

# Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

## Blues Greats B.B. King, Ruth Brown Introduce "The Blues Story"

"I am convinced that the future music of this country must be founded on what are called Negro melodies...There is nothing in the whole range of composition that cannot find a thematic source there." Antonin Dvorak Czech composer, "Symphony in E Minor, From The New World" (December, 1893).

Blues greats B.B. King and Ruth Brown warmed up a corner of Manhattan's bitterly cold business district with a recent impromptu "concert" that introduced the radio documentary series, "The Blues Story: Triumph Of An American Music Form."

Scheduled to air on 480 radio stations nationwide, "The Blues Story," a series of six one half hour audio tapes, was produced by radio America and underwritten by Philip Morris Companies Inc., to commemorate Black History Month, February, 1994.

The series was introduced to the public during a reception for more than a hundred supporters who braved New York City's Arctic winds to reach the Sculpture Court, Whitney Museum, a the Manhattan offices of Philip Morris 'companies Inc.

The spacious atrium then rocked for a time as B.B. King sang out, "But, if it's no tasking too much, please send me someone to love..." Ruth Brown later thrilled the crowd with: "You're the best thing that ever happened to me."

The host for the evening, George L. Knox II, Vice President, Public Affairs, Philip Morris Companies Inc., told the guests: "To many of us the blues are about more than music—they are about the triumphs of African Americans, the human stories that are sad and harsh, and at the same time, sweet and joyous."



Ruth Brown, B.B. King centered behind portrait

Knox said earlier: "Philip Morris is pleased to help develop educational projects and give all people a deeper understanding of the contributions of African Americans to the mosaic of our country."

The radio documentary series, which will be given, without cost to schools and other not for profit organiza-

tions, explores the birth and evolution of the blues. Placing the music in an historical context, it features entertaining and informative interviews with such legendary blues musicians as B.B. King, Buddy Guy and Junior Wells, as well as successful modern-day blues artists like Robert Cray.

Noted blues scholars help trace the blues' journey from the Mississippi Delta to urban 'American cities and to England, where the Rolling Stones, the Beatles and the Animals adapted the form and helped popularize it among whites.

The series producers note that at its birth, the blues reflected the social

isolation and adverse circumstances of its creators; but the blues also offered encouragement to be strong and to overcome obstacles. Thorough its music and poetry the blues expressed life's struggles and celebrations, travails and victories. It expresses sadness and joy. The message of the blues today is the same and its resonance is

felt around the world.

As an enduring American music art form, the blues continues to inspire musicians and fans worldwide. And—as the late jazz trumpeter Miles Davis noted in his classic composition, "All Blues"—the blues still lies a the heart of much good music, its influence extending beyond the narrow confines of its genre.

Others heard in the radio series are: Henry Louis Gates, Chairman, Department of African-American studies, Harvard University; Jude Peiser, Director, Center for Southern Folklore; Amiri Baraka, poet and author, "Blues People"; Pete Seeger, musician; John Hope Franklin, James B. Duke Professor of history, Duke University; Jim O'Neal, former editor, Living blues Magazine; Sid Greaves, Director, Delta Blues Museum; Samuel Charters, author, "The Country Blues" and Peter Guralnick, author, "The Blues: Searching for Robert Johnson."

Philip Morris Companies Inc. has underwritten radio America's series of Black History Month documentaries every year since 1989 and each production has won a prize for excellence.

The programs, in chronological order, were: "Afro-Americans and the Evolution of a Living Constitution" (1989); "Equal Rights in America: Desegregation Under Law" (1990); "Contributions: African-Americans and the American Mosaic" (1991); "Mr. Justice Thurgood Marshall and the Struggle to End Legal Segregation" (1992) and "Black Achievers: Prescriptions for Progress" (1993)

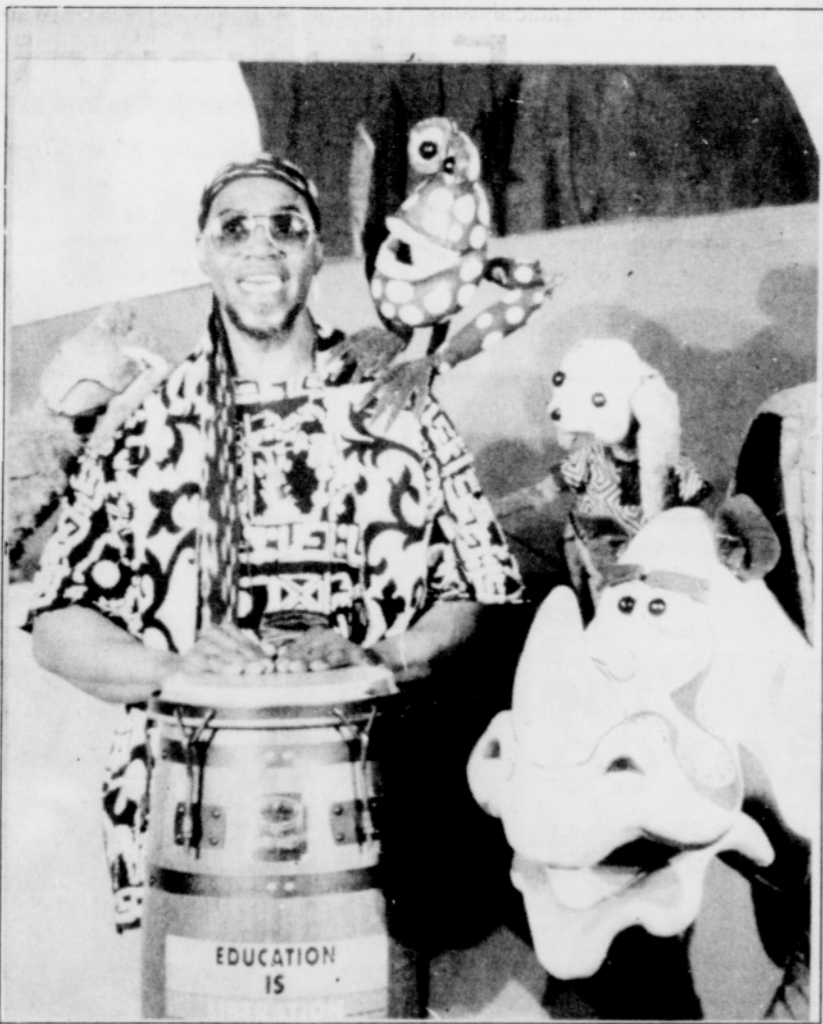
## Tears Of Joy Theatre

Take a journey to east Africa and the American Southland when Tears of Joy Theatre presents Brer Rabbit Tales. Brer Rabbit stories in the United States evolved from African tales about the antics of along-eared fellow named Sungura the Hare. Tears of Joy Theatre's production includes stories from both continents.

Tears of Joy Theatre is producing Brer Rabbit Tales as a collaboration with African-American storyteller Nyewusi Askari. Askari is an expert on african-American culture and a multi-talented performer. In his creative endeavors, Askari delves into the role art plays in educating people. He uses traditions from Afro-American culture, teaching people about those traditions to help them find their own ability to create art. Askari will be live, on stage with Tears of Joy Theatre's puppets recounting the outrageous rabbit tales and playing drums and harmonica.

Laugh as the resourceful Sungura the Hare and Brer Rabbit enlist the help of their animal friends to get them out of tight spots. You'll meet Chewi the leopard, Weha the jackal, Chjura the frog, Pembele the rhinoceros and many, many more.

Brer Rabbit Tales includes three short stories; Son of the Long One, Tug-a-War and Signifyin(g) Monkey. These fiberglass and fabric creations are expertly manipulated by Mary Harrison and Fred Riley, two of Tears of Joy Theatre's staff of professional actors/puppeteers. Harrison and Riley joined Tears of Joy in 1993 and toured with Tales of Japan before beginning work on Brer Rabbit Tales.



Guest artist, Askari, with his Tears of Joy Theatre puppet Friends from "Brer Rabbit Tales"

Brer Rabbit Tales, sponsored by Target Stores, will be presented at the Columbia Arts Center (400 W. Evergreen Blvd., Vancouver) February 19, 20, 26, and 27 at 2pm. Portland performances will be held at the Winningstad Theatre of the Portland Center for the Performing Arts (1111 SW Broadway) March 5, 6, 12 and 13. Saturday performances

are at 11am and 2pm. Sunday performances are at 2pm. Tickets are available by calling (503) 248-0557 or (206) 695-0477 weekdays from 9am to 5pm.

Brer Rabbit Tales is recommended for children age three and older. The play will be interpreted for hearing impaired audiences February 26 and March 6.

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