

ENTERTAINMENT



BROADWAY BOUND REPORT

by Garland Lee Thompson

Well, the "Moor of Venice" is in town, co-produced by its stars, Rick Jones and Joel Morello and directed by Tom Lasswell at the Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center, 5340 N. Interstate Avenue. It runs September 23rd through October 16th, 8:00 P.M. Friday, Saturday and 7:00 P.M. on Sunday.

The Director's notes in the program states: "For years the three of us have wanted to work together on a production of 'Othello'. We were all convinced, however, that we wanted the performance to be something more than just another Shakespearean production. First, we didn't want to use pseudo-British dialect, or even the modern approach which is an elevated speech style call 'Translantic'. We wanted to use American sounds which would communicate this glorious poetry to American ears."

[Note: A few years ago, this same technique was tried at the New York Shakespeare Festival when producer Joseph Papp wanted to form a new Black Shakespearean company]. The technique didn't work there and I have some problems with the "Americanization" concept at the IFCC. Mainly because "Othello" has to have and must demonstrate great power and stature before we can understand Othello's fall from grace. We must be able to witness this tremendous change for the production to work. When it doesn't happen, the production ends up as just another "Hey Dessie Baby" rendition of "the Bard's Blackamoor Blues."

From the legendary Black actor Ira Aldridge, who toured Europe many years ago, to the great Paul Robeson, who played Othello on Broadway for three years and even Sir Lawrence Olivier of England, who played Othello in "Black face" in the movie, the bottom line in Othello was power first, then the weakness and flaws appear to create the real drama of this Shakespearean masterpiece. The power so creativity projected by those legends are missing from the "Othello" production at the IFCC.

The Director's notes continue: "We wanted to recapture the sense of an audience's imagination, which in Shakespeare's theatre supplied the scenery costumes and spectacular elements in their minds eye. We have set our play in a rehearsal space in the theatre. Iago is our stage manager." Frankly speaking, to the degree that the actors are involved directly in the tragedy, they don some semblance of period costume. But to the extent that they are on the periphery, the actors at the IFCC have merely a suggestion of costume or they may simply be reading a character's part.

It is listed in the program that the set and lighting is by Joel Morello and the "Master Carpenter" is the entire cast. So, the question is "does it work?" As Iago, Morello did make a good stage manager - cold blooded and method in his acting of the role. He has had the most experience working at this his 15th Shakespearean play. Yes...it shows through everytime. And also, I am told that Morello needed to cut the cost of the production, however, we, the audience, need to see the actors on a set that gives us a true sense of the reality of the scene that takes place in the play. The production needs to get us out of the rehearsal hall mentality of a low-budget production. The theatre is magic and illusion that should take us somewhere special and not just backstage, especially when the audience pay real money for tickets.

And finally, the Director's notes tell us that "We wanted to offer a different, much more contemporary picture of the women in the play." In my opinion, the three actresses, Trisha Todd [Desdemona], Sarah Lucht [Emilia] and Gretchen Savage [Bianca] did just that. I loved Bianca in her scene with her lover. I felt for Desdemona, whose only crime was to get involved with some mad men's hangouts...and Emilia was excellent.



Apart from life in the spotlight as one of the famous Jacksons, Marlon Jackson lives quietly at home with his wife Carol, and their three children Valencia, 11; Brittny, 9, and Marlon Jr., 6.

Dreamgirls, the sizzling pop Broadway musical smash of the decade, will premiere in Portland Tuesday, October 25 at the Civic Auditorium.

Dreamgirls chronicles the story of three young singers "The Dreamettes," a singing group from Chicago who struggle to break into the Pop Charts, out of the commercially limiting rhythm-and-blues scene, and end up as superstars a la the "Supremes." Dreamgirls was directed on Broadway by Michael Bennett, creator of "A Chorus Line". Its dynamic score became the biggest-selling show album in Broadway history. "Dreamgirls" was the winner of 6 Tony Award and 2 Grammy Awards when it debuted on Broadway in the early '80s.

In 1987 'Dreamgirls' was revived for an extended engagement on Broadway further attesting to

the show's continued popularity and earned an additional Tony Award nomination for "Best Revival." In re-examining the production, Frank Rich of the New York Times wrote:

"Still the most exciting staging of a Broadway musical this decade! Dreamgirls lives, and so does the striking vision of Michael Bennett, one of the most brilliant showmen the Broadway musical has known!"

'Dreamgirls' will play 8 performances at Civic Auditorium. Evening performances Tuesday, Oct. 25 through Sunday, Oct. 30 are at 8:00 p.m. Two matinees are scheduled for Saturday, Oct. 29 and Sunday, Oct. 30 at 2:00 p.m. Tickets are price from \$21-\$32 and are on sale at all G.I. Joe/Ticketmaster outlets, PCCA Box Office and the Galleria Jean Machine.



BEHIND THE SCENES

by Lisa Collins

Black communities being abandoned by major banks: California business and civil rights organizations have appealed to federal regulators to develop a national plan to aid minority communities abandoned by major banks. In a six-page letter to the Federal Reserve Board, they stated that federal agencies have no policies or programs to save minority communities from the improvidence of giant white-owned banks, and pointed to a disproportionate number of bank closings in Black communities in the wake of deregulation. They also expressed concern that minority branches are set-up for failure citing competitive pressures and poor bank service.

What's the most expensive Black art going for these days? Among today's Blacks, Jacob Lawrence and Romare Bearden are the most renowned artists, and their works are selling anywhere from \$15,000 to \$75,000. "But Black art goes way beyond that," says Alitash Kebede, a private LA art dealer. Among the most valued is work by Henry O'Tanner. According to Kebede, "Bill Cosby purchased Tanner's work at an auction for somewhere around \$250,000." But, says Kebede, "if you're interested in collecting, it's essential to read about it." Her own recommendation is "Two Centuries Of Black American Art" by David Driscoll.

Willie Davis purchases station near Denver for \$5.5 million: All-Pro Broadcasting recently announced that it has acquired KPOU in Greeley, Colo. This brings to four the number of stations owned by former all-pro Willie Davis. Other stations include WMVP-AM and WLUM-FM in Milwaukee, KACE in Los Angeles.

LA Street Rappers show big business savvy: West Coast Distributors is made up of four small record labels formed five years ago, individually, by a handful of rap artists in their 20's—Greg Broussard (Egyptian Empire), Rudy Partee (Kru Kuts). Each had experienced prior success, selling as many as 600,000 units with Macola Records. However, when Macola persistently cut them short of profit, they began seeking a better means of distribution for their

music. In January '88, that better means became West Coast Distributors, and this year, collectively, they expect to earn \$2,000,000. Ironically enough most of them have deals for themselves and many of their artists with major labels. Rudy Partee's LA Dream Team record for MCA. With a staff of eight, they operate out of South-Central LA as a record company, complete with artist development and promotions. "The biggest problem" says Lisa Allen, who oversees day-to-day operations, "is that everytime we make some noise with a new artist like J.J. Fad, and put a dent into the sales market, here comes the majors wanting to buy them out."

Systems Management American Names Hattie Chadwick Director of Procurement. In this position, Chadwick assumes full responsibility for SMA's purchasing department, a staff of nine, its policies, practices and compliance to Federal & Defense Regulations.

Baseball gets a raise: The average salary of major league baseball players in 1988 will reach all-time high of \$433,000. This represents an increase of \$31,000 over the '87 average of \$402,000.

Now that Jesse Jackson has won his suit against MPI Video over the rights of his "We Can Dream Again" keynote address, did you know that the Rev. Martin Luther King stopped a record company from selling recordings of his famous "I Have A Dream" speech.

A footnote on Emerge: Time Inc., one of the backers of emerge, the much-talked about new magazine targeting upwardly mobile and progressive Blacks, that recently suspended publication pending some financial turmoil, has said it will go ahead with its earlier plans to invest \$1.5 million, should Emerge raise the balance of \$4.5 million.

Number of Black manufacturers down: The latest statistics show that minority manufacturers account for only 1.5% of all firms owned by Blacks, Hispanics and Asians. That's down from 2.2% five years ago, however, those companies averaging \$350,000 per year, stand among the minority firms with the highest revenues.

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