

Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the death of Billie Holiday – the hard-living, velvet-voiced vocalist who helped to make jazz an art form. The decades since her untimely demise (she died when she was just 44), have not dimmed Holiday's star. She is one of those performers who seemingly is more popular in death than they were in life.

A talented bunch from Nashville-based Tennessee State University will give National Black Theatre Festival audiences a peek into Holiday's life and music in "Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill." Set in a tiny nightclub on the Southside of Philadelphia, the show is set in the late 1950s, near the end of Holiday's life. In between drinks, Holiday, played brilliantly by TSU student Ashley Bishop, regales the audience with stories and songs. The cast also includes Alex White II, Joel Diggs, Harold Pettigrew III, Randy Taylor, Marquez Jackson, Anitra Montgomery, Sherill Humphreys, Sandra Baxter and Carl Boyd. Live music is provided by Daryl Nettles (the show's musical director), Paul Deyo, Brook Sutton and Kyle Burnham.

The talented cast has performed the show in the Triad before. In February, the production was one of five regional finalists invited to perform at the Regional IV Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. It has now been selected as one of the 19 Kennedy Center National Finalists.

Written by Lanie Robertson, a playwright known for his biographical works, "Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill" is directed by TSU's Dr. Lawrence James. Professor Mark Collino is the scenic and lighting designer and the technical manager.



Tennessee State Photo

– The Chronicle

Ashley Bishop as Bille "Lady Day" Holiday.

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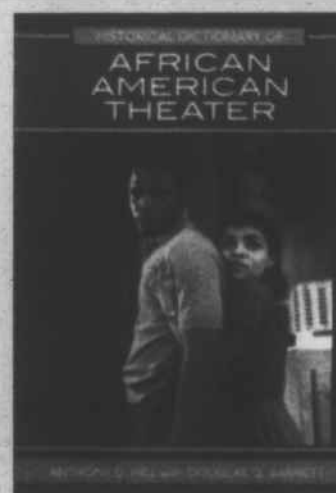
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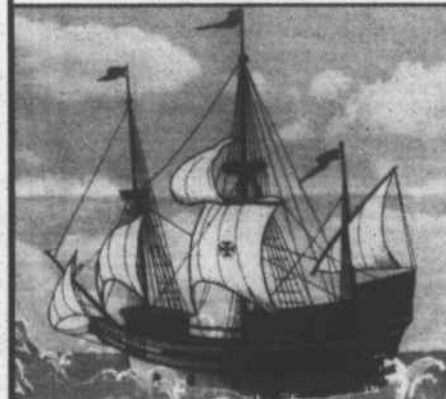
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