

Play takes up-close and personal look at actress Dorothy Dandridge

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

The name Dorothy Dandridge is not as foreign to people as it was several years ago. There have been books and documentaries about the trailblazing African-American actress, and Halle Berry won an Emmy and a Golden Globe for playing Dandridge in an acclaimed HBO film.

"Yesterday Came Too Soon: The Dorothy Dandridge Story" takes another look at Dandridge. Los Angeles-based Do It



Photo courtesy of Do It Yourself Productions.

Sloan Robinson as Dorothy Dandridge.

black community.

Actress/dancer Sloan Robinson portrays Dandridge. The play is spiced with songs that Dandridge made famous and dancing. The play is set the day before Dandridge died in 1965 at age 42.

Dandridge was the first black woman to be nominated in the Best Actress category at the Academy Awards. She gained that honor for the 1954 film "Carmen Jones." She also starred in "Island in the Sun" in 1957 and "Porgy and Bess" in 1959.

"Yesterday Came Too Soon: The Dorothy Dandridge Story" is written by Jamal Williams and directed by Erma Elzy-Jones.

Venue:

WFU's Proscenium Theatre

Schedule:

Aug. 5 at 8 p.m.; Aug. 6 at 3 p.m. and 8 p.m.; Aug. 7 at 3 p.m. and 8 p.m.

Price:

\$35

Yourself Productions has won critical praise and a 2001 Theatre Award from the Hollywood/Beverly Hills chapter of the NAACP for the production.

"Yesterday Came Too Soon" is a one-woman play that takes place backstage before Dandridge's final performance in Las Vegas. Through a dialogue with a cub reporter from a black newspaper, Dandridge tells of her highs and lows, including two short-lived marriages, racism in Hollywood and her struggle to gain acceptance from the

Griots Speak

Music, spoken word marry in play

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In Africa, the griot wears many hats. He or she is a storyteller, historian, librarian and keeper of his or her people's oral history. The tradition of the griot comes to life in the one-of-a-kind theatrical event "Underground Griots," which has drawn critical praise and audience adulation everywhere it has been staged.

"Underground Griots" features a series of one-act plays that tackle a variety of subjects. The plays are a collection of spoken word poetry designed to inspire, uplift and reinforce. The cast of "Griots" is an eclectic mix of young wordsmiths that mix the tradition of West African storytelling with the urban rhythms and rhymes found in the popular music of today.

Acts in the play were written by Keith Josef, Natalie Parker and Manatho Masani. Jimmie Woody is the brains behind the production. Woody has Cleveland, Ohio,

buzzing with the many innovative projects that have come through The Labyrinth, an after-hours space where Woody has created some memorable productions. Woody, who has been hailed as one of his generation's best actors and directors, is the founder of Umoja Inc.

Venue:

WSSU's Anderson Center

Schedule:

Aug. 8 at 3 p.m. and 8 p.m., and Aug. 9 at 3 p.m. and 8 p.m.

Price:

\$35

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