

ENTERTAINMENT

BROADWAY BOUND REPORT

by Garland Lee Thompson

"THE COLORED MUSEUM" CASTING AT IFCC
The Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center on Interstate near N. Killingsworth in Portland, this week has started casting auditions for George C. Wolfe's highly successful theater piece, "The Colored Museum." This new work, like the choreo-poem play, "for colored girls," by Ntozake Shange, is not the usual-type play in construction, content or style, to say the least.

I saw the New York production last year and, since it's coming to town, now seems to be a good time to re-print a part of my review of the original production, written for a newsletter I was developing at the Frank Silvera Writers' Workshop in New York:

"The American Black Theatre Movement has come a far piece," someone said coming out of "The Colored Museum," the night I viewed "The Exhibits" in this unusual theater piece that was, at the time, appearing at New York City's Public Theatre on Lafayette Street and Astor Place. It was ideal for the New York East Village scene.

We, the audience, were taken on a trip to "LaLa Land" by LaLa (played by Sandra McClain, the night I saw the play), and friends at the New York Shakespeare Festival's rendition of the Crossroads Theatre Company's production of George C. Wolfe's new comedy "Exhibits" in "the Colored Museum." It was originally directed by L. Kenneth Richardson in his New Brunswick, New Jersey, Black Theatre space before producer, Joseph Papp, moved "The Colored Museum" into New York. I suppose they said "why not give it 'the Papp test?'"

First of all, when you get on board, in the opening "Exhibit," with "Miss Pat, the airline stewardess," played by Danitra Vance, you feel like fastening your seat belts on board "The Celebrity Slaveship" flight when she demonstrates "the real deal," which are shackles for the wrists. Also, we checked out "the human baggage" rolling in on the moving stage. I knew that there was no getting off this flight and missing this slave-passage-to-the-Americas trip. And the next "Exhibit," "Cooking With Aunt Ethel" (Aunt Jamima), was stirred up by Vickilyn Reynolds, or "The Photo Session," modelled "to the mack" by Sandra McClain and Reggie Montgomery. They gave us "Ebony Fashion Fair" extraordinaire plus, with Tommy Hollis, as "The Soldier With A Secret," rolling in on the revolving stage. I just can't resist moving scenery, but one might not be ready for "The Gospel According to Miss Roj," with Reggie Montgomery in drag and Tommy Hollis as "The Waiter."

Mr. Wolfe has taken us from Lorraine Hansberry to Ntozake Shange, in "The Last Mama-On-The-Couch Play" scene, with everyone getting into the act in the last spoof on all those black plays of the last 40 years of theater. This black playwright trashes the neo-Blackman's old

tunes, hits, idols, and hair oil relaxers in one trash bin scene called, "Symbiosis," and Danitra Vance, as "Norma Jean," lays a big surprising egg in another strange little-misunderstood-young-Black-girl vignette. "And it ain't nothing but a party, girl," shouts Vickilyn Reynolds, in "The Party" scene. And that it was, indeed.

I felt like I had "No Place To Be Somebody" (a play by Charles Gordone) standing perhaps at "the Negro Ensemble Company," after "The Black Picture Show" (a play by Bill Gunn, produced a few years ago also by Joseph Papp), as we come out of "The Colored Museum," where "colored girls who have considered suicide, when a rainbow is enuf" (also produced by Joseph Papp), and with us trying to find our way up "The River Niger" (a play by Joseph Walker that I stage-managed on Broadway in 1973), on the Harlem River Drive. It was a "trip!"

A few years ago, we would have called this "wacky theater." I said to George C. Wolfe later, at the Frank Silvera Writers' Workshop in New York (He conducted playwright seminars there last season, man; it was a Thriller, but maybe he should not have stayed out on "the Coast" so long, like "a California Raisin in the Sun," waiting for "The First Breeze Of Summer" (a black play, by Leslie Lee) to come along and give us "The Colored Museum." I told him that "I heard it through the grape vine," that he may have missed "The Blacks" in New York in the '60s (a play by Jean Genet), but he did experience "The Hollywood Shuffle" (the film by Robert Townsend), "live and in living colored," right? "Write on, George!"

Hovesomever, lets wait and see what IFCC and director Al Jamison does with this wild piece of theater in the new 1988-89 season, opening after the first of the year, okay theater fans?

NEW-WORKS FESTIVAL PLANNED IN PORTLAND

Storefront Theatre and the Northwest Playwrights Guild are joining forces to present Playwrights Festival '88, a new-works festival the groups hope will become an annual event.

The festival is the works in progress and new, unproduced plays. Mixed-media shows and musicals are eligible, as well as dramas and comedies. Script submissions are invited Sept. 6 - 15. First-run performances of selected scripts will be Nov. 9 - Dec. 4, and a best-of-festival of new plays that Gary O'Brien produced as artistic director of the IFCC Theatre in 1985 and 1986. Write On, Gary!

For details and further information, playwrights should call the Storefront Theatre at 224-9598.



by Lisa Collins

BEHIND THE SCENES

Will Dick Griffey Be Evicted or Does His Mexican Standoff with Warner Bros. Music go on? In 1986, Griffey filed a \$386 million lawsuit against the Elektra division of Warner Records for wrongful actions (like that of trying to steal some of Griffey's top acts including Howard Hewitt, and the Deele). Griffey, in turn, owes about \$6 million to Warner Bros. but only repaid \$1.6 million before putting a stop to payments in '86. So, in a recent move, Elektra foreclosed on his office building, valued at more than \$5 million, and is trying to sell it. However, Griffey filed a separate lawsuit, thus far blocking the eviction. Neither party appears to be either in the mood to settle or talk publicly about the matter. Ironically, with the sale of Motown to MCA, Griffey's Solar Records becomes the nation's largest Black-owned record label.

Gates & Son—Expanding A Family Tradition: Gates & Son, leading chain of renown Kansas City Barbecue, has just launched a billboard campaign to prepare consumers for the appearance of their famed sauce in grocery retailers. Along with their classic sauces, now served in restaurants, they will market Polynesian, Extra-hot, Mild, and No-Salt-No-Sugar-Added varieties. At this point, all of the sauces, with the exception of the "No-Salt" flavor, are available for purchase only in the barbecue outlets.

Administration cuts off Black venture capitalists: The administration has eliminated for its next fiscal year the \$36 million it is lending to minority venture capitalists in 1988. However, the industry has received such funding for the past 16 years, and the cut-off proposal is not likely to pass.

Big Expansion Going On at BET: Black Entertainment Television has announced it will open a new office in Los Angeles in September. Its new \$10 million facility is slated to be operational around

the first of the year. BET is also expanding its program lineup to include a game show, "Tell Me Something Good."

New, upscale cosmetics line targeting non-white women is launched: Patricia French heads up a new cosmetics skin-care firm, claiming to be the first to address the specific needs of dark-skinned women. The products, now sold internationally, can be found in upscale U.S. specialty shops. French says her average customer, a professional woman making \$40,000 a year, can afford her products, which range in price from \$15.50 to \$42.50. The Paris-based firm projects revenues of \$3 million this year. And while French is a legal resident of Detroit, she resides in Paris.

Executive turntable: Former Essence VP and Director of Communications, Terrie Williams, has just announced the formation of The Terrie Williams Agency. The agency, to specialize in the areas of public relations and special events, already boasts a client roster that includes Eddie Murphy and Miles Davis. **And while Essence shut down their TV show,** they're expanding their mail order catalog, which has shown a marked increase in sales. Its licensing division has kicked off Essence EyeGlass Wear and recently cut a deal with Butterick patterns, which will prominently feature two Essence designs in its coming lineup.

A Black Woman of Enterprise: Mary Winston, born the daughter of an Alabama sharecropper, was one of just six women honored by Avon Products and the Small Business Association at their second annual Women of Enterprise Awards in New York. To win, each woman had to overcome an obstacle to become successful in business. Winston quit school at 11 to help raise 25 children after her mother died. Today, her Indianapolis firm has more than 264 employees.



American Masters, a Public Television Special, profiled Ms. Aretha Franklin on Oregon Public Broadcasting (Ch. 10), Sept. 5, 1988. The show pointed out that, when it comes to African-American music, Aretha is truly an American Master. American Masters, a weekly anthology series, celebrates America's native and adopted masters in the creative arts.

Sammy Davis Jr. Takes The Spotlight On Ebony/JET Showcase!



Legendary entertainer Sammy Davis Jr., and his wife, Altovise (both seated) get a visit from host Darryl Dennard.

Entertainment legend Sammy Davis Jr., "Amen" star Anna Maria Horsford and singing group New Edition bring all-star talent to Ebony/JET Showcase the weekend of September 16-18 (consult your local listing for date and time).

Multi-talented performer Sammy Davis Jr. is keeping in step with the entertainment world with his latest film, "Tap," which also stars actor/singer Gregory Hines. Davis says Hines impressed him with his tap dancing abilities and talks of his respect for today's "hoofers." The long-time performer comments on his life since overcoming drug and alcohol abuse and recovering from hip replacement surgery, and he salutes his wife, Altovise, for helping him tackle those obstacles. Davis also reflects on his days with the famous "Rat Pack" and tells what role performer Frank Sinatra played in his film career.



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| Tillamook Park Bldg. 2108 N.E. 41st Ave. Mon. Tues. Wed. Thurs. Fri. | 7:00 p.m. 7:00 p.m. 9:30 a.m. & 5:00 p.m. 7:00 p.m. 9:30 a.m. | Rivergate Community Church 4737 N. Lombard St. Tues. | 7:00 p.m. |
| | | University of Portland 5000 N. Willamette Blvd. Columbia Hall (Enter from Portsmouth) Wed. | 5:00 p.m. |

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