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Iconic 'Cleopatra Jones' Star Dies

Hollywood's first black heroine

Actress Tamara Dobson -- best-remembered for her portrayal of the kung fu-fighting, Afro-wearing, fashion-conscious government super agent Cleopatra Jones -- died Oct. 2 of complications from pneumonia and multiple sclerosis in a Baltimore rehabilitation facility. She was 59 years old.

Born May 14, 1947, in Baltimore, Md., Dobson was a former beautician who earned a degree in fashion illustration from the Maryland Institute of Art. She went on to work as a professional model.

She launched her film career in 1972 with a small role in "Fuzz," playing Yul Brynner's girlfriend (the film also starred Burt Reynolds and Raquel Welch.) Her big break came in 1973 when she was cast in the title, pioneering role of "Cleopatra Jones," opposite Shelley Winters, Bernie Casey and Antonio Fargas.

The film introduced the first black super heroine to the silver screen; prior to Dobson's role, the blaxploitation genre had been dis-

tinguished primarily by black males doing battle with the white establishment, crooked cops, drug dealers and pimps.

Her character inspired the creation of other tough, black female leads in movies such as "Coffey,"

United States and abroad, her character was often likened to a female version of James Bond, every bit the fierce fighter and fashion maven as the iconic spy. Known for her 3-foot-wide hat brims, colorful garb and flowing fur robes,

she was recognized by the Guinness Book of World Records as the tallest leading lady in film.

"She was not afraid to start a trend. She designed a lot of the clothing that so many women emulated. With the knowledge from her degree and her natural creativity, she helped develop elegant fashions, especially for tall women," says Dobson's brother Peter.

Ms. Dobson lived most of her adult life in New York, where she and tennis legend Arthur Ashe became the first two African-Americans to reside at the exclusive Carnegie House Condominiums at 57th and 6th Streets. She was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis six years ago.

"It was tough going through that debilitating disease, especially with her athleticism and involvement in karate," Peter Dobson said. "That was something she had to fight, and that fight was horrendous...and being a proud individual, the fight was even harder for her."

"She was the perfect combination of power and kindness," he added.



Tamara Dobson was known as the Kung Fu Queen of the 1970s with her role as 'Cleopatra Jones.'

"Foxy Brown," "Get Christie Love," and "Black Belt Jones." Cleopatra Jones was parodied in "Austin Powers in Goldmember" in 2002.

In 1975, Dobson reprised her super spy role in "Cleopatra Jones and the Casino of Gold." A federal agent fighting the drug trade in the

Cleopatra Jones' penchant for exotic clothing and super-sized Afros inspired mid-1970s fashion trends, including the popular waist-length, leather-trimmed fur jackets.

At the peak of her career, Dobson, who also trained in martial arts, cut a stunning figure. At 6 feet, 2

Portland Art Museum: Soul Vaccination --

One of Portland's favorite soul bands, Soul Vaccination, takes the Portland Arts Museum stage, Wednesday, Oct. 11, 5:30 p.m., at 1219 S.W. Park Ave, mixing all the best 70's sounds from R&B to funk! Cost is \$5 for members and \$8 for non-members.

Human Rights on Film --

The Northwest Film Center Presents Human Rights on Film, continuing through Nov. 9. Nine films are featured that deepen awareness to the values of dignity, equality and justice as filmmakers tell universal stories of human struggle, sacrifice and triumph. For titles and show times, visit nwfilm.org.

OMSI Presents: Black Holes --

A flight simulator transforms real scientific data about black holes into stunning visualizations in OMIS's new planetarium show "Black holes: The Other Side of Infinity." For more information, call 503-797-4000 or visit omsi.edu.

Norman Sylvester Band --

Welcome back Norman Sylvester, who is recovering from the hip replacement he received over the summer, at Domenic's in Milwaukie on Friday, Oct. 13 and on Saturday, Oct. 14 at the Wonder Ballroom on North Russell. For more information, call the Boogie Cat Hotline, 503-281-5989.



Norman Sylvester

Portland Lesbian and Gay Film Festival --

The Portland Lesbian & Gay Film Festival takes place through Sunday, Oct. 15 at Cinema 21, 616 N.W. 21 Ave. For schedules, visit: plgff.org.

Live Music Every Night --

Kick off your week with live jazz every Sunday at 9 p.m. at The Blue Monk (3341 SE Belmont). Participate in a mixed-media open mic night each Monday at the Back to Back Café (614 East Burnside). The Thorn City Improv, featuring members of Old Dominion, Quivah, The Chosen and The Black Notes, perform at Conan's (3862 S.E. Hawthorne) every Tuesday at 10 p.m. Celebrate Hump Day at The Red Sea (381 S.W. 3rd Ave) after work on Wednesdays, from 5 to 9 p.m. Inch toward the weekend at the Candlelight Room (2032 SW 5th Ave) with the Black Notes, performing each Thursday. Celebrate Friday with Mel Brown, who plays jazz at Salty's on the Columbia every Friday and Saturday, and Jimmy Mak's on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Round off your week with live Reggae on Fridays and Saturdays at Montego Bay, (1239 S.W. Jefferson).

Call to Artists -- Local artists are encouraged to show off their talent by becoming a Portland Open Studios Artist. Each year, 96 artists are chosen from the metro area to open their stu-

ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

dios and become part of an exciting regional art event. Visit portlandopenstudios.com for more information.

Trippin' through Town --

Take a trip through time to find the hottest poetry, hip-hop and soul influencing Portland on Wednesdays at the Ohm. \$7 cover. 31 N.W. First Ave.

Belly Dance Classes --

Caravan Studios offers classes in belly dance, African dance and more. Visit www.gypsycaravan.us.

Time to Jam --

Jam Night, Portland's ever-popular comedy and variety show is at Christian Performing Arts Center, 8131 N. Denver Ave. Shows continue every Friday night starting at 9 p.m. with dinner by Mondemaj Catering next door to the show at 6:30 and 7:30 p.m.

Hip-hop Dance Classes --

Vancouver-Clark Parks and Recreation is hosting family friendly hip-hop dance classes for ages 5 to 18. Various lessons teach rhythm, technique, coordination, agility, combinations and teamwork through urban dance moves. For more information, call 360-696-8236.

Salmon Festival at Oxbow Park --

Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 14-15, the 23rd annual Salmon Festival celebrates the return of the fall Chinook salmon to the Sandy River and inspires us to value clean water. The festival offers; an interactive exhibit, nature walks, engaging activities for children, arts and crafts, demonstrations, music, storytelling, horse-drawn wagon rides, a salmon barbecue, and food court. The Oxbow Regional Park is 8 miles east of Gresham. For more information, visit metro-region.org/salmonfestival.

Spooky Haunted MAIZE --

The MAIZE at the Sauvie Island pumpkin patch offers laughter by day and spooky fun by moonlight in October. Haunted evenings Oct. 13-14, 20-21, 27-28 and Halloween Night! Visit portlandmaze.com or call 503-621-7110 for more information. Regular Admission: \$6 adults; \$4 kids 6-12 (5 and under free).

Radical Girl --

Wednesday Oct. 18, 7:30 p.m., Alix Dobkin, folk singer, political activist, educator, and writer will be reading from her memoirs at the In Other Words, Women's Books and Resources on Northeast Killingsworth Street. That same evening,

she will perform at Mississippi Pizza at 9 p.m.

Orchestra Opens Season --

Portland Columbia Symphony Orchestra opens its 25th anniversary season on Friday, Oct. 13 at 8 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church, 1838 S.W. Jefferson St. For more information, contact 503-234-4077.

'Witches, Midwives and Nurses' - Book Review --

Learn about the history of women's reproductive healthcare in the U.S. on Wednesday, Oct. 25 at 6:30 p.m. during an autumn buffet, with vegetarian option at 6 p.m. at the Bread and Roses Center, 819 N. Killingsworth St. For more information, call Radical Women at 503-240-4462.

'A Season for Peace' --

The Portland Gay Men's Chorus kicks off their 27th season with the theme of "A Season for Peace" with a "cabaret soiree" on Saturday, Oct. 21 at 8 p.m. in Kaul Auditorium at Reed College. The holiday concert "Goodwill to All" assembles music from various cultures and traditions to celebrate the holiday season with performances scheduled at Kaul Auditorium on Friday and Saturday Dec. 15-16 at 8 p.m. and Sunday, Dec. 17 at 2 p.m.



'Ragtime' Epic Story of Struggle --

Lakewood Theatre Co. presents "Ragtime: The Musical," an epic story of struggle, dignity, honor and acceptance in segregated America at the turn of the 20th century. The fictional lives of three very different American families become dramatically intertwined with real-life historical figures and events. Performances continue through Oct. 29 at Lakewood Center for the Arts, 368 S. State St. in Lake Oswego. For more information, call 503-635-3901 or on line at www.lakewood-center.org

Holiday Ale Festival --

The 11th Annual Holiday Ale Festival will begin on Thursday, Nov. 30, and continue through Sunday, Dec. 3, at Pioneer Courthouse Square, 701 S.W. Sixth Ave. Complimentary sodas for minors and designated drivers.

Lakewood Theatre Company

Ragtime the Musical

directed by Greg Tamblyn

Sept. 15 - Oct. 29 2006

Thurs. - Sat. at 8:00 PM,

Sundays at 7:00 PM

Sun 2:00 PM matinees Oct. 15,

Oct. 22 and Oct. 29

Tickets: 503-635-3901

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www.lakewood-center.org

performances at Lakewood Center for the Arts
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