

ENTERTAINMENT

BROADWAY BOUND REPORT

Aida to headline Portland Opera's Silver Anniversary

Current production could be one of the grandest ever performed in City of Roses. International cast engaged

by Stephen E. McPherson,
Special Correspondent

More than one generation of Portland residents has come to love the Portland Opera Company and to expect good opera to emanate from it. For the last 25 years they have brought operas in the truly grand style to the City of Roses. This year they will celebrate their silver anniversary with Giuseppe Verdi's Aida,

is a prisoner of war held by the Egyptians. She is forced to be the servant of the Egyptian princess, Amneris. Aida has fallen in love with Radames, an Egyptian warrior who later is to lead his army in battle against her father. Aida is torn between the compelling emotions of the heart and the conditioned allegiances to her family and country.

Added to this complication is the fact that Radames is passionately enamored with Aida, but because of his success in battles against the Ethiopians, the king of Egypt has betrothed his own daughter, Amneris, to him.

The Ethiopian king, Amnonso, is captured by the Egyptians, but upon learning that Aida and Radames are in love with each other, prevails upon Aida to have Radames disclose important Egyptian military secrets.

Radames' treasonous breach of security is discovered and a tribunal of the high priests passes down his death sentence. He is to be sealed while yet alive in his own tomb. Aida surreptitiously enters the tomb before it is sealed vowing as a final tribute of her love to join him in death.

All lead artists will be making their Portland debuts. The title role will be sung by the Hungarian dramatic soprano, Katalin Szendrenyi, winner of the 1987 Verdi Busseto Competition.

Amnonso, her father, will be sung by the African American Baritone, Mark Rucker, winner of the 1986 Pavorotti Competition. Later this year Mr. Rucker will make his European debut having been engaged already by opera companies in New York City, Nevada, Indianapolis, San Francisco, Cincinnati and Chicago.

The Italian tenor, Giuseppe Giacomini, will sing the role of Radames and Bulgarian contralto, Mariana Paunova will take the part of Amneris, the unrequited suitor of Radames who also is the Egyptian king's daughter.

This probably will be the largest production of an opera ever staged here in the Portland area. It includes a chorus of more than 70 performers, numerous warriors, captives, dancing girls and even a real live elephant on stage.

Aida will be under the direction of Portland Opera's Robert Bailey. Its music will be conducted under the baton of Joseph Rescigno. The colossal historically correct sets and elaborate costumes were all designed by Francis Reynders.

Tom Nelson, Captain of the supermarinaries is still looking for at least a half dozen African American males to assume non-speaking parts as prisoners. Persons selected for these roles will have to attend four, three hour rehearsals and four performances. This also will be an entree into other productions. Those interested African American males should contact Mr. Nelson at 241-1407.



A most masterful piece of opera, laced with a good amount of tragedy, ballet and pageantry all wrapped up in one enormous package. It is quite safe to predict that this production will please even non-opera patrons and they too are urged to witness and to enjoy its splendor. Aida is scheduled to open the opera season here in Portland September 30th in the Civic Auditorium. It will continue for four performances.

During his career, Verdi is known to have been fascinated by things African, however it is interesting to observe that Aida was not written until well past the midpoint in his long and prolific career. To be sure when first broached with the subject he disdained the idea.

At the time Verdi wrote Aida, two important pieces of political history were converging. On the one hand, the rise in nationalism and the clamor for identity in Germany was manifested by the lyrical stage of Richard Wagner. On the other hand the re-emergence of Egypt and its important culture along the Nile was beginning to attract more attention from the dominant European nations. With the building of the Suez Canal, Egypt became an important entity when it formed the first direct sea link between the middle east and the occidental world. It is with this in mind that the Khedive of Egypt commissioned Giuseppe Verdi to write Aida.

Its Cairo premier in 1871 caused great consternation in Europe, not only because of its grandiose nature and pageantry, but also because its innovative musical nuances were identified more readily with Richard Wagner rather than with the passionate melodic line that had become the hallmark of Giuseppe Verdi.

Aida is an Ethiopian princess who

BEHIND THE SCENES



Lisa Collins

Like Mother, Like Daughter? Keisha Jackson, the daughter of R&B singer Millie Jackson was recently signed to Epic Records and is set to release her debut album this fall. Yet, if it would seem that mother and daughter have a great deal in common, Epic Records would have you to know that there is a great deal of difference in the two. "It's not Millie's type stuff at all", said Larry Davis, National Director of Black Music Promotion for Epic Records. "Keisha would be aiming at the same audience as a Jody Watley, Janet Jackson or Shirelle, the first single is "Hot Little Love Affair", but must because it's hot little love affair, doesn't mean it's Millie". In fact, the label was set to launch a campaign to establish a separate identity for the 22-year old singer, who makes her home in Atlanta, but decided it wasn't necessary. Davis believes what people will find most surprising about Jackson is that "first of all she can sing. People remember Millie most for the trashy lyrics and monologues in her songs, but Millie can sing too, and that's what a lot of people overlook. This girl can really sing". **Is It In The Genes?** If vocal abilities are tied to genes, none would be happier than new Geffen recording artist Christopher Williams. Williams, who is making quite a splash with his recently single "Talk To Myself", is the great-nephew of Ella Fitzgerald. (Williams has often been referred to as Al B. Sure's cousin, but the two, who are very good friends, are not related). At any rate, so high on the debut is Geffen Records that they are going all out with a national radio promotion with Radioscope, a nationally syndicated radio show. A lucky listener will win a cellular car phone and \$1000 to cover phone bills.

Ross Bothered By Unauthorized Bio: Diana Ross joins the growing number of celebrities who are a little more than annoyed by unauthorized biographies that they call an intrusion into their privacy. Ross, who has failed in her attempts to stop J. Randy Tarborelli's upcoming "Call Her Miss Ross", is said to fear the worst. The book, which is due out in November, supposedly explores Ross' romantic liaisons with Ryan O'Neal, Gene Simmons, Smokey Robinson, and Berry Gordy. The book also touches on her curious relationships with Michael Jackson and Mary Wilson, who's mere appearance backstage at one of Ross' recent Los Angeles performance was said to have touched off a tantrum. (Wilson was reportedly asked to leave).

Whoops... While it's no secret that Whoopi Goldberg's popularity has been sliding, she may get a much-needed career boost with her role in the upcoming film, "Long Walk Home". The story centers on the relationship of a black maid and her white mistress in the backdrop of the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the often turbulent civil rights movement. Goldberg stars opposite academy award-winner Sissy Spacek in the film.

There's No Place Like Home: In an effort to raise awareness to the plight of the homeless, Stevie Wonder is kicking off an 18-month campaign to raise funds to build shelters for the homeless around the country. The project titled, "Every Heart Needs A Home" will feature celebrity appearances, public service announcements, and a series of benefit performances slated to begin sometime in September.

Short Takes: Joan Collins is teaming with Mowtown Productions chief Suzanne de Passe to produce a light mystery-adventure series, which is to be based and filmed in Europe. Collins will also star in the project...Dancer-actor Gregory Hines has been tapped for the lead in a science fiction thriller titled "Eve Of Destruction".

ON THE MONEY

The Small Business Administration Restructures Its Minority Program:

In an effort to increase the chances that economically disadvantaged or minority-owned companies participating in its 8(A) program survive in the general marketplace as well as to cut down on widespread program abuses, the SBA has restructured its program. Perhaps the most significant change is the net worth of program applicants. Previously, applicants were required to have a net worth of no more than \$750,000 (including home and business assets). Under the new rules, applicants the requirement was lowered to \$250,000. What's more, limits have been set on a participants' net worth during the two phases of a company's term in the program. The maximum term in the program is nine years. Erline Patrick, who heads the SBA's Minority Small Business Office has said that among her own goals for the program was to act more swiftly with respect to applications. The present wait for applicants is up to one year. Patrick wants to cut that to no more than 90 days.

Rejection Gives Birth To Successful Newsletter: Jamie Foster Brown says her successful "Sister 2 Sister", music trade publication, was founded out of rejection. After several assignments to write a column for various black music trade publications ended with rejection, a frustrated and infuriated Brown decided to send the column out herself as a one-sheet xerox, once a month. That was in May of 1988. Borrowing \$600 from a close friend, Brown, a former producer of "Video Soul" for Black Entertainment Television, developed the idea into an instrument through which women in the entertainment industry could keep in touch. By the time the newsletter debuted in September, it boasted nine features. Columns like "Who Does She Think She Is" keyed in on key women in media and entertainment, but Brown's newsletter quickly became best known for its "chatty-style" gossip, and has earned her the nickname of the "Rona Barrett of R&B".

Brown then tackled advertising and within a year was generating revenues upwards of \$100,000. At present, the newsletter's readership is estimated at 20,000, with subscriptions going for \$30 annually. While, Brown's newsletter remains music industry-oriented, she hopes to expand to 32 pages and increase circulation to 300,000 or more within the next five years.

In Short: It was quite a reception thrown by Bronner Brothers on the occasion of their annual hair care convention and the launching of Upscale Magazine at the Ritz Carlton in Atlanta. No expense was spared in the spread for potential advertisers for the general interest magazine that made its debut on the nation's news stands this past July.

The High Cost of The New Home Technology: What do you think of a microwave that will automatically prepare your food according to recipe, a single touch screen that controls the heating, cooling, lights, appliances and home security systems. or a whirlpool bath that can be pre-programmed to draw your bath. In fact, the "Autofill" tub goes for anywhere from \$3,874-\$4,745, and is available. Sharp Electronics offers the microwave that cooks to order for around \$1,000, even if at present it is only available in Japan. These are just a few items reflective of the direction of automation in today's housing industry. However, the biggest news is the development of a voice-activated home management controller, which while wired into every electronic appliance, also monitors those appliances, enabling one, for example, to dial from work to cut off a TV set or coffee pot that is still on. However, the system's biggest obstacle is cost. The least expensive, offered by Mitsubishi (and is still in the testing stages) is priced at \$10,000. Next week: find out how much it would cost you to build your own home, and a look at some successful black real estate developers.

by Garland Lee Thompson

IT ISN'T EVERY DAY YOU MEET A COLLEGE PRESIDENT, AND SHE'S BLACK

Everyday that I open my eyes, life is just full of surprises. A good case in point, recently I was standing at the cashier's desk in the restaurant of the Winston-Salem Stouffer Hotel, during the final day of the National Black Theatre Festival in Winston-Salem, N.C. (August 20, 1989), when a lady standing there, asked me about my involvement with the 1st National Black Theatre Festival and she noticed my Upward Bound Program T-shirt from Portland State University.

I explained to "the nice lady" that, in addition to being in the theatre for many years and founding the Frank Silvera Writers' Workshop in New York, in 1973, one of the American Black Theatre Movement's most productive playwrights' developmental theatres in the country. I have also been teaching theatre, video, working as the Cultural & Recreational Coordinator of the Upward Bound Program at Portland State University for the past four summers (now I am teaching at the Black Studies Department at Portland State University).

The Upward Bound college preparation program in the State of Oregon is one of the original pilot projects of the nationally acclaimed federally-funded programs, that began at the University of Oregon more than a decade ago. It now includes similar projects at Oregon State University, Pacific University, as well as PSU, in Portland, Oregon. There are many Upward Bound Programs at colleges and universities across the country now, which is, no doubt, the frame of reference for Dr. Scott, with the UB program in the country.

WE TOOK THE STUDENTS TO SEE EVERYTHING OF CULTURAL IMPORTANCE

I first joined the summer Upward Bound staff in 1986 at PSU, under its first director, Armando Laguardia (He is now the assistant to the president and interim Affirmative Action Officer at PSU), who had been, himself, a graduating, former Upward Bound student from the University of Oregon. Write on, Armando.

BLACK THEATRE FESTIVAL, INTENSIVE NATIONAL NETWORKING

So, to make a long story short, "the lady" asked me for my card and I asked her for her's in exchange, as one does during these intensive national "networking" functions. She only had a press release "flyer" with her at the time, on which she wrote her name and information. It read: "Gloria R. Scott, president of Bennett College, Greensboro, North Carolina." I returned her pen at the elevator, after which it hit me just who she was; Dr. Gloria Randle Scott, the president of Bennett College, a proud black college, that was founded in 1873, as a co-educational institution, in the basement of the St. Matthews Methodist Episcopal Church in Greensboro, North Carolina. It is now a leading black college for senior women. This is one of the first times that I have ever casually, met a college president, who is a woman and black!

BLACK WOMEN COLLEGE PRESIDENTS, RARE

Some years ago, I had the pleasure of meeting the, then president of Morgan State University, a black man, college administrator (I believe it was Dr. Robinson), who came to

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visit one of our play reading/critiques at the Frank Silvera Writers' Workshop in New York City. And later, at a New York, Hunter College book party for author, Alice Childress, I met the current black woman president of Spelman College, (add her name here) but before she became president (When she was still teaching at Hunter College). I did meet, several years ago, the late Mattie Cook, president of Malcolm-King Harlem College Extension of New York. But black women, who head college and universities, are rare.

EMPOWERMENT OF BLACK AMERICANS THROUGH EDUCATION

"Bennett College continues its commitment to excellence with the development of an institutional long range plan which will guide the directions of the College (a United Negro College Fund member) from 1990-2001," states Dr. Scott. "America must invest its dollars in the long term returns that are necessary to have 'ONE NATION.' This means THE EMPOWERMENT OF BLACK AMERICANS THROUGH EDUCATION."

"AFRICAN AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHTS, THEIR CRAFT AND LEGACY"

Needless to say, I can not wait to return (Sept. 21, 1989) to the Black Studies Department of PSU and tell Dr. Darrell Milloner, chairman, his small faculty, staff and our students, about the high-powered events of the historical 1989 Theatre Festival. I found that it "fits like a glove," my returning class course in the BS Dept.: "AFRICAN AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHTS, THEIR CRAFT AND LEGACY."

Many of the playwrights, actors, directors, producers and theatre people, about whom, I have been talking, I found were right there, in Winston-Salem (August 14-20, 1989), among the 25,000 to 30,000 artists, audience and craft-people, who attended the festival. Write on, our 1989 host, Larry Leon Hamlin, and your North Carolina Black Repertory.

ENROLL NOW FOR THE NEW FALL, AFRICAN AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHTS, AT PSU

For information regarding the fall 1989, course on African American playwrights, scheduled for Tuesday evenings, call for time and dates (beginning Sept. 21, 1989), the Black Studies Dept. (503) 464-3472, NH, 3rd floor, PSU. Tell them, GLT, sent you.

August 21, 1989

TO: Fellow Writers', Northwest African American Writers' Workshop

FROM: Useni Eugene Perkins

RE: Status of (our new) Anthology

I know you'll be pleased to hear at our next meeting on Sunday, August 27th, 1989, at the Urban League (3:PM-5:PM) we should have the final draft of our manuscript. Please come prepared to review your manuscript before we take it to the printer. We are looking at a production date around September 15th, so we will have the anthology for our scheduled September 24, 1989 reception at the YWCA Center, 5630 Northeast Martin Luther King Blvd, from 2:PM - 5:PM. At this time, members will read from their works and, hopefully, we'll sell a few books.

Hope to see you on August 27, 1989.

In the interest of creativity,
Useni E. Perkins

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