

Film honors will be bestowed

Theater community will honor director, screenwriter and costume designer

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

The National Black Theatre Festival will continue the tradition of honoring those who have made great strides in the world of film. This year, three greats who have worked behind the camera will be receive awards during the Aug. 4 Opening Night Gala. Also, some of their work will be

seen as part of the National Black Film Festival, a fairly new wing of the NBTF.

Charles Burnett and Trevor Rhone will receive Lifelong Achievement in Film awards. Bur-

nett's films include 1990's "To Sleep With Anger" and 1977's "Killer of Sheep." Burnett is highly respected in the industry and among critics. He is also the recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship Foundation Genius grant.

Kingston, Jamaica-native Rhone also is respected in show-biz circles. The screenwriter won The Genie for Best Original Screenplay for the movie "Milk and Honey." Rhone's most recent film, "One Love," premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, France. Rhone is also a winner of the Norman Manley Award for Excellence in the Dramatic Arts.

Ruth Carter, two-time Academy Award-nominated costume designer, will be saluted for her high caliber body of work.

Carter received Oscar nominations for her work in "Malcolm X" and "Amistad." Some of Carter's works are on display at Winston-Salem State University's Diggs Gallery. See page 48 for more information about Carter and her work.



Burnett

Phenomenal Woman

Maya Angelou says she feels right at home in Winston-Salem

(Editor's note: Maya Angelou was instrumental in helping Larry Leon Hamlin start the National Black Theatre Festival, and her support has done much for the festival. Here is a profile The Chronicle did on the world-famous poet and city resident. It originally ran on Nov. 7, 2002.)

BY T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

Growing up, Maya Angelou never dreamed that her words would have the ability to inspire and move people, that her regal presence and thoughtful insights would leave everyone — from U.S. presidents to the average Joe — in complete awe, that her body of work would make her one of the most influential writers of the 20th century.

Angelou said she always believed she would be successful, just not as a multifaceted artist.

"I did think I was going to be a successful real estate broker," Angelou said during an interview over the weekend. "I would have a brief case, I knew I would have an attaché case, and I would wear high heels and matching purses. I just knew that. It never occurred to me that I would become any of what I have become."

Through her work as a writer, director, singer, actress, social activist and humanitarian, what Angelou has become is one of the most respected people in the country today. Admiration for Angelou — a St. Louis native who was reared in Arkansas and California — runs especially deep in Winston-Salem, where she has called home for the last two decades.

The job of Reynolds professor of American studies at Wake Forest University brought Angelou to the city. Her generosity, openness and kindness have endeared her to its people.

Winston-Salem State University said thank-you to Angelou yesterday with a daylong celebration on the campus. Angelou read selections from her body of work and the school's choir set many of her poems to music. A roundtable discussion was also held to discuss the impact of Angelou's work.

Angelou said she was delighted by the honor.

"I am a friend of Winston-Salem State. I have been since I moved here."

In 1998, the Maya Angelou Institute for the Improvement of Child and Family Education was established at WSSU. The institute addresses educational needs for children and tries to provide remedies for families to some of life's challenges. A gala to celebrate Angelou's 70th birthday featuring Quincy Jones and Ashford and Simpson was held at WSSU to raise money to open the institute.

Angelou has left her mark locally in many other ways as well. For example, she was instrumental in helping the biennial National Black

Theatre Festival become a reality in the late 1990s. Late last year, she signed over a collection of her personal manuscripts to Wake Forest University. The collection spans Angelou's literary career and is worth an estimated \$500,000.

Angelou said she loves Winston-Salem as much as the city loves her. The people make it appealing, she said.

"No place is worth anything without the people. You could live on the 90th floor of the penthouse on Fifth Avenue, but if you don't have

not, whether we do anything about it or not," Angelou said. "I have long believed that instead of cursing the darkness, I might at least strike a match. There is something I can do."

Angelou said she would like to see more young people take more of an interest in addressing the issues that plague society.

"I wish more young people were even observant of what is going on around them. But even if they aren't, life will wake them up."

But Angelou is not one who finds fault in everything that young people do. In fact, she said, she admires young people greatly. She has attended a massive poetry slam event in California, where hip-hop generation poets read their works, often at a fanatical pace.

"I love to see and hear young men and women say what they think. I support slams," said Angelou, who added, though, that she is not a big fan of work that features vulgarity simply for the sake of being vulgar.

Angelou believes that many older people dismiss the issues and culture of younger people because they lacked something in their own youth.

"One ought to try to be, I think, spiritually and intellectually young. I can't undo the lines," she said, gently touching parts of her face. "I think some older people are mean to young people because they didn't enjoy their own youth. Well, I had a ball."

"A Song Flung Up to Heaven" is the last in Angelou's series of autobiographies, which began in 1970 with the release of her signature work, "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings."

The latest book ends at the point in Angelou's life when she began to write "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings."

"I never wanted to write about writing," she said when asked about stopping the autobiographical series. "But I do want to continue to write."

Angelou is working on a cookbook that will mesh stories and recipes. The recipe for her greens will be included in the book, she says. In an aside during the Bowles rally, Alexis Herman praised Angelou's greens as some of the best she

has ever tasted.

Angelou said she also will continue to publish poetry and essays. She is also in talks to direct again. Most recently, she directed the critically acclaimed film "Down in the Delta." Angelou is hoping to bring Bebe Moore Campbell's book "Singing in the Comeback Choir" to the big screen. Angelou also is hoping to recruit actor Wesley Snipes for the film. Snipes also appeared in "Down in the Delta."

Angelou said the many facets of the work that she does often takes her away from Winston-Salem. But she said she will always return here, even though her fame would grant her prestige in any city in the world.

"I have no plans to leave. This is my home," she said, flashing her trademark smile. "My paintings are here; my books are here; my structure is here."



Maya Angelou speaks at a community event in 1999.

people around you to make you laugh and make you smile and to enjoy a pot of greens or roast beef with, then none of it matters."

In her most recent autobiography, "A Song Flung Up to Heaven," Angelou details her work with civil rights icons Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. At one point, Angelou served as a regional director for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

At 74, Angelou still proudly wears the title of social activist. Last week, she joined former Secretary of Labor Alexis Herman for a Winston-Salem rally for Erskine Bowles, Democratic nominee for U.S. Senate in North Carolina. She also has traveled to New York this election season to campaign on behalf of Carl McCall, the Democrat who tried to unseat Gov. George Pataki.

"We are all political, whether we know it or