian

The Olympian Fitness Center will open its spic and span new facility to the community for a grand opening party Saturday from 6:30-10:00 p.m.

Staff will conduct tours of the center's recently remodeled building, located at 1829 N.E. Alberta. Non-alcoholic health cocktails and hors d'oeuvres will be provided, and body building coach Von Ray Johnson will give a welcoming address.

Linda Johnson and Harold Johnson will add their thoughts about economic development along the Alberta Street business corridor.

Club members will demonstrate body building, aerobics, martial arts and other fitness activities, accompanied by music. Drawings and a musical tribute to Marvin Gaye will round out the evening.

Admission to the grand opening party is by printed invitations, available free of charge at the center, which is open 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., Monday through Friday, and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday, and at King's Ransom, 520 S.W. 5th.

Owner Martin Mentzer said it was time that Northeast Portland had a club-type fitness center. "It's been a team effort," he said. "We hope to have a positive impact on the community."

Junior Johnson, Olympian fitness director, is a former Grant High football star and P.S.U. All-American wrestler. He coaches children's wrestling, adult body building and men's and women's weight control classes. "One of our main goals is to turn out world class athletes and world class people," Johnson said.

Former Olympic boxer and now human resources specialist at Portland Community College, A. Halim Rahsaan, will teach boxing, and 1984 Tai Kwan Do national champion Na'im Hasan will teach martial arts.

Kita Gaile coaches a Saturday aerobics class and Eyvonne Harris leads about 30 women in freestyle exercises Monday through Friday, 7-8 p.m.

"Everybody lives in this area and we're putting in 100 percent," said Johnson. "The good Lord willing, it's going to kick for us."

Asitranbulaw!

The world premiere of Asitranbukaw! will be presented at the Portland Art Museum's Swann Auditorium on June 28, 1985 at 8 p.m.

Asitranbukaw, which means "sit down, relax, and enjoy yourself," is a lively presentation of the music, dance and costume of Ghana. The show was written and produced by Obo Addy. The first scene begins in the city of Accra, Ghana, with the Ga people. The traditional ceremony which includes the pouring of libation opens the show. Scenes which feature the music of the Ga, Ashanti, Ewe, and Dagomba people will be included.


Ghanaian music is known for its intricate hand drumming and lively rhythms. All the instruments and costumes are authentic. Obo Addy's musical group Kukrudu, will assist with the music. Other cast members include Benny Bell, Ruby Burns, Michael Grant and the Passinart Theater Company, and many more.

Asitranbukaw promises to be an exciting, unusual, and dynamic evening of entertainment. Seats are limited. Tickets are available through Bass outlets, G.I. Joes, and Artichoke Music for \$7 in advance, \$8 at the door.

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