

ENTERTAINMENT

BROADWAY BOUND REPORT

Multi-Ethnic Cultural Center Squeeze From Here To L.A.



by Garland Lee Thompson

It was twenty-years ago, in the summer of 1968, that I returned to Portland for a short visit with family and friends from Los Angeles. I was working in L.A. as one of three stage managers at the Inner City Cultural Center (ICCC), one of the first National Endowment for the Arts funded multi-ethnic theatre and dance companies. The founder of ICCC, C. Bernard Jackson (winner of a 1961 Obie Award for Best Musical for his play, "Fly Blackbird," starred Robert Guillaume, Micki Grant and Mabel King), said recently, "Ironically, in this new age of so-called racial tolerance and acceptance, ... a multi-ethnic arts center is just as controversial in 1988 as it was in 1966 ... Although the Center has gained the respect of the Black, Asian, Hispanic and White communities, it has not been successful in motivating these groups to emulate their (ICCC's) efforts ... People of color will have to look at their commonality of concern before any real change is made in society."

The plans he then cited for the future included refurbishing the "rapidly aging old building," situated at 1308 New Hampshire Ave., in L.A., which I helped to scout in 1969-70 with Production Stage Manager, Hal DeWindt. ICCC was looking to move from the old Fox Movie Theatre on Washington Blvd. and Vermont Avenue to better quarters. I had stage managed 11 stage productions, a record at the Center while working with a list of great artists such as Paul Winfield, D'Urville Martin, Margarite Ray, Isabel Sanford, Beah Richards, Glynn Turman, Carmen Zapata, and many others who have passed through the Center's portals.

The ICCC, whose "fruits" are far too numerous to list, is con-

sidered to be one of L.A.'s major multi-cultural art institutions, but, as such, has recently suffered significant funding cuts from a \$1.8 million Federal grant it received during the three year period that I worked there. "L.A.'s multi-cultural artists have felt the Reaganomic squeeze perhaps even more seriously than their main-stream-cultural counterparts.

The interesting thing we must learn from this "L.A. experience" is in viewing a possible parallel between our City of Portland's firehouse multi-ethnic center, the Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center, now in its fifth season of production (under Executive Director, Sue Busby), and C. Bernard Jackson's ICCC in L.A. town. Both California and Oregon, unlike the big New York State Council on the Arts, have very poor funding budgets to assist such Centers as the ICCC and IFCC. Without the City and Federal support for IFCC, it simply would not exist and that's the cold hard fact and "Reality Rag" of it all. We must support and keep these important not-for-profit multi-ethnic theatre centers alive no matter whose in the White House.

THE GREAT WRITERS' STRIKE OF 1988

My son, Garland Jr., who is currently working (thank goodness) on the crew of an HBO video film in Hollywood, entitled, "First and Ten," called me this week to tell me of the growing "horror pains" of the 9,000 member Writers' Guild of America's strike, now in its awesome 20th week. Over the last few weeks, film studios have cut hundreds of people from their payrolls. As the possibility of a fall television season has receded, the networks have begun to hire British and Canadian writers and to rework old television series like "Mission Impossible." More than 150 small production companies have signed interim contracts on the guild's terms. But the studios and networks are refusing to buy scripts and programs from the companies that have signed.

Now, a dissident group of movie and television writers has given their union an ultimatum. Twenty-one members of a group calling itself the Writers Coalition filed a complaint with the National Labor Relation Board on Thursday, July 14, 1988, asking the board to invalidate a portion

of the guild's constitution that keeps writers from resigning during a strike. Yes, things are getting "hot!" A statement by the splinter group said the action was intended to give notice to guild leaders that if the strike had not ended in two weeks, some members would resign, thereby reverting to "fiscal core" status, which would enable them to go back to work. Fiscal core affiliates of a union keep their pensions and health benefits but are not allowed to vote or hold office.

David Milch, the winner of two Emmys for "Hill Street Blues," said he had resisted joining the Splinter group until this week. He said that he still considered himself "a good union member," describe the group's complaint, which he signed as "the proverbial shot across the bow." Milch said it would "force our leadership to recognize that our patience is not endless and to realize that at some point the game isn't worth the candle." He said, "It seems to a growing group of us that the guild has abused its mandate."

Meanwhile, "back at the ranch" on the picket line the president of the guild, George Kirgo, said: "What the Fugitive 21 did yesterday, a lot of people just abandoning us in the middle of a strike, has further galvanized the unity of this guild. The degree of anger is just astonishing." Yes, its getting "hotter and hotter" this summer of '88 in "LA LA land!"

Although no formal negotiations are under way, Brian Walton, executive director of the guild and its chief negotiator, said that he and his counterpart, Nicolas J. Counter, the chief negotiator for the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers, were still meeting. "Send in the Clowns!" And just how does this all affect us "poor TV viewers," well, it's more "re-run city on the old tube" this fall or a re-hash of the "same old same old!"



BEHIND-THE-SCENES

by Lisa Collins

DeBarge Busted in drug sting: Johnathan "Chico" DeBarge, 22, and Robert "Bobby" DeBarge, 32, were indicted on charges that they conspired to bring more than two pounds of cocaine to Grand Rapids, Michigan. Each faces a possible life prison term should they be convicted on the conspiracy and trafficking charges.

Tisha Spurns Spike/No Love Lost: Spike Lee is being sued by School Daze co-star Tisha Campbell for the credit and funds she didn't receive from one of the cuts to the film's soundtrack, "Be Mine Tonight." While neither could be reached for comment, Lee is said to have met with Campbell to resolve the matter.

Whoopi's popularity paper-thin in LA? Sales for a recent Whoopi Goldberg concert in Los Angeles were so low that 600 tickets were given away to the Brotherhood Crusade for distribution to various community groups to paper the hall, for the first night of a two-night stint. Either Whoopi has lost her popularity or her appeal to blacks, coupled with the fact that they're aren't enough whites supporting her. Insiders says it's a case of overexposure.

CASTING IS UNDERWAY TO FILL THE VOID LEFT BY LISA BONET AND MARISA TOMEI. Tomei, who played "Maggie," won't return to the series this fall, due to its revamping. The series will have more the look and feel of college/campus life. The characters of Whitley and Dwayne (favorites among the viewers) will be beefed up. Bonet will return to the series after she delivers the baby, and if the strike isn't settled soon, she won't miss much of it. For the record, **Cosby denies that he was ever angry** at Bonet for having gotten pregnant. Cosby was vacationing with his wife, Camille at their customary spot in the south of France. The Cosby's were joined this summer, by actress-dancer Debbie Allen

and hubby Norm Nixon. Allen had been performing in France. And in the event you didn't know it, Debbie Allen signs too. In fact, an album is slated to be released by MCA this fall.

Malcom Jamal Warner is upset about the response his latest role is having on Cosby fans. The furor is being caused from Warner's involvement in the stage play, "Three Ways Home." In it, he portrays a streetwise and suicidal male prostitute. Seems Cosby fans take a dim view of what their Theo Huxtable is up to during the show's hiatus. Some unknowing parents drag their kids out in the middle of the show. **Switching Gears:** Morris Day makes his acting debut, as a record company executive, in a pilot titled "Heart & Soul," to air this week on NBC directly after the Cosby show. Day is reportedly trying to switch gears into the acting arena. The pilot is by Castle Rock, Rob Reiner's production company, is a possible mid-season replacement.

Day's other acting plans include a movie featuring members of the "The Time," once he's done touring. And while Morris Day is switching gears, **Klymaxx is said to be trying to switch courses.** The group reportedly wants out of its Solar contract to go to MCA.

Rick James has just released his first album in two years — "Wonderful." James has been living in near seclusion in his native Buffalo, and was reported to have kicked a drug problem and become a born again Christian. However, James insists that he is still "just Rick." Meanwhile **production on Eddie Murphy's upcoming LP has been delayed** due to an injury Murphy sustained to his jaw. **Brenda will have to face the music:** A court date has been set for a preliminary hearing for Brenda Richie. While 22-year Diane Alexander, the woman Richie assaulted, said she would not press charges, the Beverly Hills City Attorney's office didn't make any such promise and from all indications is going to prosecute the case. Reports now surfacing indicate that the couple was living apart before last month's incident.



Lisa Collins

Lisa Collins is a freelance writer, based in Los Angeles, California. She has authored over 200 articles on a variety of issues for a number of national publications from Essence to Design Magazine. Her background in the field of entertainment reporting is extensive, featuring cover stories and interviews with the likes of Richard Pryor, Michael Jackson, and Prince. At present, Miss Collins serves as senior editor of RadioFax and KACE Magazine, and serves as editor-producer of a nationally syndicated radio show, titled **Inside Gospel**, broadcast daily in over 55 markets across the country. A second show, **The Bottom Line**, featuring black business news, tips, and success stories, is due to air later this year.

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Black Colleges Annual Conference

Plans are underway for the 8th Annual Black Colleges Conference which will be held October 22nd at the Memorial Coliseum from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

The conference will feature speakers and representatives from many historically Black Colleges. Workshops on many topics including financial aid, tips for test taking, and careers of the future will also be presented.

Information regarding the conference may be obtained by calling 284-7930 or 287-9669.

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