



Geraldine Patton, left, and Mabel Robinson are carrying the Black Rep's baton. Photo by Layla Farmer

# Black Rep leaders excited about new teen program

Youth productions will play more prominent role

BY LAYLA FARMER  
THE CHRONICLE

With the dawning of a new year comes the start of the Teen Theatre, a new program for the North Carolina Black Repertory Company (NCBRC) and the first big initiative since its founder and visionary, the late Larry Leon Hamlin, passed away last summer.

Executive Director Geraldine Patton and Artistic Director Mabel Robinson were appointed to their respective positions last October. Since that time, the two women have been working hard to keep up the furious pace that the famed company demands and to remain true to its original mission.

"I'm not looking to change anything; I'm going to stay the course because the course that (Hamlin) has put us on is the right thing," commented Patton. "As we see opportunities to continue quality theater, we will take some of those directions, but we're not looking really, other than to bring the best in theater to this community."

As promised, the company is following in the footsteps of Hamlin's dreams. Auditions were held Jan. 5 for the Teen Theatre, which was created to expand upon Hamlin's ever-present dedication to youth.

Designed for youth ages, 13-17 who have a strong interest in dramatic arts, the new program will allow participants to explore the world of theater, putting on their own performances with the help of Robinson.

"It's to be a training program and performing of course, training in all three art forms: dancing, singing and acting," she explained. "They've been included in our productions, but now they can have their own productions."

The new arm of the company began with an Oct. 25, 2007 production entitled, "Choices." The show was produced by the NCBRC and funded by a grant from The Forsyth Adolescent Health Coalition. The play itself was penned by Roz Fox, an actress whom Hamlin mentored as a youngster. Teens from the Forsyth County Department of Public Health's Teen Talk program helped Fox develop the dialogue in the play and filled most of the necessary roles on stage and off.

"I was just in awe when I saw the concept and then the kids come in and for Mabel to just take them from absolutely no association and to develop that into a finished product. They were so proud of what they'd accomplished; the roles that they had and that it was saying what they wanted to say in the way that they wanted to say it," Patton said of the original production, which Robinson plans to turn into a full-fledged Teen Theatre production. "I just thought it was extraordinary to see that come together and how much they



Larry Leon Hamlin was known for his commitment to youths. Here he is pictured with some Hill Middle School students he worked with several years ago.

appreciated the opportunity and were looking forward to continuing."

The company is not only looking for talented youth, Robinson says - they have to be dedicated too.

"If you're going to be a part of it, you have to be committed to it," she remarked. "It's not just something you can drop in when you want to."

The students will be expected to perform well, both on stage and off, Robinson added.

"I'm a stickler about making sure their grades remain at least a B," she stated. "Usually when they are focused in an art form, I find that they do better in their other curriculums as well, (and) it's important for them to know that the education process is very important."

As they settle into their new roles, both Robinson, a renowned dancer and play-

wright who taught at the North Carolina School of the Arts; and Patton, the former office manager of the now defunct LISC (Local Initiatives Support Corporation) office in Winston-Salem and one-time president of the NCBRC Guild, say they are excited about being at the helm of the company as it forges into the future.

"The best thing is to be able to continue to give of myself in the development of the theater and hopefully of theater's excellence," Robinson said with a satisfied smile. "For me, there can be nothing better than to be a part of the Black Rep, the artistic director of the Black Rep."

For more information about the Teen Theatre, contact Artistic Director Mabel Robinson at the NCBRC office, 336-723-2266.

## News Clips

### Mabe completes infantry training

Army Pfc. David M. Mabe has graduated from basic infantry training at Fort Benning, Columbus, Ga.

During the nine weeks of training, the soldier received training in drill and ceremonies, weapons, map reading, tactics, military courtesy, military justice, physical fitness, first aid, and Army history, core values and traditions. Additional training included development of basic combat skills and battlefield operations and tactics, and experiencing use of various weapons and weapons defenses available to the infantry crewman.

He is the son of Don Mabe of Kernersville. Mabe graduated in 2001 from East Forsyth High School and received a degree in 2006 from Forsyth Technical Community College.

### Deadline approaching for internships with NC government

North Carolina residents attending a college, university, technical institute or community college have until Jan. 23 to apply for one of 100 paid state government internships available in 2008. Established in 1969, the program provides students real-world experience in a wide range of state government workplaces and experience in public service.

Paid summer internships are available in locations across the state. They provide North Carolina students with a compensated profes-

sional work experience that integrates education, career development and public service. Opportunities exist in numerous recognized fields of study, from architecture to zoology.

Interns earn a stipend of \$8.25 per hour and work 40 hours per week in the summer. They also participate in seminars, tours or other activities designed to broaden their perspective of public service and state government.

To be eligible for the program, a student must be a North Carolina resident with an overall grade-point average of 2.5 or better on a 4.0 scale, and must have completed at least one year of study. To qualify for a position designated for law interns, a student must have completed at least one year of law school.

Interns are selected through a competitive process overseen by the N.C. Internship Council.

Details about the program and a listing of summer 2008 internships are available by calling the Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office in the N.C. Department of Administration at 919-789-5880, or by visiting its website at <http://www.ncyao.com>.

### Chapters to observe Founders Day

The Winston-Salem Salem Alumnae, Gamma Phi and Pi Omicron Chapters of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. will observe Founders Day on Sunday, Jan. 13 at 4 p.m.

The chapters will feature Dr. Julianne Malveaux, President of Bennett College for Women as the speaker. Dr. Malveaux is also a renowned economist, author and commentator. The event will be held in the Brendle Recital Hall of the Scales Fine Arts Building on the campus of Wake Forest University.

The public is invited to

attend.

### Scheck and Estrich will headline UNC death penalty talk

Famed attorney Barry Scheck, a founder and director of the Innocence Project,

and Susan Estrich, a syndicated columnist, will discuss the



Scheck

death penalty on Jan. 17 at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Their dialogue, at 7:30 p.m. in Memorial Hall, is one of four events early this year, all free to the public, for "Criminal/Justice: The Death Penalty Examined," UNC's yearlong discussion of capital punishment.

Estrich, a law professor at the University of Southern California, believes that capital punishment should be avoided if doubt about guilt or innocence remains or counsel has been inadequate. However, in the most clear and heinous cases, the death penalty is just, she said. She wrote "Getting Away with Murder: How Politics Is Destroying the Criminal Justice System."

Scheck and Peter Neufeld founded and direct the Innocence Project, which seeks to exonerate wrongfully convicted people across the country through DNA testing. Scheck also received media attention for his role as a DNA expert on O.J. Simpson's defense team.

Tickets are required for admission. Free tickets are available at the Memorial Hall Box Office on Cameron Avenue, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays. Call 919-843-3333 to reserve tickets.

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