

ENTERTAINMENT



BROADWAY BOUND REPORT

by Garland Lee Thompson

"WE NEED BLACK CRITICS," IS THE CRY IN NEW YORK

"Nobody was more shocked than I was when I read Frank Rich's New York Times review of Ron Milner's (new black Broadway play), 'Checkmates,' quoted Beth Turner, editor and publisher of Black Masks, a black arts monthly magazine in the New York City. 'Having attended opening night, I had joined the audience in its standing ovation for the play and its dynamic and immensely talented cast (starring Pual Winfield, Ruby Dee, Martha Jackson and Denzel Washington). Although it was not a 'perfect' play (and what play is?), it thoroughly entertained while also touching on many poignant elements of black married life today and yesterday, and offered certain wonderful insights and historical perspectives," she continues.

"To discover that Frank Rich found not one commendable feature in the production was astounding." (Beth, I don't know why you were astounded, I thought). She continued: "Not even (black designer) Ed Burbridge's set escaped the all-inclusive singe. Perhaps only (black designer) Judy Dearing's costume were spared but that was only by lack of mention at all," stated this unhappy black woman journalist, playwright and a friend of mine.

She makes a point that, "happily, some enthusiastic television reviews (we do not have any here in Portland) by WNBC-TV and support from Black journalists such as Abiola Sinclair and Dick Campbell (two other friends of mine) in the Amsterdam News (black press of New York); and an exuberant word-of-mouth have been enough to keep the show alive despite Rich's scathing condemnation. (This always points up the question to me: "Is there 'life-after-Frank' of the New Time?")

Black editor, Turner, whose monthly black arts magazine has grown steadily in influence, recently in New York Black Theatre 'Circles, further said, "this incident, among others, has painfully reaffirmed the absolute necessity of a resurgence of the black critical voice for Black Theatres. Black Theatres consistently cry out for coverage by the press for the reviews they feel are necessary for the survival of their productions and even for the survival of their theatre (when it comes time to document their work to funding sources.) Most Black Theatres never succeed in attracting coverage by the more prominent white newspapers (we just noticed the Oregonian did not review the Portland, October 2nd, 'The Diary of a Black Man). When they do succeed, the white critics' reviews often meander across the full gamut of reactions from that of Frank Rich's toward 'Checkmates,' directed by Woodie King Jr., to some kind of paternalistic softening of standards for ethnic theatre as documented by Howard Kissel in the August 7, 1988 issue of the New York Daily News. Certainly, the truth is not to be found in either instance."

"Yet, good critical writing can be an invaluable partner to good theatre," she concludes. "When a critic is not out to make a reputation for himself at the expense of the artist, then he can often be one of the most insightful forces for the understanding and fostering of fine drama that there is. From true criticism, theatre and artists can develop and flourish in ways the unwarranted praise and unfinching condemnation never allow. Black Theatre needs this kind of good critical writing."

"DREAMGIRLS" COMES TO TOWN!

The touring production of the Michael Bennett hit Broadway black musical, "Dreamgirls," opens at the Civic Auditorium, Tuesday, October 25th, and plays 8:00 p.m. through October 30th, with a Saturday and Sunday matinee at 2:00 p.m. The original production, billed at "the musical of

the eighties," the winner of six "Tony" Awards, two "Grammy" Awards, has book and lyrics by Tom Eyer and music by Henry Krieger. KGW-TV, Channel 8, is welcoming this Portland premiere to the City of Roses.

This is the "dazzling" show that made black singer, Jennifer Holiday, a star along with a friend of mine, actress/singer, Loretta Devine, who received fabulous response as one the original, "Dreamgirls." This is a "must see" show, theatre fans.

"HAIR" IS HERE AT THE CIVIC

The Portland Civic Theatre, the city's old community theatre (the place where I made my debut many years ago), is currently presenting the now classic musical of the sixties, "Hair," on mainstage, through November 6th, directed by the theatre's new artistic director, Michael Jones. With songs like, "The Age of Aquarius," this powerful show has "a musical score that has become a classic, reflecting the joy, passion and heartache of the political and social times of the sixties."

A CHARLES FULLER PLAY IN REHEARSAL AT THE STOREFRONT THEATRE

The Storefront Theatre has black playwright, Charles Fuller's controversial play, "Zooman and the Sign," directed by Rick Jones, in rehearsal, featuring actors, Al Jamison, Wanda Walden, Nysewusi Askari and Anthony Armstrong, among the cast.

This month of October is scheduled for the opening of this powerful piece, written by the author of the Pulitzer Prize play, "A Soldier's Play," and the screenplay of the Academy Award nominated film,

BLACK WOMAN FILM-MAKER AND PLAYWRIGHT, KATHY COLLINS DIES IN N.Y.

Kathy Collins, a noted black film-maker and playwright, died in the third week of September in New York. The film and Black Theatre circles of New York and the country mourns the death of One of its own. I had the pleasure of presenting one of the first readings of a play of Kathy Collins, several years ago at the Frank Silvera Writers' Workshop in New York. Her work as a film-maker and editor is widely known and respected in the "fast track" film and theatre of New York. Ms. Collins taught film-making at City College of New York and deserves a greater recognition in her field for her craft and professional achievement and skill. Hopefully, her films and plays will live on in her memory. "Write on, Kathy, we will miss you!"

Phylicia Rashad and Sara Lee Corporation CEO To Chair 1988 Living Legacy Awards Banquet



Phylicia Rashad, "The Cosby Show" and John H. Bryan, Jr., chairman and chief executive officer of Sara Lee Corporation (left to right).

John H. Bryan, Jr., chairman and chief executive officer of Sara Lee Corporation, recently joined television personality Phylicia Rashad on the set of "The Cosby Show" to promote the 1988 Living Legacy Awards Banquet to be held at 7 p.m., October 13, 1988, at the Hyatt Regency on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C.

Bryan will serve as the first corporate CEO to chair the dinner, and Rashad will serve as executive vice chair. This marks a return engagement for Rashad who co-chaired last year's event with her husband, NBC Sports commentator and former Minnesota Vikings wide receiver Ahmad Rashad.

Sponsored by the National Caucus and Center on Black Aged, Inc., the banquet will honor six recipients of its 1988 Living Legacy Awards saluting life-long contributions to society:

Maya Angelou, 60, Winston-Salem, N.C.; Dr. Elizabeth L. Doles, 77, of Detroit, Mich.; Dr. Mary S. Harper, 69, of Washington, D.C.; Dr. Aaron E. Henry, 66, of Clarksdale, Miss.; Arthur D. Shores, 84, of Birmingham, Ala.; and Arnolta I.E. Williams, 92, of Jacksonville, Fla.

Keynote speaker for the event will be Lerone Bennett, Jr., executive editor of EBONY and a critically acclaimed author on Black history. Actress and comedian La Wanda Page, best known as "Aunt Esther" from the television sitcom "Sanford and Son," will serve as master of ceremonies.

Tickets to the Living Legacy Awards Banquet may be purchased from the NCBA's national office in Washington, D.C. (202) 637-8400 for \$200 each or \$2,000 for a table of 10 seats. Proceeds from the banquet will be used to expand NCBA's successful housing development program and advocacy efforts for the elderly.

Founded in 1970, NCBA is 3,000-member non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for Black elderly.

Sheila Wills In Latest TV Production "Family Medical Center"

Viewers of "Family Medical Center," the latest production from the team that brought "The People's Court" to television, have a new star to watch and get involved with - Sheila Willis.

The beautiful, intelligent, compassionate Sheila Willis plays Dr. K. C. Nicholson on the five-times a week series. She and two other performers are the stars of the Ralph Edwards/Stu Billett Production which is syndicated by Lorimar. Lauren K. Woods plays Dr. Miles Jaffee and Wortham Krimmer Protrays Dr. Alexander Raines.

Together the trio heads the "Family Medical Center," where patients with problems that en-

compass all areas of today's medicine, come for treatment. The series dramatizes true medical cases and premiered September 12.

Sheila, one of 12 children, sprung out of the Watts ghetto with her brains and hard work. Teachers encouraged her and she was able to win a scholarship to Occidental College. Accepted into Stanford University's masters program, she opted instead to accept a job as Assistant Dean of Admission at Occidental College. She held that position for four years before her dream of being an actress actually drove her to "Go for it." Her first T.V. commercial landed her a contract at Universal Studios where she remained for four years until the contract program was halted.

She has appeared in a number of movies and hit television shows and numerous stage productions before she accepted the role of Dr. Nicholson.

"I see K.C. as someone not very far from my own personality," she admits. "K.C. wants to help peo-



ple. She cares about them and she's there for them. I've always been involved in service for people and when you think about it, entertainment is a form of service, too. I love K.C. and I hope the audiences will, too."

A single mother, she is raising two beautiful young girls from her liason with Philip Michael Thomas, of "Miami Vice." She recently bought her first home and Phillip visits as often as he can, she says. "We are very good friends. He lives in Miami and we live in Los Angeles, so he doesn't get to see the girls as much as he would like."

Sheila and her family were living in Watts when the 1965 fierce riots destroyed people's lives and made headlines across the country.

"We were living at 47th street and Broadway in what they called Charcoal Alley Number Three," she recalls. "When the National Guard came in we could hear the gunfire and we were all on the floor crawling around. It was very scary. It was a frightening time.



by Lisa Collins

BEHIND THE SCENES

Jackson's world tour tops \$133 million mark: Revenues for Michael Jackson's current world tour have now reached over \$133 million racked up in merchandising items. U.S. fans paid an average of \$23 a-piece. Their European counterparts paid an average of \$30 each, while fans in Japan and Australia, paid about \$44 per ticket. Fans paid an additional 7-8 per head in T-Shirts and merchandising. "If black acts get \$1-2 per head, they're doing great." This according to Jay Brown, 37, president of Brown Sugar Marketing, who has posted net receipts of more than \$800,000 in a given year and has emerged as the leading black merchandiser. "What happens is when Black people go to a concert, they are sharp, whereas white people will come to a concert looking like bums and buy T-shirts." So, Brown Sugar Marketing racks up big bucks taking photos of concertgoers set in a backdrop of the show's headlines. "They want a picture in their new clothes." (Other big sellers to Blacks are roses and glow necklaces). Says Brown, "the profits are not tremendous, but the cash flow is outrageous."

Tyson's troubles turn off advertisers: In the wake of the latest bad publicity about boxer Mike Tyson, Diet Pepsi has temporarily discontinued using the champion in its TV spots. Pepsi did not comment other than to say that Tyson is someone who appeared in a campaign that has concluded. Eastman Kodak has also stopped running commercials featuring Tyson, though denying the move had anything to do with bad pub-

licity. Said one industry insider: "all this negative publicity is just too much. You want a spokesman people can relate to ... a good guy." However, Tyson's agency denies reports of waning interest. Agent Norman Brokaw maintains that both movie studios and book publishers are interested in his life story, and that an animated children's program about Tyson is in the works.

Going For The Green: Olympic athletes will not only be going for the gold, in Seoul, but for the green. Carl Lewis, who pulled in an estimated \$500,000 in annual endorsement fees after the '84 Olympics, is looking to strengthen his position with advertisers. Canada's Ben Johnson will make that difficult. What's more, advertisers like Johnson. Last year, he signed a \$2.5 million, five-year contract with an Italian shoe maker. He's also made commitments to Mazda, VISA, Toshiba and Johnson's Wax. Jackie Joyner-Kersey just finalized a two-year endorsement with McDonald's—her second endorsement approaching six figures. Other key endorsements include Seven-Up, Primatene Mist, and she's negotiating Disneyland. Her sister-in-law Florence Griffith-Joyner is still considering numerous offers. Her only real firm plans are to come out with her own fashion label after the Olympics.

Executive Turntable: Kenneth Walker, a distinguished ABC news correspondent noted for his coverage of the Jackson Presidential campaign and South Africa politics, has accepted to role of anchor for the Money segment of "USA Today: The Television Show."

"I understand why a lot of people don't get out of poverty because it is so powerful. But my mind was stronger. I always had a vision of what I wanted to do and I was always very interested in school."

"The teachers knew I was motivated, knew I was not lazy and they supported me, encouraged me. I've had a job since I was 11 years old. I've cleaned houses, cleaned beauty salons and, as a kid, I would knock on doors and ask to go grocery shopping for people because I knew they would give me a tip for that." She always turned the money over to her family because that was the thing to do—help out.

And now she's helping out in a reality drama that will humanize doctors and those who work in the medical professions. Dr. K.C. Nicholson is always on call.



One Stop Records and Tapes AVAILABLE

R & B, RAP, JAZZ, BLUES AND GOSPEL PLUS SNAKE SKIN BELTS, GUCCI HATS, POSTERS OF YOUR FAVORITY ARTIST AND

On Sale This Week For \$6.99 Is Karyn White and One Way

For Records and More - Make Your Stop ONE STOP

1615 N.E. Killingsworth

We're Playing ONE STOP YOUR Song. RECORD SHOP