

ENTERTAINMENT

BROADWAY BOUND REPORT

BEHIND THE SCENES



Lisa Collins

Natalie Cole Sets Date For Lavish Wedding: The date is September 17, and a computerized list is being used to track the 400 guests who will attend the nuptials, and hear Natalie Cole repeat her "I Do's" to record producer, Andre Fischer. "I'm truly excited," said Cole. "There's still so much left to do." It's been somewhat of a whirlwind seven-month relationship for the couple who actually met some 15 years ago. They met again last October, when he contacted her office to submit some material for her next album. Fischer began his career as the drummer for Rufus, and most recently produced Brenda Russell's last project, "Piano in the Dark," as well as two of the cuts off Natalie's latest LP. The two began dating after hitting it off at the NAACP Awards in mid-December. On the 10th of February, he proposed. This will be the second marriage for Cole, who has one son, Robbie.

On The Home Front: By the time you read this, newlyweds Nia Peeples and Howard Hewitt will have more than likely given birth to their firstborn. Nia was two days away from her scheduled delivery when I saw them at a star-studded recording session, hosted by Nancy Wilson. Wilson wanted "Heaven's Hands," one of the songs from her upcoming LP, to have a gospel choir sound, so she called on a few of her friends for support. Those turning out for the session included Deneice Williams, Little Anthony, Natalie Cole, Teena Marie, Sandra and Andre Crouch, Phillip Bailey, Shaunice Wilson, Siedah Garrett, and Freda Payne. Unfortunately, you'll have to wait until September when the album is released to hear how it all turned out.

Big Women/Men Get The Call: The word is out. Producers of a sure bet for a new one-hour series, "American Gladiators," are launching a nationwide search for men and women to play gladiators. However, to qualify men must be 6'1" - 6'5".

190 to 250 pounds, while women should be between 5'7" and 5'10". If you're interested, send a photo and resume to American Gladiators, 11755 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 850, Los Angeles, CA 90028. The show, which will debut in syndication on September 9, has already cleared over 70% of the country.

The Darker Side Of Sammy Davis Jr.: What many of us once thought of as horrible rumors were confirmed in a newly released book by Sammy Davis Jr., titled "Why Me?" The book, released earlier this month, details Sammy's one-time obsession with pornography and porn queen Linda Lovelace, and even a short stint with Satanism. The book, also tells of numerous marital affairs and his involvement with drugs. All this to show how one entertainer handled his obsession to stay on top? The book, however, draws no conclusions. Perhaps the real question should be--why us?

What's become of the Sisters Sledge? The group that topped the 70's with such hits as "We Are Family" is indeed still intact, having just returned from touring Europe. The sisters who now, for the most part, make their homes in Los Angeles, are in the process of recording a new LP. **Short Takes:** Michael Jackson's latest project just may be a movie based on the life of the great black Russian poet, Alexander Pushkin. Pushkin, who died in 1837, is one of Russia's literary greats. Of course, Jackson would have the title role, and word is he envisions the project to be a joint effort between the United States and Russia. **Esther Rolle is back before the cameras** in Atlanta, shooting a film called "Driving Miss Daisy" which also stars Morgan Freeman and Jessica Tandy. **Next week: Find out why superstardom has eluded Atlantic Starr.**

ON THE MONEY

OAO-- the biggest minority business secret? "We are probably one of the largest minority-owned businesses in the country," said General Emmett Paige, president of OAO Corporation. However, you won't find this company in Black Enterprise's 1989 listing of nation's largest black businesses. Why? "Beats the hell out of me" said Paige. "A lot of people fail to realize that OAO is a minority-owned company." But if this company is suffering from a image problem, it surely hasn't spilled over into their sales, which last year exceeded \$68 million. The firm was founded in 1973 by Cecile Barker, who presently serves as chairman of the board. Barker (then 29) had been working with NASA as a mission director for the Orbiting Astronomical Observatory, when he took the project's initials as well as \$10,000 in savings and formed OAO Corporation, which specializes in systems engineering and integration. Today, 16 years, 1400 employees, and 16 field offices later, his dream has paid off. The company's fate was perhaps signed, sealed and delivered two years ago when they received a \$300 million contract award from the Jet Propulsion Laboratory. Ironically, Paige says their biggest obstacle has been financial support. "Our dealings with the bank are less than satisfactory. Most minority companies are treated as if they are going out of business tomorrow. In our case, the yearly profit on this account has been in excess of \$700,000, yet they act as if they'd just as soon not have our business. When the day comes around that we can get a partnership with the bank, I think this company will really take off and grow." **As to the matter of the B.E. 100's...** "I don't know why we would miss it," said Black Enterprise business editor, Alfred Edmond. "I don't ever recall us missing a company that would rank in the top ten." Yet, fact is, many firms don't want the exposure. Said one source, whose '88 sales exceeded \$20 million: "when you get on the list, more than anything else people hit you up for money. If you hide in the weeds, nobody says anything and you can keep your money. Besides, if you're doing work with the government, the exposure could hurt you."

Former Pittsburgh Steeler Franco Harris Heads Firm: It was in 1984 that all-pro Franco Harris retired from professional football. But he has been all but inactive since. In fact, in 1986 he launched his own firm, and today, **Franco's All Natural** handles, marketing, sales and distribution for at least half a dozen national food products, from a natural soft drink line called Perq to an all natural fresh fruit salad, fresh fruit sticks, and a super doughnut with 25% less sugar and 15 minerals and vitamins, (that has been approved for school breakfast programs). "Response has been fantastic" according to Max Gonberg, a representative of the firm. "We believe that the food industry is striving in all phases to be a more healthful industry and we expect our business to grow enormously." Harris is not the only athlete that sees the potential of today's most lucrative food and beverage industries. All-pro Raider's running back **Marcus Allen** has gotten into the act with the launching of ProBall, a company that provides packaging for soft drinks. Speaking of athletes, Sport Magazine published their annual listing of the **top moneymakers in professional sports**. Seven of the top ten are back. They are (1) Mike Tyson--\$22,133,333; (2) Michael Spinks--\$13,500,000; (3) Sugar Ray Leonard--\$11,700,000; (4) Kareem Abdul-Jabbar--\$3,000,000; (5) Larry Holmes--\$2,800,000; (6) Patrick Ewing--\$2,750,000; and (9) Earvin "Magic" Johnson--\$2,500,000. **In Short:** The American Association of Retired Persons is warning workers to exercise caution with regards to early retirement. It seems some companies are encouraging older workers to do so in violation of Federal laws.

AARP has designed two free publications to help older workers make right decisions. For a copy of "Look Before You Leap" (#D13390) and "A Guide To Understanding Your Pension Plan" (#D13533). Contact: AARP Fulfillment, 1909 K Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20049. **Next week: Investment in Africa pays off big for CEO of the nation's biggest black-owned record company.**

BROADWAY BOUND REPORT:

By Garland Lee Thompson

BLACK WOMAN'S PLAY OPENS AT IFCC

The PassinArt: A Theatre Company is opening a news AUDELCO Black Theatre Recognition Award-winning play, "Long Time Since Yesterday," by J.P. Gibson, Friday, June 23rd, thru July 16th, 1989, 8:00 PM, at the Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center. A special preview is scheduled for Thursday, June 22nd at 7:30PM. Performances will play Fridays, Saturdays at 8:00 PM and 3:00PM on Sundays.

The exciting new play was first presented by Woodie King Jr.'s New Federal Theatre at the Henry Street Settlement Playhouse in October, 1985, where I first saw it with a strong cast in New York City. "Long Time Since Yesterday," is a powerful new drama set in suburban Ewing Township, N.J. at a reunion of former college mates, now in their thirties, at the funeral of another friend, who has recently committed suicide. These women are not poor, but prosperous, professional, middle-class Blacks ("Buppies"), who have gone through the turbulence of the sixties and come out on the top in the eighties. At the wake for their deceased friend, the suicide which has brought them together again, we find a literate, humorous, and sensitive look at the lives of some dynamic and contemporary Black women.

Directed by Connie Carley, this new PassinArt Theatre production, features: Brenda Phillips, Denise Williams, Jeannette C. Bhajan, Jeanette Russell Brown, Chiffon Davis, Letta LeDuff, Betty Jean Garner, Aisha Irving and Carmen Warren. Wanda Walden designed the Costumes, Doug Strong is doing the set, Vicke Hudson, the sound, and Rubin Hudson is designing the lights.

For further information, groups rates and reservations, call 284-4108 or IFCC at 243-7930, for this first play by a Black woman to reach the Portland area theatre in a "Long Time Since Yesterday." And it's a "honey" of a drama! Check it out, theatre fans. Write on, PassinArt. **SOUTH AFRICAN PLAYWRIGHT GUEST AT THE NORTHWEST AFRICAN AMERICAN WRITERS WORKSHOP**

I received a call from Selaelo Maredi, a well-known, exiled South African playwright, who is back in Portland working on a new play about children, "Our Parents Day." I invited this active international Black artist to join us at our bi-monthly workshop meeting this past Sunday, June 18th, 1989.

Maredi, a performer as well as a playwright, spoke freely with members of the Workshop (headed by Useni Perkins), about his experiences

PASSINART: A THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS LONG TIME SINCE YESTERDAY

PassinArt: A Theatre Company is pleased to present the Oregon premiere of **LONG TIME SINCE YESTERDAY** by P.J. Gibson. The play opens June 23 and runs through July 16, 1989 at the Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center (5340 N. Interstate in Portland) on Fridays and Saturdays at 8:00 p.m., and Sundays at 3:00 p.m. **LONG TIME SINCE YESTERDAY** is a potent new drama set in suburban Ewing Township, N.J. at a reunion of former college mates, now in their thirties, at the funeral of another friend, who has recently killed herself. These women are prosperous, professional, middle-class Black women who have gone through the turbulence of the sixties and have come out on top in the eighties. **THESE ARE WOMEN WHO YOU KNOW.** At the wake for their deceased friend, the suicide which has once again brought them together. This is a literate, humorous, and sensitive look at the lives of contemporary Black women. The play was a success at the New York City's Federal Theatre in October of 1985.

PassinArt Theatre Company's production of **LONG TIME SINCE YESTERDAY** features Jeannette C. Bhajan, Jeannette Russell Brown, Chiffon Davis, Letta LeDuff, Betty Jean Garner, Aisha Irving, Brenda Phillips, Carmen Warren, and Denise Williams. The production will be directed by Connie Carley who is the co-founder of PassinArt Theatre Company. Assistant Director, Michael Grant, set design is by Doug Strong, costumes by Wanda Walden, lighting by Rubin Hudson, and sound by Vicke Hudson.

Ticket prices are \$7.00 on Fridays and Saturdays, and \$5.00 on Sundays. Discount rates available to groups and seniors. For reservations or more information, please call 284-4108 or 243-7930.

SPECIAL PREVIEW NIGHT - THURSDAY, JUNE 22 AT 7:30 p.m. AT THE INTERSTATE FIREHOUSE CULTURAL CENTER - ADMISSION \$1.00.

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and start in the politically dangerous "mine field," of writing for the performing arts in South Africa and his eventual travel to the United States on tour with a show that stranded him and his fellow actors in this country.

And he stayed. Write on Selaelo, the freedom fighter from South Africa, from whom we now learn that unless Black South Africa has freedom and is able to perform its art freely, none of us are free in the total scheme of things and conditions in the world. Write on, to the freedom-loving artists all over the planet. **NW OPEN DIALOGUE: CREATING A NORTHWEST AGENDA FOR MULTI-CULTURAL ARTS**

The King County Arts Commission, the Association of American Cultures with support from the National Endowment for the Arts, The Seattle Arts Commission, The Before Columbus Foundation, the University of Washington's American Ethnic Studies Dept., and a host of other private foundations, will sponsor an important conference, "NW Open dialogue: Creating a Northwest Agenda for Multi-Cultural Arts.

The conference starting Friday, 10:00AM, June 23rd and Saturday, June 24th, is designed, according to Josephine Ramirez, King County Commission Coordinator, to address concerns of Asian American, African American, Native American and Latino artists and arts organizations based in the State of Washington and Oregon. Ramirez asked that we all come to add our voices, share our work, ideas with other multi-cultural arts in the Pacific Northwest.

The featured speaker will be Ish-makel Reed, noted novelist, essayist, and reviewer, contributing writer to the New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Black Words, and Ramparts, and editorial director of Yardbird Press. There will be showcase presentations of selected Washington and Oregon artists representing different disciplines that will share their works and special multi-disciplinary collaborative new work will also be presented. This is the first gathering of its kind in the Northwest that is designed to network with one another, showcase the work of our NW multi-cultural artists, determine what our regional needs are and create strategies for addressing the areas of concern. Also they will prepare a Northwest constituency to attend "Open dialogue IV" in 1990, a biennial national conference which will be sponsored by the Association of American Cultures, an organization representing multi-cultural arts in the United States. Write on, Kings County Commission.

For further information and registration (\$29.00 to \$35.00), call (206) 296-8671, Kings County Arts Commission, 1115 Smith Tower, 506 2nd Avenue, Seattle, WA 98104.

JUNE IS BLACK MUSIC MONTH



MUSIC MILLENNIUM

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STATE OF OREGON

Acting by and through its Department of General Services is looking for a site to house its Albina Human Resources Center.

Requirements for Building:

- *41,150 gross square feet, approximately 35,775 net usable square feet.
- *135 of street parking spaces.
- *Primary area of interest is within a quarter mile radius of the intersection of Mason street and Williams Avenue, bounded on the north by Alberta Street and on the south by Albina Avenue, on the south by Fremont Street, and on the east by 7th Avenue.
- *Secondary area of interest is within three quarter mile radius of intersection of Mason and Williams, bounded on the north by Jarrett/Jessup Streets, on the west by I-5 on the south by 15th Avenue.
- *7 year term beginning approximately July 1, 1990.
- *Existing facility or build to suite, single story structure preferred.
- *Full service lease, must be fully handicapped accessible and usable.
- *Proof of ownership or full authority to represent property required.

THE STATE WILL:

- *Hold an informational meeting for interested offerers on July 12th, 1989 at 9:30 a.m. at Portland State Office Building, Room 26, 1400 S.W. Fifth Avenue for the purpose of answering questions from offerers.

If you are interested in receiving an informational package, please, call 378-2864 in Salem on or before July 10, 1989.

DEPT. OF GENERAL SERVICES
1225 Ferry St. S.E.

SALEM, OREGON 97310

State reserves the right to refuse any and all offers.

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