



# ENTERTAINMENT



Portland Black Repertory Theatre Opens Original Musical Comedy

## RED BEANS & RICE



LEONTINE GUILLIARD

Red Beans & Rice is a musical comedy that dramatizes the story of the history of black music in America. The setting moves from church to nightclub to church; featuring the songs of Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, Nat King Cole, James Cleveland; Duke Ellington, and more. There is choral singing and jazz and tap dancing, with a congregation of colorful characters and a zany romantic couple.

Live music is performed by a six piece jazz band under the direction of local jazz pianist, Janice Scroggins. The original theme song, Red Beans & Rice, was written and arranged by Thara Memory, Janice Scroggins, and members of the original 1980 Red Beans and Rice cast. Vocal director, Willie Binns has created original arrangements of spiritual and gospel songs. Choreography is by Sagirah Banks, set design by Patrick Steward, costume design by Wanda Walden, and lighting by Jon Ares.

The play was first presented to sold-out audiences in 1980 in repertory with the choreodrama, For colored girls who've considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf. According to playwright, Rosemary Allen, "It was meant to give us an opportunity to laugh to each other, and to get away from the serious problems that seem to always be prevalent in theater about the black experience. We simply wanted to unapologetically embrace the wonderful and thrilling soulfulness of black people."

Red Beans & Rice features a dancing, singing and acting cast of 18 artists and a 6 piece band. Actors include: Vernon Ambus, Johnathan Berry, Rose Ann Butler, Debra Brown, Leontine Guillard, Lewis Dwayne Golden, Gypsy Dance, Tabari Jones, Soomi Kim, Gayle Miller, Louise Moaning, Kudra Owens, Brenda Phillips, Karen Phillips, Zawdie Phillips, Barbara Thomas, Denise Williams, and Jessie Jackson.

Actress and blues singer, Leontine

Guillard, is a special featured artist. She will recreate her popular role of "Messy Bessie" (Bessie Smith). Ms. Guillard currently lives in Los Angeles where she has played leading roles in television movies, and performed as a blues and jazz singer in clubs. She currently performs in Los Angeles with CADEAU, a jazz duo, with her partner Michael R. Simpson. Her extensive credits include the HBO's drama trilogy, "Prison Stories; Women on the Inside," airing last year, for which she was submitted for an Emmy nomination. Other credits include the critically acclaimed KCET's American Playhouse production of Zora Is My Name, and adaptation by Ruby Dee; "Frank's Place," and the NBC movie of the week, "She Knows Too Much." She made her feature film debut in "Nuts," starring Barbra Streisand and directed by the late Martin Ritt who was the creative genius behind such film classics as "Sounder," "Hud," and "Norma Rae." Ms. Guillard is the younger sister of T.V. and screen actor, Yaphet Koto.

Red Beans and Rice was first presented in 1980 at the Cabell Center for the Performing Arts with a cast that featured musicians, actors and dancers who have since become local and nationally recognized talent. Musicians included, trumpet player and bandleader, Thara Memory who was musical director; Obo Addy, percussionist, Don Mumford, drummer, John Mazzocco, bass, and Janice Scroggins, piano. Ruby Burns was choreographer, and the play was the debut of Portland's currently only African American Equity actress, Brenda Phillips.

The 1992 Portland Black Repertory Theatre season culminates with emerging playwright, Marian X's Wet Carpet, directed by Terry Bellamy, of St. Paul, Minnesota (Previews are September 16, 17 and opening September 18 through October 11). The play features an all-female cast. It is the north-west premiere of this new drama set in the present, in Baltimore, which tells the story of three sisters and the daughter they raise.

## TOTAL ECLIPSE



Victor Johnson

Dre' Baby

Bernie K.

Dave Brown

in the physical universe a total eclipse is a forbidding darkness caused when one planet crosses in front of a source of light. It's a great cause of wonder, but the result is an even stronger energy and brightness that emanates thereafter. In ancient times it was a sign of change, a symbol that something new was on the horizon. In 1992 this Total Eclipse is a throbbin' groovin' rockin' slamin' feelin' band comin' at ya courtesy of vocalist Bernie K., guitarist Victor Johnson, drummer Dave Brown and bassist Dre' Baby. Brilliant musicians in an equation that is pure magic. Alchemy is alive!

Here's how the cards lined up for Total Eclipse so they could record their debut album on Tabu/A&M Records. Bernie K. was the powerhouse voice, Dave Brown was the master blaster behind the drum kit in the original all black, hard rock metal band Sound Barrier who were signed out of the LA clubs and released three albums (yes, well before Living Colour). Victor Johnson built his reputation with the respected Bus Boys, while Dre' Baby came from the more R&B and funk side of life. There was one common thread between the four members who came together in Total Eclipse. "We all have our influences. I love rock and like to do the funk thing," said bassist Dre'. "Dave has a jazzier background, but deep down we all want to rock." It shows.

"Everything that had to happen in order to make this band be a reality did," said drummer Dave Brown. "I'd been bugging Vic for years to put a rock band together." "I had originally come to Los Angeles from Colorado looking for a hard rock band," said the highly respected guitarist Johnson. VJ ended up touring and recording as the axeman in the Bus Boys and sat in on a few Sound Barrier gigs. Dre' baby came west from Cleveland, found work as a session player, also joined the Bus Boys and recently recorded with Jennifer Batten (Michael Jackson's last tour guitarist). He was the final link in the Total Eclipse chain of fortune. "I kept thinking," said vocalist Bernie K. "Lord just give me a bass player. We found one who could really lay it down!"

Once intact the Eclipse captured the attention of producer Michael McDonald (the engineer for such diverse artists as Martika, Patti La Belle, Ray Charles, and the Desert Rose Band) who took the band into the studio to record demos. The band played a handful of shows, and quickly established a reputation inside the tight musical community of Los Angeles with their live performances. "Vocalist Bernie K. combines the sensual assurance of Marvin Gaye with the firebreathing vocal finesse of Rod Stewart" and... "Guitarist Victor Johnson's solos possess all the shock inducing impact of a concussion bomb," said the LA Daily News. After that,

Brown's brother-in-law saw the band live and walked the tape into Clarence Avant's office. He played it without identifying the band and that started the ball rolling. "Ultimately, we were given full control to make the album we wanted," remembers Brown. Immediately the band went into the studio with producer McDonald to lay down the tracks. "We turned on the tape and just started jamming to get the vibe," said Dre' "and went from there."

"I just wanted something that felt right. That's our motto," chimed in the undeniable Bernie K., who captured the attention of Bruce Springsteen, while Total Eclipse was recording their album and ended up doing a session with the Boss. "As long as it feels right is what this band is all about. There hasn't been one day since we've been together that I haven't heard the word 'groove'. It all starts there, it has to be there. We all want something that is universal, and great music has to have a groove."

The real proof is in the music you'll find in the thirteen tracks in the self-titled debut album. Total Eclipse has combined a grinding groove (what they call "Rock n' Groove") and superb musicianship with a confidence that makes them unique. Listen to "Get Outta Yo' Body" and you'll feel like dancing. On "Check Me Out" you'll understand Bernie K.'s invitation to get into his band. "I like to twist the lyrics sexually," Bernie says, "because I think rock should be sexy. Get into it and we know you'll dig it." Put "Freedom Star" on the stereo and you'll understand the sentiment that comes from four black musicians who are socially aware and passionate. And for those music lovers who appreciate great guitar work, Victor Johnson's solo will send shivers to your fingers as you wonder where those notes come from. "Fire In The Rain" which has become Bernie K.'s signature work is redesigned this time. It has grown from a simple piano ballad about the demise of a former band, to the title track of one album, and is now a Total Eclipse sweeping and climatic favorite, as well as the first single from their debut release.

"I think the strength of this band," said Johnson, "is that we are doing what we really feel and there is a special chemistry." "We can look each other in the eye," adds Dre', "without saying a word and know if it's right." "I've even had people come up to me," concluded Bernie K. "and say 'man you guys play so tight, you sound like you wear the same underwear!'"

Rarely will you find four such spirited musicians with such a commanding feel for their music, a broad spectrum of musicality, all focused on one target, as the players in this band. But then how often does a total eclipse come along?

### Arrested Development



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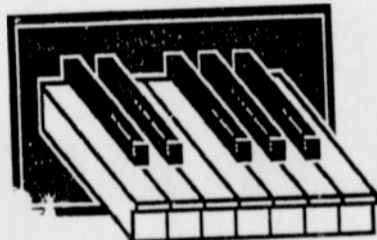
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