

ENTERTAINMENT

BROADWAY BOUND REPORT



by Garland Lee Thompson

Upon receiving a call in New York from Portland State University to speak to Nina Lowry, Director of Education Activities, who asked what project would I like to do, I replied, its "Simple!" I am referring, of course, to the Langston Hughes/David Martin musical "Simply Heavenly," premiering at Portland State University's Lincoln Theater on August 25, and running September 11, 1988.

SECOND REVIVAL FOR "SIMPLY HEAVENLY" COULD BE A PRELUDE TO BROADWAY RUN

In an interview last week with Phil Hunt, theater arts reviewer for the Oregonian, I was asked if "Simply Heavenly" does well in Portland, would I like to take it back to Broadway?" I responded, "Yes, I have known for a long time that Portland is potentially a great 'tryout town' for Broadway, as they say in the 'Big Apple'. I do, however, want to clarify some things in the August 12, Phil Hunt article.

First, I directed "Simply Heavenly" in its 30 anniversary production early last year in Philadelphia at the New Freedom Theatre. Philadelphia Inquirer reviewer Douglas J. Keating called it a "fetching production," and "a charming, amiable musical which aimed to attract white (and black) audiences in the '50s (in which) Hughes injects a social message." Keating said the socially pertinent scenes are skillfully handled, and he added that the best reason for seeing the play is that "it is simply a spirited, entertaining, enjoyable show." I told Phil that after receiving such great reviews from the Philadelphia Tribune, the leading black newspaper, I began to think in terms of moving the show to a bigger house in the central city of Philly in order to attract a larger audience and investors to produce the show to take Langston and "Simple" back to New York.

THE SHOW WAS LOST FOR THIRTY YEARS

For some 30 years, the play has been "buried," and before we did last year, it had never even played Philly, just a 120 miles from New York. So the show and the music was like "pure silver new mint" to the eager new audience as well as "music to the ears" of all Langston Hughes scholars and fans. I have always wanted to direct the show properly and bring it and myself home to

Portland for 'a run' before taking it on to New York.

The Portland cast, as I told the Oregonian, does run the gamut, from seasoned professionals to some who are making their performing debut, just as I did 30 years ago this year. Brenda Phillips, well know in Portland for performances in "Ain't Misbehaving", "A Raisin in the Sun," "Little Shop of Horrors," and recently, "A... My Name Is Alice," is appearing as Mamie, a role that made Claudia McNeil, a star.

Neal Thomas appears in the title role of "Simply," while the romantic women leads are taken by Denise Williams ("Joyce") and Jeanette Russell Brown ("Zarita"). Other players include Michael Holiday ("Watermelon Joe"), Ruby Reuben ("Arcie"), and Steve Lee in as "Ananias Boyd," the Langston Hughes character. Janice Scroggins, is serving as musical director, a well-known jazz pianist who appeared recently in the Portland Civic Theatre production of "Ain't Misbehavin'".

Performances are scheduled Thursday, Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m. and Sunday at 3 p.m. Tickets are \$12 general admission and \$5 students/senior citizens, available at the PSU box office, Smith Memorial Center, or call 464-4440.

A Harlem Legend Lives Again On Broadway

The New York Times review this past week by Frank Rich, says "Ain't Misbehavin'" is so torrid that it may be the only place in town (New York) where you feel happy to be hot. In their scrupulous re-creation of the Fats Waller show that first electrified Broadway a decade ago, the original cast and creators have conjured the same between-the-wars dream world as before. The stage of the Ambassador Theatre turns into a mythic saloon where black jazz bounces against Tin Pan Alley pop, where 125th Street intersects 52nd Street, where men coil around women in a plume of reefer smoke. It's always 3 o'clock in the morning. The Joint is always jumping. And if there's a smell of summer sweat, it's of the sweetest old-time New York vintage; one part gin, two parts jitter-bugging flesh."

The show is "a slice of the life" of the larger-than-life Waller—stride pianist, composer, comedian and Harlem legend before and after his death in 1943.



by Lisa Collins

Mahalia Jackson gets a star: It will be a star-studded affair as Natalie Cole, Dinah Shore, Coretta Scott King, Pearl Bailey, Pat Boone, Steve Allen, and a host of others turn out for the dedication of Mahalia Jackson's Star on the legendary

Hollywood Walk of Fame, Thursday, Sept. 1. The ceremony will precede the Mahalia Jackson Gospel Music Festival which is set for the Labor Day Weekend in L.A., and will star some of the greatest names in gospel, including the Hawkins Family, the Clark Sisters, and Pops Staples.

Spike Lee plays a pizza delivery man in his latest film, now being shot on location in Brooklyn. The film titled "Do The Right Thing," co-stars Danny Aiello (Cher's lover in "Moonstruck"), and centers in on a day in the life of a block in Brooklyn's most renown projects, Bedford Stuyvesant. In other film news, James Earl Jones has just finished work in a film called "Fugitives," starring Nick Nolte, Cleavon Little is filming "Fletch II," which stars Chevy Chase, and Flashdance's Jennifer Beals is in Rome making her third film, "La Partita."

BEHIND-THE-SCENES

Howard Rollins gets reprieve: Rollins, who was to be arraigned in Louisiana two weeks ago on charges of drunk driving and possession of cocaine, was granted a continuance until August 24. And if you thought you'd seen enough of Mike Tyson? Super-agent Norman Brokaw, co-chairman of the board of the prestigious William Morris Agency, doesn't agree, and will personally represent the world heavyweight champion in the realm of television, motion pictures, commercials, personal appearances, and even literary. While the young singer, Siedah Garret, won't get also big plans at William Morris Agency for the 25-year-old vocalist who sang "I Just Can't Stop Loving You" with Michael Jackson and co-penned "Man In The Mirror." Garrett just inked a deal with the agency for exclusive representation.

while, a national talent search to replace the dynamic lead vocalist is being planned.

Whatever happened to Mavis Staples ... Well, she just recently was signed by none other than Prince to record on his Paisley Park record label. In the meantime, she's providing some backup support on his European tour. In other touring news, this week in Baltimore, Rick James kicks off his first tour in five years ... Al B. Sure, is all but firmed to tour with New Edition this fall. This talented guy wants it all—film, TV and recording. His first album has gone platinum, and while he is self-assured and confident, sure is in awe of the female attention he's getting.

Tight-lips at "Different World"—Recently it was announced that there were some additions to the cast of "A Different World" this season. The new cast members were reportedly Cree Summer Franks and Sharnell Brown. However, spokesman David Brokaw would not confirm the information, adding that they were not prepared to make any statements about the show or any cast additions.

Atlantic Starr on hold—Since announcing the departure of female lead singer Barbara Weathers, Atlantic Starr has put everything on hold. The split seems to be amicable enough as Weathers continues to date Wayne Lewis and, in fact, the Lewis Brothers are set to produce her first solo effort. Mean-

PORTLAND OBSERVER
"The Eyes and Ears of the Community"
288-0033

Portland State University Presents
A Musical by Langston Hughes
"Simply Heavenly"
Book and Lyrics by Langston Hughes Music by David Martin

Directed by Garland Lee Thompson
August 25 through September 11
Thursday - Friday - Saturday - 8 pm
Sunday - 3 pm

Lincoln Hall Auditorium • S.W. Broadway at Market Street
All Seats Reserved • Admission \$12: General - \$5: Seniors-Students
Special rates for groups available: 464-4440 • PSU Box Office
Presented by The Summer Program of Educational Activities

An explosive motion picture that will shock you and disturb you.

"An absolute don't miss on your list of must see films."

MARILYN BECK,
Syndicated Columnist

DEBRA WINGER TOM BERENGER

BETRAYED

by COSTA-GAVRAS

UNITED ARTISTS PRESENTS IRWIN WINKLER PRODUCES

DEBRA WINGER TOM BERENGER

(COSTA-GAVRAS) BETRAYED

JOHN HEARD JOHN MAHONEY

AND THE JOE ESZTERHAS HAL W. POLAIRE

AND BILL CONTI

PRODUCED BY PATRIZIA VON BRANDENSTEIN

WRITTEN BY JOE ESZTERHAS

PRODUCED BY IRWIN WINKLER (COSTA-GAVRAS)

Soundtrack Album available on Varese Sarabande Records, Cassettes and Compact Discs

R RESTRICTED Read the Screenplay

STARTS AUGUST 26th AT
A THEATRE NEAR YOU

Cleo's Cafe
3041 N. Williams
284-7150

Ethnic Cuisine
Southern Style

HOUSE SPECIALTIES
Chitterlings • Meatloaf
Mix Greens • Beef Stew
Catfish • And Many
Other Southern Dishes

Including:
Cleo's
Zesty Ribs In Sauce

— HOME-COOKED DESERTS —

Come See 'Luberta'
For Down Home Cookin'!
MEMBERS & GUESTS

HORSE RACING DAILY

POST TIMES
Weekdays - 7 p.m.
Weekends & Labor Day - 1 p.m.
\$2.00 minimum wager

THRIFTWAY

62
KGW
Radio

Today is 62 KGW Radio/
Thriftway Day! Adult
admission is only \$4.00
with coupon available at
Thriftway stores. FREE
carnival rides for everyone
from 10:00 a.m. - 12 noon.
Half-price rides 12 noon to
6:00 p.m. with coupon.

THE BIG ONE
August 26 - September 5 Salem, Oregon