

ENTERTAINMENT

BROADWAY BOUND REPORT

Actor Shares Talent With Students

Behind-The-Scenes

On The Money

by Garland Lee Thompson

Storefront Theatre Ship-Wrecked To The Nines On "Ten November"

On "Ten November," 1989, this writer attended the current production of the Storefront Theatre; "Ten November," at the Wingingstad Theatre. "Ten November," was a commissioned piece, written by Steven Dietz, with music and lyrics by Eric Bain Peltoniemi. It was first presented as part of the Actors Theatre First Stage Program in the of 1986 in St. Paul, Minnesota.

This is the second play of the Storefront's season by this same author. The theatre opened their twentieth anniversary season with another play by Dietz, "More Fun Than Bowling," when the theatre decided to produce both plays. As they announced: "We faced an impossible choice" between the two works and finally refused to make "the cut," so they are presenting both as the first and second in their season.

The Question Is Why?

While I sat in seat 13, looking at "the death of a ship," lost in a storm on Lake Superior on "Ten November," 1975, I was carefully trying to determine why "this event" was important enough to write about for the stage? The mystery of the sunken ship, the Edmund Fitzgerald, is that it went down suddenly without a trace on the radar screens, leaving no survivors or cues as to what happened to it in that terrible Great Lake November storm.

The writer took a great deal of time setting up the situation, that began to sound like a ship's version of a confusionly written old "STAR TREK," segment. We were presented with ship's log-type supposition, a U.S. Coast Guard investigation, tons of "flash-backs," such as the birth and christen of "the Fitzgerald," the crew members, other ships' crew in the area, the women of dead crew members, etc., but "Where's the beef, Dietz?"

I enjoyed the folk-singing style and lyrics (by Eric Bain Peltoniemi) of the three women singers; Robin Chilstrom, Lynne Fuqua, Marian Gaylord, as they were like "a folk trio nightclub act," right in the middle of a modern folk play; spinning their tales in song about the cold, hard life of American freshwater seamen and the ships lost on the Great Lakes of North America.

It had "an Irish theatre" quality about it here that director, Alana Beth Lipp,

worked out quite nicely. The actors did their job; Steve Clark (Kent) Pachosa, Galen B. Schrick, Santos Flores, Hank Cartwright, Rick Mullins, Bob McGranahan, Ross Huffman-Kerr, David Heath and Rob Buckmaster.

In one scene, the mysterious "numerological background" (the study of the fate of numbers) of the fateful date and numbers of the doomed vessel, was carefully laid out by a character, while sitting and drinking tea like "Allister Cook" on TV, or somebody. But the question remained; why is this saga important for us to dwell on for two-acts in the theatre?

Yes, the ship was one of the biggest ever built for freshwater sailing on the Great Lakes, but there are more than six thousand wrecked ships at the cold bottom of the Great Lakes in the North. And at the end of the play what were we, the audience left with? A odd little seaman's tale about "the big on that got away," and nobody knew just how and why (at the time).

There are hints of scandal involving the possible "overloaded" cargo, the threat of sailing in the bad weather jinx month of November, the possible lack of safety drills and precautions, the suspected flaws in the ship's design, and strange other-worldly "Twilight Zone" causes. But as for the real mystery story, it just didn't seem to come together in the end to have a meaningful impact on me, as an audience member, viewing this, indeed, another odd little Steven Dietz theatre experience. Steven, you are so weird.

The IFCC Theatre Returns With "The Colored Museum"

In another Portland Area theatre happening, the Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center is re-opening George C. Wolfe's great black comedy show, "The Colored Museum," November 15-December 17, 1989.

This will mark the first time that the IFCC is returning one of its last season award-winning hits; a sophisticated, satirical musical exploring the myths and changes of Black America.

The original cast of Brenda Phillips, Denise Williams, Gregory Donovan, Shirley Nanette, Neal Thomas, Louise Moaning and directed by Al Jamison; will bring back to Portland, one of the funniest, zaniest, and most thought-provoking shows to ever be staged in this city. Never miss it, theatre fans. Write on, Sue Busby and the IFCC.

by Judy Andrews

Many soap opera fans will remember him as police Lt. Ed Hall, a featured player for 17 years on the popular daytime drama "One Life to Live."

Now actor Al Freeman Jr. has assumed a new continuing role as teacher and mentor to drama students in the Howard University College of Fine Arts.

Freeman, a veteran of eight Broadway plays and many television appearances, received an Emmy Award in 1979 for Outstanding Actor in a daytime series.

Describing his stint this year as artist-in-residence in Howard's department of drama as "splendid misery," Freeman says he has always wanted to work with students and just stumbled on the opportunity at Howard.

"I was doing a play last year at Arena Stage (in Washington, D.C.) and asked a friend who happens to teach here if she could show me around the campus," he says in an interview. "I arrived only to find out that she had scheduled me to do an informal workshop with students."

Apparently during this session several students asked why he couldn't come back, and before he knew it he had agreed to return this fall. Thinking back on this scene with the students, Freeman smiles wondering if they had been prompted to beg for his services.

The actor is no stranger to academic life. At the urging of his friend, actor Bill Cosby, he returned to school in 1976 and two years later received a master of education degree from the University of Massachusetts, the same institution Cosby attended.

"Cosby said, 'Go do this!'" Freeman says with a hearty laugh, explaining that after 30 years, he had to struggle with college entrance examinations.

Working with students in a university setting has taken some adjustments which Freeman, who has worked in professional theater some 30 years, is trying to manage

with a smile.

During a recent visit, he had students interrupting him with excuses about missed rehearsals, costume questions, and problems with other instructors who didn't want to give them class release time to work on Freeman's production of "A Soldier's Play."

Yet, he says that there is no thrill like watching a student, who after repeated attempts, finally gets the part right.

Recently, in Howard University's newly renovated Ira Aldridge Theater, Freeman's "miseries" paid off as he and a cast of students and professionals presented "A Soldier's Play," a story of murder and racism during World War II which was written by Charles Fuller.

Freeman played the role of the irascible Sgt. Waters, a part played on the screen by the late Adolph Caesar.

Speaking fondly of Caesar, he told a story of twice having almost played this same part on the New York stage and in the Norman Jewison film production of the play. When Caesar needed a two week rest from the Broadway production, Freeman was asked to step in but declined and then again he was asked to audition for the film when it seemed Caesar would be unavailable for the role.

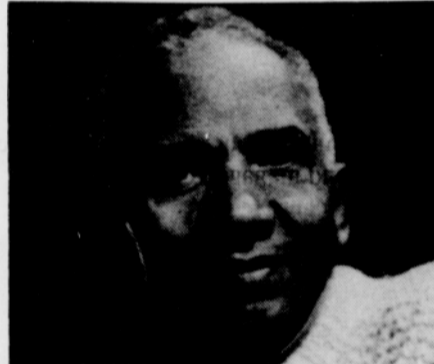
In the Howard production, Freeman is also directing, a decision he now jokingly laments as foolhardy.

"I don't think playwrights should direct their own plays and I don't think actors should direct themselves either," he stresses. "It makes the process rather fragmented."

In addition to his work on the university production, Freeman, who has directed for both stage and television, also teaches a class, "Acting for Television and Film," on Mondays and hopes to teach some master acting classes next semester.

Asked about his own career, which he describes as "somewhat checkered," he simply says that he is looking into a few things. In the meantime, he is contemplating retirement while happily living on his boat in a little town near Annapolis, Md.

Actor Al Freeman Jr., who portrayed Lt. Ed Hall for many years on the daytime soap opera "One Life to Live," is now teaching in Howard University's College of Fine Arts. As artist-in-residence, Freeman and a cast of students and professionals recently presented a production, "A Soldier's Play," at the university's Ira Aldridge Theater. (Photo by Harlee Little)



A.R.T. To Premiere Holiday Voices



Selaelo Maredi, Renee Margolin and Diana Loverso (left to right) in "Holiday Voices," an intimate and personal revue of holiday songs, stories and traditions, created by Artists Repertory Theatre.

Oregon Symphonic Band To Perform

The Oregon Symphonic Band, Oregon's Premier Symphonic Band, a group of 60 Portland area professional free lance musicians and music educators, is currently presenting its fourth concert season.

This very fine concert band has performed at many Portland area locations including the Portland Performing Arts Center and at the Western International Band Clinic in Seattle in 1987. The group was formed in 1986 and presented six concerts its first year. Nine concerts will be performed in the 1989-90 season.

Mr. Dell Herd, director at Sunset Mr. William band director at University will duties this year. highly respected in tors, clinicians and



The band per- of concert band audiences can relate to and be very entertained. Various soloists, ensembles and guest conductors have appeared with the group in each series.

One of the unique features of this group is to perform a number by encircling the listeners in the audience. The band stages its entry through the audience to the stage. The effect is a beautiful stereophonic sound which engulfs the audience. To further draw the audience into the concert, various sections of the band play short demonstration pieces to show off their virtuosity.

Some guest conductors in previous concerts have included Norman Leyden, Associate Conductor of the Oregon Symphony, Warren Barker of Los Angeles, and Mr. William Tuttle, Portland State University. Soloists in the past include Richard Thornburg, trumpet, Mike Donohue, narrator and Margie Boule vocal soloist in the 1988-89 series.

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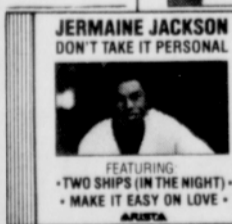
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