

Local lady sings the blues

Kim Graham grew up singing gospel songs in the church

BY COURTNEY GAILLARD
THE CHRONICLE

While most of us will be finally thawing out from the snow storm this week, Kim Graham of Winston-Salem will be soaking up some sun in the Virgin Islands by the time you read this story. Graham will be sharing the stage this Saturday in the Christmas in Paradise Concert on the Rock!, which will feature singers Kelly Price, Gerald Levert and an assortment of reggae and calypso acts.

Graham's fulltime job is at Piedmont Aviation Credit Union. But she has been singing since she was 9 years old, when she began belting out tunes in church. Graham graduated from R.J. Reynolds High School, where she sang the national anthem at many school events.

Over the years, this alto singer has enjoyed stints in several gospel groups such as the Make a Wish Band, and she even sang on jazz artist Joe Robinson's latest CD.

Music producer Donald DeGraff contacted Graham after she opened up for Gerald Albright in concert in Charlotte in October and asked her to participate in the concert in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands.

"I'm going down to (the Virgin Islands) for the fun of it. If something comes out of it, I'm blessed. If not, I'll have a bunch of pictures and memories," Graham said.

Graham will be the featured singer at a VIP reception for all of the artists on the concert lineup as well as some governmental officials tomorrow evening, and then she will perform for the big Christmas concert at Lionel Roberts Stadium in St. Thomas.

While Graham was thrilled at the chance to share the stage with R&B greats such as Price and Levert, she says her brief trip won't involve too much R&R because her itiner-



Kim Graham hopes to find stardom with her voice.

ary is pretty full. Graham, Price and Levert will make a stop at a local radio contest winner's job to personally give the winner tickets to the concert at which they all will perform.

"I'll be busy from the time I hit the islands doing interviews until the time I come back," said Graham, who recently recorded a demo CD titled "...Hold on," which includes two original songs.

"I really enjoy doing what I'm doing," said Graham, who is also a member of the choir at Greater Cleveland Avenue Christian Church. Graham has not yet set her sights on quitting her full-time job and shopping for a record deal in the what she calls "cutthroat" business of the music industry.

She doesn't really consider

herself to be an aspiring gospel singer but more of an inspirational singer. One of Graham's music idols is Gladys Knight of Gladys Knight and the Pips.

"I say if I ever get big, I'm going to call her up and see if I can remake one of her songs," said Graham with a sparkle in her eyes.

Caribe Productions is presenting the tropical Christmas concert. Company officials expect the show to be "the biggest show to hit the Virgin Islands since comic Sinbad performed there years ago."

In March, Graham is scheduled to perform again in a concert featuring P. Diddy, Jagged Edge and Usher, and then in May, she will return to the Virgin Islands to perform at a spring festival.



Photos by Kevin Walker

Danielle Days waits for her scenes while watching her classmates perform their parts from a bench backstage.

Diggs

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concludes with Clara waking up from her dream.

"For a lot of (students) this is the first real encounter and experience with theater of this caliber. To them it's a big deal. To watch them from rehearsal to this point, it's been a great pleasure for all of us to watch them grow and get excited," said Burgess, who adapted the script from the book. For everyone included, Burgess said that putting on the play "was a fun experience."

Burgess says the cross-curriculum theme for the second quarter of the school year was the concept of dreams and how they affect reality. "The Nutcracker," with its large dream sequence, was a perfect opportunity to showcase how dreams can be filled with great imagination.

On Monday and Tuesday afternoons, the cast had dress rehearsals for the student body, who giggled, oohed and ahed as the Nutcracker came to life to defend Clara from the dancing mice. Burgess and her arts team - including dance teacher Nancy Lansner, choral director Adrian Joiner, visual arts coordinator Carolyn Munday and the cast of third, fourth- and fifth-graders - had a little over two months to organize the play and rehearse all of the scenes and dance sequences after school and on some weekends. Several parents helped out with painting set backdrops and costumes.

Many of the students in the cast seemed right at home on



Anthony Shore and Anthony Mitchell dance backstage.

stage as they leapt and twirled about to the amazement of their fellow students. Keshia Jones, a fifth-grader at Diggs, played the lead part of Clara, whom she describes as an "intelligent girl." Jones enjoyed playing the part of the Nutcracker's princess in the dream sequence.

"I hope that (students) take away from the play that if they really put forth the effort and really hold on to dreams, then they can achieve it," said Burgess, who feels that theater is a wonderful outlet for acting out dreams.

According to Langsner, the students quickly picked up the dance steps for all of the dance routines in relatively short amounts of time.

"The students were very enthusiastic and fast to learn. It really wasn't that difficult," said Langsner, who was pleased with her students' performances and hard work.

Tuesday evening parents and the rest of the Diggs community enjoyed the Diggs students' official performance of "The Nutcracker."

HAWKS

On behalf of the Board of Commissioners, Management and Staff, we wish all the residents a very MERRY CHRISTMAS and a PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR!

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AMENITIES MAY VARY BY LOCATION

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