

Theatre...

By Claude Reed, Jr.

The American Theatre Association recently held its National Convention in New York City. Over 2,000 actors, directors, playwrights, teachers and critics were in attendance at the Sheraton Centre Hotel for a three-day program.

In its 46th year, the ATA Convention covered a wide range of theatre interests in its numerous sessions. Noted actress-choreographer **Carmen De Lavallade** headed a session on "The Director and the Choreographer;" Actress **Claudia McNeil** did a session on "Developing Black Theatre Programs in Army Theatre Arts;" while other sessions included examinations of Ibsen and Shakespeare, the Black and Hispanic Playwright with **Amiri Baraka**, an examination of Lesbian Theatre and the Role of Cable TV in Black Theatre, among others.

Conducting the opening ceremony and keynote address, actor-director **Ossie Davis** offered a challenge to American theatre to become more socially conscious.

"Theatre is a very serious enterprise," Davis proclaimed, "Often we forget that, because in our society we tend to look upon the arts as a form of entertainment. But we are in a time of great crisis, where important decisions are being made in our name. They have to do with such topics as the end of the world, which is a literal possibility, let alone changes...in the philosophy of our government. It seems to me that theatre has a basic responsibility at a time like this to help us make those decisions."

By most indications, Davis' challenge did not go unanswered as the various sessions did address some serious issues. In fact, two pre-conventions were also held for two days prior to the Sheraton Centre event. One workshop dealt with Women in Theatre, while the other, titled Black Theatre Form and Style, explored theatre technique. This theatre workshop was comprised of Black people from all over the country and as far away as California.

Along with the panel sessions on technique, several plays were seen by participants including **Elizabeth Van Dyke's** "Love to All, Lorraine" and **Charles Fuller's** "A Soldier's Play." The affair was wrapped up with a dinner/reception at the Harlem State Office Building.

The fact that such a diverse representation of people came together for

New York Hosts ATA Convention Ossie Davis Keynotes



Ossie Davis

a unified purpose is an encouraging sign that theatre may soon become much more exciting.

Broadway Notes...

Vinnette Carroll's durable gospel/musical "Your Arms Too Short To Box With God" is back on Broadway after a national tour with **Patti La Belle** (see **National Scene** August, 1982). Joining Patti is the soul-stirring singer turned minister **Al Green** of "Let's Stay Together" fame. Produced by **Fran** and **Barry Weissler** the show can be seen at the Alvin Theatre.



Patti La Belle and Al Green in "Arms Too Short to Box With God."

The Manhattan Theatre Club launched its new season last month presenting **Jane Martin's** "Talking With." Their current production is "Standing On My Knees" by **John Olive**. This is the story of a schizophrenic, young poet and the impact her illness has on her work, lover and friends. This show will be followed by **John O'Neal's** "Don't Start Me Talkin'" on November 9, 1982. This is a one-man show performed by O'Neal in the role of Junebug Jabbo Jones, a charmer who relates humorous stories of Black southern life interjecting poignant realisms along the way.



Harry Belafonte was among those in attendance at **Hazel Bryant's** Richard Allen Center as part of the ATA's pre-convention on Black Theatre. Photo by Hakim.