

# Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

## Forgotten Songs of the Heart

### Black Pearl Sings at Portland Center Stage

Delve into American history through the forgotten folk songs of former slaves with Portland Center Stage's production of *Black Pearl Sings!* Now playing through June 17 in the Ellyn Bye Studio at the Armory.

In 1935 Texas, Susannah, an academic and song collector for the Library of Congress, visits a high-security prison where she meets Pearl, an African-American woman imprisoned for murder who longs to leave prison and find her lost daughter. Hoping to record the treasure trove of spirituals and African folk songs that only Pearl knows—and make her reputation on the discov-



Chavez Ravine stars in *Black Pearl Sings* at Portland Center Stage.

eries—Susannah bargains for Pearl's parole and arranges for several public performances.

Featuring beautiful a cappella renditions of little-known American folk songs, Director Bill Fennelly describes the play as, "about memory. Memory is power. It's our

connection to our ancestors, family and those people who have come before us." The two women soon find themselves walking a delicate line between exposure and exploitation. *Black Pearl Sings!* chronicles a powerful story about fighting for one's soul in a world where anyone can be a commodity.

Alberta "Pearl" Johnson is played by Chavez Ravine, a newcomer to Portland Center Stage and a native of Chicago who has appeared off-Broadway in Steppenwolf Theatre's *The Bluest Eye*.

Show times are 7:30 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday, with 2 p.m. matinees on Saturdays and Sundays and matinees at noon on select Thursdays.

Tickets can be purchased online at [pcs.org](http://pcs.org), by phone at 503-445-3700 or by visiting the box office located at 128 N.W. 11th Ave.

## Trying to Get Back on Track

### Bobby Brown finds healing through music

(AP) — Bobby Brown says it took him a long time to come out with a new album because he's spent so much time trying to get his life on track.

Now on tour with bandmates New Edition, Brown says he's ready to return to his solo career with the album "Masterpiece," due on June 5.

"It's what I've been through throughout my life, and just trying to heal myself through my music," the 43-year-old singer said in a recent interview.

"Masterpiece" is Brown's first album in 14 years. He was a multiplatinum star with New Edition and later developed his solo career. But his well-documented battle with drugs and his legal woes led to his musical decline. His turbulent marriage to Whitney Houston further eroded his image.

In a recent interview with the "Today" show's Matt Lauer, Brown denied that he got his late ex-wife addicted to drugs. Houston's career was derailed by her drug use, which came to the public's attention

during her marriage to Brown. The superstar drowned in February in Beverly Hills, Calif.; her death was complicated by heart disease and cocaine use, according to authorities.

"The Matt Lauer interview was just for me to clear the air about what everyone was feeling about my ex-



Bobby Brown

wife's death," Brown said.

Although he was arrested for DUI in March, Brown insists he has been drug-free for more than seven years. He said his attempt to get his life in order is part of the reason why the album took so long to make.

"When you're working on yourself, you have to really concentrate on working on yourself and it takes a back seat to what you want to do and what I'm gonna do," he said.

Brown says "Masterpiece," which he started working on last year, is "the best album I've done so far.

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