

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

The Portland Observer

No Gloom In These Tombs

So, you haven't felt the inspiration kick in powerful enough to propel you to the Imperial Tombs of China ticket stand, is that right? As an exclusive liaison between you and the Arts, it is my duty to probe this dilemma further and give you honest dish on this exhibit.

The unearthed tombs primarily date back to the warring states period between 475 BC-221 BC. Their age of 2,000 years seems unfathomable at times, but pure awe breaks you out of the confusion as a larger than life-size Chinese soldier-statue peers down on you after spending more than twenty centuries in a Chinese emperor's tomb.

Thousands of soldiers were found buried in the tombs to defend the emperor's spirit. And might I also note that no two soldiers had the same haircut. They were probably given different nicknames also, but that wasn't specified.

If you are among the people who read less than half of the assigned reading for history class, and willingly let loose the memorized facts five minutes after the final exam, don't fret. The tour is very user

friendly and allows you to float along at your own pace with a pre-recorded cassette that caters to both history buffs and history dropouts alike.

What strikes with greatest force is the Chinese fascination for death and life after death, which is the underlying theme of the exhibit. An emperor was thought to be the ultimate ruler



of all under the heavens and when age took hold it then became his duty to design his tomb with treasures that would provide the same luxuries for his soul after death. One infamous emperor drained one-third of the national treasure in creating his lavish tomb.

Had the people not carried out the laborious tasks of the burial, it was a common belief that emperor would

return to the living world as a vengeful ghost.

It is a gross assumption to think this ancient civilization would be primal in artistic skill, as you can clearly see for yourself. In a surprisingly worldly sense, they appreciated art and went to great lengths for its production.

Now is certainly the best time to go, lines have shortened and the museum volunteers are still fresh and cheery (and they look so cute in their black slacks and red sashes). And take the kids! They will be given an entertaining kiddie version of the tour cassette. Many adults were using it instead of the adult version and midway through the tour I watched them dancing and chuckling and quickly became insanely jealous.

That wraps up the jive on this week's pick. The Imperial Tombs of China will be showcased at the Portland Art Museum (1219 SW Park Avenue) until September 15. Tickets can be purchased by phone at (503) 790-ARTS. As I always say, there's no business like the coffin business.

Norman Brown's Better Days Ahead

"WARNING: Prolonged listening to this album may lead to peaceful drives up the coast, frequent romantic encounters, reduced stress, and an end to lonely nights at home."

Which album deserves such a warning label, you may ask. The answer, of course, is *Better Days Ahead*, the latest effort from MoJAZZ recording artist and Soul Train Music Award winner, Norman Brown. *Better Days Ahead* contains just the right balance of upbeat styling and mood enhancing sheen to qualify as an exceptional collection of music. In short, this album is dynamic. With this much power, it's hard to believe that this album is available over the counter without a prescription.

For those in low spirits, take heart; this album is the perfect pick-you-up. After listening to the ten-song set, one has to sense that surely everything will be okay after all. Birds will sing, kids will smile, and the sun will shine. But for Norman, who claims his music is "drama to the ears", he wouldn't have it any other way. His aim is to communicate with people and to touch them on the deepest level possible. "I want to open up the lines of communication and talk to people through the mu-



Jazz guitarist, Norman Brown

sic," says Brown. "I need to know that what I am trying to say is getting through."

The response to Norman's first two releases indicates that he is moving in the right direction. The jazz guitarist's album, *Just Between Us*, the debut release for both the artist and his label, MoJAZZ Records, sold over 150,000 units. By jazz standards this represents a good day at

bat, but Norman didn't stop there; he was just revving his engine. His follow-up album, *After The Storm*, grabbed both the Gavin and Soul Train Music Awards for 1995 Jazz Album of the Year and continues to soar on its way to gold. On top of that, the album has remained on the Billboard Jazz charts for over 109 weeks. The message is quite clear—people are listening.

VARIETY ENTERTAINMENT SUMMARY

Actor Returns To Killing Fields

Sam Waterston, who starred in the 1984 film "The Killing Fields," has traveled to Cambodia for a visit aimed at highlighting the misery caused by land mines. Waterston is a board member of the advocacy group Refugees International. The actor portrayed New York Times writer Sydney Schanberg in "The Killing Fields." Waterston's co-star, Haing Ngor, who was shot dead in Los Angeles this year, won an Oscar for his work in the film.

Lost Dean TV Appearances Found

The Museum of Television and Radio, working with Nick at Nite, has uncovered four long-sought programs for its collection, including three James Dean television appearances. The three Dean appearances in 1953 include his work in the 30-minute films "Something for an Empty Briefcase" (from NBC's "Campbell Soundstage" series), "Rex Newman" (from NBC's "The Big Story" series) and "Death is My Neighbor" (part of the CBS series "Danger"). Nick at Nite's TV Land plans to air the films July 28.

Vargas, Lunden Say All Sunny

Elizabeth Vargas and Joan Lunden are disputing reports of tension between them on ABC's "Good Morning America." Lunden told USA Today that it saddens her "that people want to see some kind of cat fight. Ever read anything like that with a guy? When have you ever read, 'The other guy better watch out?'" Vargas said the reports upset her and Lunden. The younger Vargas moved from NBC to "Good Morning America's" newsreader slot May 28, igniting speculation that ABC is grooming her to replace Lunden.

Another 'Die Hard'?

Bruce Willis is considering a fourth "Die Hard." According to sources, Willis has expressed interest in several scripts — among them "Tears of the Sun," a "Deliverance"-like yarn set in the Amazon. Every previous "Die Hard" has relied on curious literary antecedents. The novel "Nothing Lasts Forever" provided the basic plot for "Die Hard," "58 Minutes" sparked the sequel, and a script about a mad bomber called "Simon Says" provided the basic framework for "Die Hard With a Vengeance."

Pharez Whitted



"The most important thing a musician can do is express himself through his music," states trumpet master Pharez Whitted. He is the producer, songwriter, composer, and arranger of his second release on MoJAZZ records, entitled *Mysterious Cargo*.

MoJAZZ recording artist Ronee Martin adds her outstanding vocal style to the soothing sound of the cover tune, "Grapevine." The collaborative efforts of these fine musicians, along with Pharez's keen musical ability, give *Mysterious Cargo* an understated power with a charismatically funky effect.



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Portland Center Stage Begins Subscription Sales

Portland Center Stage has begun subscription ticket sales for the 1996-97 season to the general public, with full season packages to five plays beginning at just \$49.50.

Tickets may be purchased by calling the box office at (503) 274-6588. Brochures are available by calling the same number.

A subscription consists of tickets to the entire 1996-97 season, which includes George Bernard Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession*; Jaston Williams, Joe Sears and Ed Howard's *A Tuna Christmas*; August Strindberg's *Miss Julie*; Jane Wagner's *The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe*; and Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The*

Rivals. Special package offers for the season include the Gallery Talks Series and Professionals Preview Night.

Other, flexible three-play packages are also available.

The many benefits of subscribing include a 10% discount on tickets, exchange privileges, lost ticket insurance, and admission to other special events and a peek backstage via the theatre newsletter.

Subscribers also receive a 20% discount on additional single tickets to each season's Family Playhouse Series production (this year *The Rivals*), especially appropriate for bringing the whole family to the theatre.

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