



# ENTERTAINMENT



## BROADWAY BOUND REPORT



By Garland Thompson

I received a letter from my friend, playwright, and scholar, Loftan Mitchell, whose career and Works span the Federal Theatre, the American Negro Theatre, Author of the Broadway Musical, "Bubbling Brown Sugar," a numbers of plays and productions. I want share with all you theatre "afficionados" some of his words and my response, which he is including among his official papers in the Loftan Mitchell Collection at the Boston University archives. Also, if any of you theatre buffs, especially Black Theatre, have some interesting "tippets" or questions to raise, please do to by writing to us, care of the 'Broadway Bound Report,' Portland Observer, P.O. Box 3137, Portland, Oregon 97208.

From Loftan Mitchell:

Dear Garland:

Thank you for your writing to me on Feb. 5th, 1988. I believe I answered this while I was running in and out of California. At any rate, I have just re-read it and I thank you again.

Now—what am I doing? Getting ready for a book party that Horace Carter and the Emanuel Pieteron Historical Society is giving me on May 26th, at the Salvation Army on Lenox Avenue (in New York City). "Tell Pharaoh," (Loftan's play) - revised edition has been published. And Chet Cummings is talking with

me about the possibility of producing my musical, "A Gypsy Girl." And I am working like hell on a new play, "The Tenure Track Position." There are just not enough hours in the day to complete all that I should be doing.

Anyway, like you, I am in there, trying.

We'll be talking, meantime, keep on keeping on.

Best, best,  
Loftan Mitchell

P.S. - I'd like permission to send your wonderful letter to Boston University archives. There is a Loftan Mitchell Collection up there.

### Memorandum

To: Loftan Mitchell, Playwright and Historian

From: Garland Lee Thompson, Playwright, founder of the Frank Silvera Writers' Workshop Foundation, Inc.

Re: A update "Newsie" bulletin and response to your recent letter.

Date: February 5, 1988

Happy New Year to you as we enter Black History Month, 1988. Thanks for your nice letter telling me about your working on a new play and about you and Chet Cummings talking "production talk."

Speaking of February 14th, that is the day that the West Coast production of another aquarian (born Feb. 1st), Langston Hughes' musical comedy, "Simply Heavenly," opened in 1958 at the old Carmel Theatre in Los Angeles, California. It will be thirty years ago, as of this year, 1988. The show, as you may remember, opened on Broadway in August, 1957, before it opened in Hollywood, six months later.

I made my professional stage debut in that West Coast production, as "John Jasper," the newsboy and son of "Arcie and Bodiddly." The West Coast cast featured: Helen Humes, the late great blues singer, as "Mamie" (I

think that's the correct spelling of Her last name), the late Spencer Williams ("Andy" of the "Amos 'N Andy" TV show), as "Bodiddly," Robert DeCoy, as "Simple," (after Johnny Lee of the Old "Amos 'N Andy" TV Fame, became ill in rehearsal), Isabel Cooley, as "Sarita" (remember her following Hilda Simms in "Anna Lucasta," correct spelling?) and Pauline Myers, was my mother, "Arcie."

Yes, it was my beginning in theatre, after first landing a small "dance bit" role in the 1957 movie, "South Pacific," a few months earlier at Twentieth Century-Fox Studio, as a teenager on a visit to Hollywood. That was some thirty years ago. Some beginning in "the BIZ," huh? I was a black teenager in Hollywood! I would sit everyday during breaks and lunch, at the great Spencer Williams' side and listen to all of his endless stories of his life and the history of black folks in SHOWBIZ and the theatre.

Yes, it was my introduction to the real black theatre history from a truly "living master" and artist, Spencer Williams, who told gripping stories of his "young spy" role days in the army as well as his performing career as an actor. This was "a walking library history book" that made me hang on every word that came out of his mouth! And bless his heart, he was my "daddy" in Langston's play as well!

So, I'm here in the Pacific Northwest, to teach in the Upward Bound Program at PSU and direct some projects before returning to New York, the Frank Silvera Writers' Workshop and other projects. I would like to get the 2nd Frank Silvera Film Festival planning, underway and begin the publishing and documentation of the best of the more than 3,000 play manuscripts, currently on file in the Workshop's collection, at the Schomburg Center Archives, as a part of the Frank Silvera Library Of The Living Playwright.

Indeed, we must leave a clear record of this current period in our theatre history for future generations, or like so many artists and their works in the past, such as in the Federal Theatre years, may be lost forever! We must not let that happen!

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## In The Know

With Romeo!!



by Danny Bell

There is unheralded group of young black musicians, who have been professionally performing in the Portland, S.W. Washington and rest of Oregon since 1978, this has been since they were just adolescents. Who's this you ask yourself, as well you should? Its Romeo which is what the band goes by now; a high tech, sophisticated, creative, intense energy urban contemporary band that really rocks.

Comprised of band members Darnell Love; bas, keyboards,

lead singer, and primary song writer, Tony Winters; drums, business manager, Bobby Winters; lead & rhythm guitar, keyboards, contributing writer and public relations, and Tracy Stone; lead and background vocals. Romeo makes up a self-contained musical unit that can be heard all to infrequently at the likes of Eli's and Key Largo.

Basically the nucleus of Romeo is made up of the two Winter brother and their cousin Darnell Love. They got their start in the church, writing gospel material for the Hughes Memorial United Methodist Church back in 1978. The experience of working in the church environment led to various engagements throughout the state of Oregon playing the church circuit. By 1982 the group Visions was created. It was during the period between 1982-1986 plus a good working relationship with talent agent Tom Stinette that the aspiring artists cut their teeth as professionals. As Visions these young gentlemen toured

Oregon extensively and by the summer of 1986 had opened for such major acts as Tyrone Davis, Con Funk Shun, Zapp & Roger.

However by this time they had come to realize that there was more to show business than just playing a song in some tidewater flat. The desire to define their own personal kind of music and a youthful curiosity as to what success could be in terms of fulfilling their lives lead the threesome to attend Clark Community College in an effort to become familiar with the business aspects of the entertainment industry.

It was during this period that Visions dissolved, and after some brainstorming and maturation the concept for Romeo came into being. Although the band members readily admit they are from Prince's Minneapolis School of contemporary music. They have been able to separate themselves from the generic brand X label.

A good example is when I caught them at Eli's opening for Shock. They have what is described in the business as "the package"; that is they are high energy, with tight choreography, a theatrical look, that conveys youth and sex appeal, with just a splash of nasty, maturity. Their delivery appears effortless held together with first quality professionalism—and on top of all that the bars clientele was partying down.

... To My Father

Mr. Edward William Calliver, Jr.  
May God Forever Bless You  
and Sustain You!  
I Love You, Daddy!

— Your daughter, Teal



UPCOMING SCHEDULE

### JUNE

MON.-SAT 13th-18th  
'The Heros'  
(Las Vegas)

SUNDAY, 19th  
'Curtis Salgado  
& The Stalettos  
MON.-SAT 18th-25th  
Ron Haywood & Stripes  
(Vancouver, B.C.)

SUNDAY, 26th  
Michael Harrison  
(Album Release)  
MON.-SAT. 27th-May 2nd  
Ron Haywood & Stripes  
(Vancouver, B.C.)

THE SHANGHAI  
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at the Downtown Marina



The kickoff performance of the "Music By Blue Lake" summer concert series promises to be a popular event as Calvin Walker and The Answer, with special guest Dial Memphis perform on Thursday, June 23rd from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. at Blue Lake Park. The cost is still only \$3.00 per car. Multnomah County Parks Services Division puts on the series which is co-sponsored by 62 KGW Radio and Kaiser Permanent.

Calvin Walker and The Answer have a pop music sound with a funk edge. It is great dance music with soulful texture. Walker's new group has been garnering critical acclaim for their crisp and original sounds. The three piece band Dial Memphis will open the set with more dance music that is funky and rooted in soul. They draw from such greats as James Brown, Jr. Walker, and Wilson Pickett with some original sounds thrown in.

## African Drummer Performs

Hear the pounding of the African drum — July 1. The heartbeat of Africa comes alive at the Oregon Art Institute, with African drummer and drum maker, Kobla Mensa Dente. His "informance" (interactive-performance) begins at 8:00 p.m. in the Sculpture Mall outside the Pacific Northwest College of Art.

Dente's work is based on the aesthetic tradition of the Akan people of West Africa, among whom he lived and studied. He introduces the African culture and music to audiences across the country in an effort to provide a greater understanding and

appreciation of this rich heritage. He encourages audience participation during his performance which includes solo drumming and storytelling.

Immediately following Dente's performance, Boka Marimba, a Portland marimba band, will play upbeat and danceable marimba music! Tickets for the event are \$5 and are available at the Pacific Northwest College of Art and Artichoke Music.

This event is sponsored by the Oregon Art Institute's Pacific Northwest College of Art, KBOO Radio and Artichoke Music. For more information, call 226-0462.

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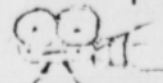
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