

NBTF Bits

Rose remembers Hansberry

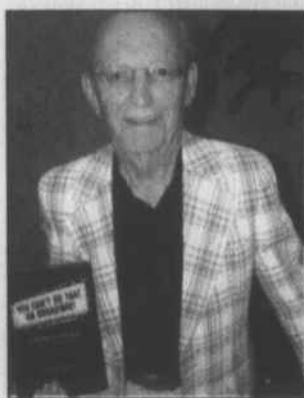
Legendary Broadway producer Philip Rose said he was overwhelmed by receiving the Sidney Poitier Lifetime Achievement Award at this year's National Black Theatre Festival. Rose, who is white, cleared a path for blacks to the Great White Way when he brought such hits to Broadway as "A Raisin in the Sun" and "Purlie Victorious."

"This has now become the most exciting time that I have ever had," Rose said about the 2003 festival.

Rose said several times this week that the only thing that could have made the occasion better was if Lorraine Hansberry had lived to see it. Hansberry, who died of cancer in 1965 at the age of 34, wrote "A Raisin in the Sun" after Rose convinced her to give up her job as a waitress to pursue other interests.

"Without her, there would be no 'A Raisin in the Sun' and no Philip Rose to some extent," he said.

Rose has compiled many memories from his stellar career in a book, "You Can't Do That on Broadway." He is signing copies of the book in the lobby of the Adam's Mark Hotel this week. On Saturday, he will have a book signing and discussion at Borders in Thruway Shopping Center at 2 p.m.



Philip Rose holds his book.

Two minutes goes by fast

When National Black Theatre Festival organizers told celebrity guests that they would have only two minutes to make their acceptance speeches at Monday's Opening Night Gala, they were not kidding. The 16 people who were honored for their decades of work on the stage, in television and film were not so tactfully reminded when they exceeded the time limits by a pumped-up sound system playing the Kool and the Gang hit "Celebration."

Festival officials said a tight ship was needed for the program to end on time. Gala guests were treated to a performance of Lillias White's "From Brooklyn to Broadway II" after the gala, and organizers wanted to make sure that the show began as close as possible to its scheduled 9 p.m. start time.

Several award winners were cut off by the festive tune, including trailblazing actress Diahann Carroll, who received the highest honor of the evening. So many people's speeches were interrupted by the music that it became a running joke. Bette Howard, who picked up an award for her decades of directorial work, sped through her thank-yous.

"I (am) going to (finish) before two minutes because I don't want to get the music," Howard said.



Margaret Avery, right, with Lynn Hamilton.

Free speech

In addition to providing a load of entertainment and social activities, actresses Margaret Avery and Janet Hubert say the festival also provides an environment where they can speak freely and be embraced for doing so. The women say Hollywood doesn't appreciate outspoken people, especially black folk. Avery, best known for playing Shug in "The Color Purple," said she has heard through her representatives that she has not been considered for roles because of the powers that be think she is too outspoken.

Hubert was the original mother on "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air" before leaving the show during the height of its success, reportedly over a dispute between producers. Hubert facetiously alluded to her departure from the show during a news conference this week.

"We all know that I have an attitude in Hollywood," she said.

Both women urged blacks to put the billions of dollars they control to good use, by supporting the programs they like and by writing producers to let them know their favorite shows. Avery said she leaves the NBTF rejuvenated and encouraged by the kind words of her theater peers and theater-lovers.

"We will take back with us what you have given us," she said.

Poetic ventures

Weusi Baraka has lived in several cities over the course of his young life, but Winston-Salem is a special place for him.

"This is home for me," he said Tuesday. Baraka lived here for many years and worked with Larry Leon Hamlin's N.C. Black Repertory Company in the early 1990s. Baraka is in the city this week to help make one of the National Black Theatre Festival's newest ventures, the Midnight Poetry Jam, a success. The jams provide young poets with an audience to express themselves.

Baraka helped behind the scenes with the poetry jams at the 2001 NBTF, which was the initial year for the jams. Baraka said people can expect an event just as exciting this year.

Baraka is working with actor Malcolm-Jamal Warner and Helena Lewis of New York's Def Poetry. Baraka, who now calls New York home, also works with Def Poetry, although he doesn't recite poetry himself too often.

"I like working behind the scenes," he said.

Baraka attended Winston-Salem State University, where he won the coveted "Mr. Ram" title in 1993.

The Midnight Poetry Jams have been held since Tuesday. The last two jams will be tonight and Friday at the Adam's Mark Hotel.



Baraka

Carroll's short visit to the NBTF filled with fanfare

BY COURTNEY GAILLARD
THE CHRONICLE

Diahann Carroll's one-day stop at the 2003 National Black Theatre Festival proved that she is indeed an entertainment legend. Standing ovations and gasps from onlookers followed her wherever she ventured. And a flurry of requests for photographs with fans and fellow actors indicated that she remains one of the brightest stars to grace our time.

Carroll, who was awarded the 2003 Sidney Poitier Lifetime Achievement Award along with legendary Broadway producer Philip Rose at the Opening Night Gala, said she was "thrilled" to receive an honor named for someone she called "one of the finest actors we've had."

"For my name to be connected to this award is an honor," Carroll said.

From the Broadway stage to Las Vegas to motion pictures to television, Carroll has performed with other great artists such as Natalie Cole, the late Frank Sinatra, James Earl Jones and Vanessa Williams, to name a few. Few can forget Carroll's pioneering roles in hit television series such as "Julia" and "Dynasty." This Tony Award and Golden Globe Award winner also has made a name for herself in the humanitarian and business sectors.

This was Carroll's first visit to the festival due to work commitments over the years. Carroll began in the musical theater in New York during the mid-1950s and considers it to have been the best education she could have gotten.

"I thought theater would always be my life. Television wasn't as interesting in the 1950s, and I had no way of projecting what would happen with television," Carroll said. "Theater is very important,



Photo by Bruce Chapman

Diahann Carroll gives her acceptance speech Monday night.

and you must go back. I think almost all actors who are serious about their craft...they go back to theater, and it reminds you of what you wanted to do and to be in the first place."

While Carroll is proud of her work in television, she cites the exhaustive schedules that television often demands, which in turn makes theater so much more appealing to actors. Television, she said, has become powered by the dollar, which seems to be dictating the direction of pro-

gramming.

"I find that television (today) is an exact reflection of our culture. I call it the Taco Bell era. We've allowed our minds to become almost dead...so the quality (of television) is not what it was...If we stop turning on shows about nothing, then they won't make them," Carroll said.

Carroll left the day after the Opening Night Gala to travel to California, where she planned to spend some time with family.

Lorey's World

BY T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

A popular adage claims that one can never go back home again. But home is coming to Lorey Hayes.

The N.C. A&T State University graduate is expecting a busload of folks from her hometown, Wallace, when she opens her one-woman play, "Little Lorey's Song," on Friday.

On stage, Hayes will bring to life the Wallace — a hamlet just outside of Wilmington — of her childhood by taking on the personas of people who gave the town its originality. Hayes is convinced that every city, especially small towns, has its own version of the people with whom she grew up.

"We didn't have a lot, but what we had some of the most fascinating characters," Hayes said Tuesday.



Hayes

Hayes dreamed of being an actress for as long as she can remember, even though her family did not get a television until she was well into grade school. Hayes has made those adolescent dreams come true. She has appeared on such television shows as "Judging Amy," "Another World," and "Sister, Sister." On stage, she has shined in a number of productions, including the starring role in "Miss Evers' Boys," which she recently took to London.

Hayes made history at A&T before embarking on her acting career. She became the school's very first theater major after turning down a full nursing scholarship to UNC-Chapel Hill.

Hayes has not called North Carolina home for some time. But she can envision leaving behind her show biz life in Los Angeles, if only temporarily, to come back home to teach the craft she loves to young people.

Hayes, though, is not ready to give up acting completely any time soon. She developed "Little Lorey's Song" just last year with the help of director Irene Pinn, who helped develop Lily Tomlin's one-woman show.

While Hayes feels special that people from her hometown are coming half way across the state to see her perform, she is also a bit nervous. Though the names in her play have been changed, she knows there is a chance that some of the material will hit close to home for some Wallace natives.

"I don't know what I am going to do; they are going to recognize themselves," she joked.

"Little Lorey's Song" will be staged at 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. on Friday and Saturday at The Ring Theatre, on the campus of Wake Forest University. A ticket costs \$35 and includes a performance of "A Song For You." For tickets, call 723-7907 or log onto www.NBTF.org.

Catching Up

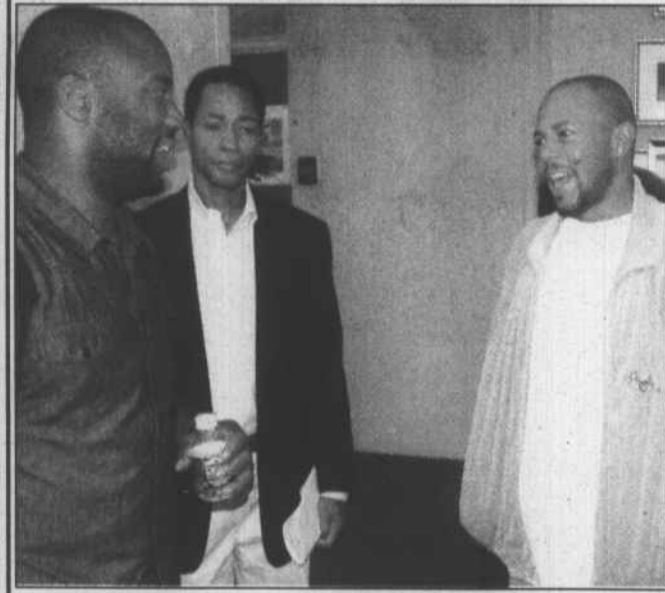


Photo by Kevin Walker

Actors Malik Yoba, far left, and Rockmond Dunbar of the hit Showtime series "Soul Food" took a few minutes to chat in the lobby of the Adam's Mark Monday morning. Yoba is best known for the series "New York Undercover."

Downtown restaurant names drink, dessert for Hamlin

BY T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

Larry Leon Hamlin, founder and artistic director of the National Black Theatre Festival, has been honored in many different ways and by many different people.

His hometown, Reidsville, has given him the key to the city. The Hollywood/Beverly Hills chapter of the NAACP presented him with its Community Service Award in 2001. And the city of Winston-Salem has erected a permanent marker downtown to honor the theater guru in front of the Stevens Center.

But Hamlin joked last week that he feels he has finally arrived now that a downtown restaurant has named a dessert and a martini in his honor.

This week, the Auction House Bar and Grill is serving up lots of Larry Leon Hamlin Marvstastic Martinis and a similarly named sweet treat.

Restaurant owner Drake Joyce came up with the idea for the menu items after Hamlin came to his restaurant in March, soon after it opened. The dessert is a puffed pastry with grapes and an assortment of berries. The martini includes vodka, Hennessy and an assortment of flavored liquors. Both the dessert and the martini are purple, Hamlin's signature color. They also bear the Hamlin-coined term, "marvstastic," a fusion of the words marvelous and fantastic.

"We are the only ones in town that I know of who are making a purple martini and a purple dessert," Joyce said.

The Auction House Bar and Grill, which is adjacent to the Sawtooth Center, has extended its hours for the festival. The restaurant will be open until 2 a.m. this week, serving dinner

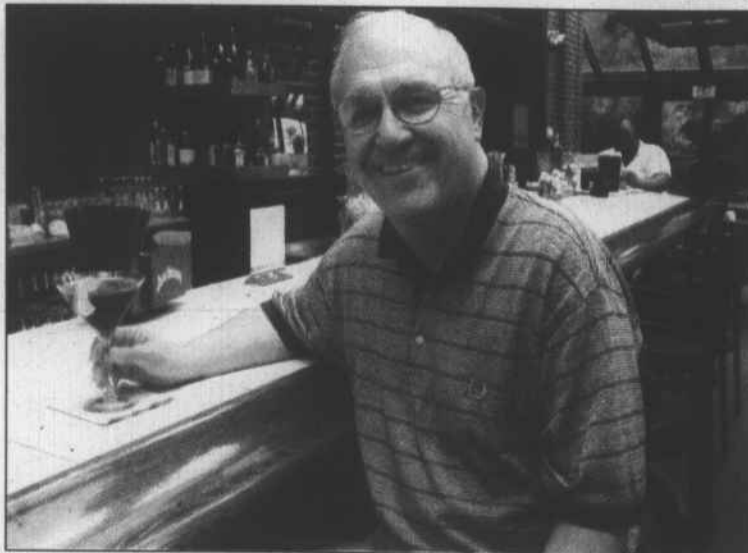


Photo by Kevin Walker

Drake Joyce nurses a Larry Leon Hamlin Marvstastic Martini.

until midnight and desserts and appetizers from midnight until 2.

Joyce was a fourth-generation tobacco warehouse owner — hence the name Auction House — before selling the warehouse and getting into the restaurant business. Although, according to statistics, a restaurant is more likely to fail than succeed, Joyce is confident that he can sell people on the Auction House.

"I love challenges. I never fail at anything," he said. Joyce said the restaurant has been on a roll in its first few months.

Those who want to try the Hamlin-inspired creations should hurry. After the final curtain falls on the 2003 National Black Theatre Festival, so will the purple dessert and martini.

"Saturday night when we close, there won't be another Marvstastic Martini made until the festival comes back," Joyce said.

The Auction House Bar and Grill is at 226 N. Marshall Street.