

Actor recalls journey to manhood in 'Runt'

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Award-winning actor/playwright Michael Phillip Edwards is bringing his hit play "Runt" to the National Black Theatre Festival.

"Runt," an introspective look at a black man's fears, introduces the world to a new kind of hero: a man who isn't afraid to face himself, or more importantly to face the legitimate fears that drive him. "Runt" is raw theater: candid, funny and angry. It will tug at your heartstrings, confront you with its honesty and make you laugh at life.

Venue:

Adam's Mark, Mark Ballroom 2

Schedule:

Aug. 7 at 3 p.m. and 8 p.m.;
Aug. 8 at 3 p.m. and 8 p.m.; Aug. 9
at 3 p.m. and 8 p.m.

Price: \$35 (includes performance of "A Tribute to Langston Hughes")

Born in Kingston, Jamaica, Edwards was recently honored with the 2003 Sony Academy



of Gold Medal Award for Best Drama (BBC production of "Runt"). Edwards also received the Edinburgh Fringe Festival's highest honor, the 2001 Scotsman Fringe First Award. He is the first black solo writer/performer in the festival's 53-year history ever to achieve this honor.

His past theater credits include Kosmond Russell's "The Visit," for which he received both the NAACP nomination and Dramalog

Award for Best Actor; the American Place Theatre's one-man production of Richard Wright's "Black Boy"; Athol Fugard's "My Children! My Africa!" (Sterling Best Actor nomination); and Amiri Baraka's "Dutchman."

Edwards is preparing to direct and star in the independent feature film version of his screenplay "Runt," to begin principal photography late this fall.

Mayor chairs festival fund-raising

BY COURTNEY GAILLARD
THE CHRONICLE

Everyone was excited when it was announced in late December that Mayor Allen Joines would lead fund-raising efforts for the 2003 National Black Theatre Festival. Larry Leon Hamlin, NBTF producer and artistic director, made the announcement at City Hall South with Joines by his side.

"We've talked about polishing the silver here in Winston-Salem. We've got a lot of good silver here, and we've got to make sure it's viable, healthy and working. The festival community is one of those key pieces of our infrastructure, which makes Winston-Salem so special," Joines said.

Hamlin said that he was "elated" about the prospect of teaming up with the mayor for the festival, calling their partnership "monumental."

"I was sometimes surprised to see (Mayor Joines) at some of the activities and events where I was present, and I'm sure he was surprised to see me at ones that he attended, but we spoke during those times and we're very happy," Hamlin said.

Alderman Vernon Robinson approached the mayor about becoming the chairman of the fund-raising committee after the last festival in 2001.

"(Mayor Joines') involvement will generate more private business support and citizen participation in reaching the \$1.5 million goal," said Robinson, who served as a fund-raising consultant for the previous NBTF.

Joines said that he hopes to personally attract more corporate financial support from the area in helping NBTF reach its goal for next year's festival. The 2001 festival fell several hundred thousand dollars short of its goal. That money was eventually raised, but not until the festival ended.

"It's events like the NBTF that helps put Winston-Salem on the map...The NBTF is probably one of the cornerstones for our downtown community," said Joines, who thinks that, despite the volatile economy, the NBTF's reputation will generate the necessary funds to make the event successful.



Genesco CEO Hal Pennington (left) presents a check for the NBTF to Mayor Allen Joines and Larry Leon Hamlin in March. Genesco is one of the contributors to this year's festival.



Actors Ajay Smith and RaeVen Larrimore Kelly take part in a Youth/Celebrity Project program during the 1999 NBTF.

All for the kids

Youth/Celebrity Project jam-packed this year

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

Thousands of young people are expected to take part in this year's National Black Theatre Festival Youth/Celebrity Project. This aspect of the festival has become one of the most popular events by giving children the opportunity to experience the arts through special workshops, events, and by getting up close and personal with professional actors, writers and directors.

Among the highlights of this year's Youth/Celebrity Project is a children's talent show that will take place on Aug. 6 and Aug. 8 at 9 a.m. in the Adam's Mark, Mark Ballroom 2. The talent show will feature young people from the Artistic Studio for the Performing Arts. There also will be a performance of the experimental youth production "Home and 'Hood" (See page 41 for more on this

play.)

Here is schedule of other Youth/Celebrity Project events:

- Kickoff activity on Aug. 1 at Union Baptist Church featuring Trin-i-tee 5:7.
- Gala welcoming rally on Aug. 4 at the Benton Convention Center.
- Sessions with the Stars on Aug. 5 at the Adam's Mark Hotel.
- Youth entrepreneurial exhibits on Aug. 5 at the Adam's Mark Hotel.
- Man Talk Session on Aug. 6 at the Winston-Salem Urban League.
- Storytelling festival on Aug. 8 at the Adam's Mark Hotel.
- Youth open-air vendors market on Aug. 9 along Trade Street.

Registration for young people is required for the events. To register groups of children or individuals, call Cynthia Mack or Cleopatra Solomon at 725-5614.