

Stage

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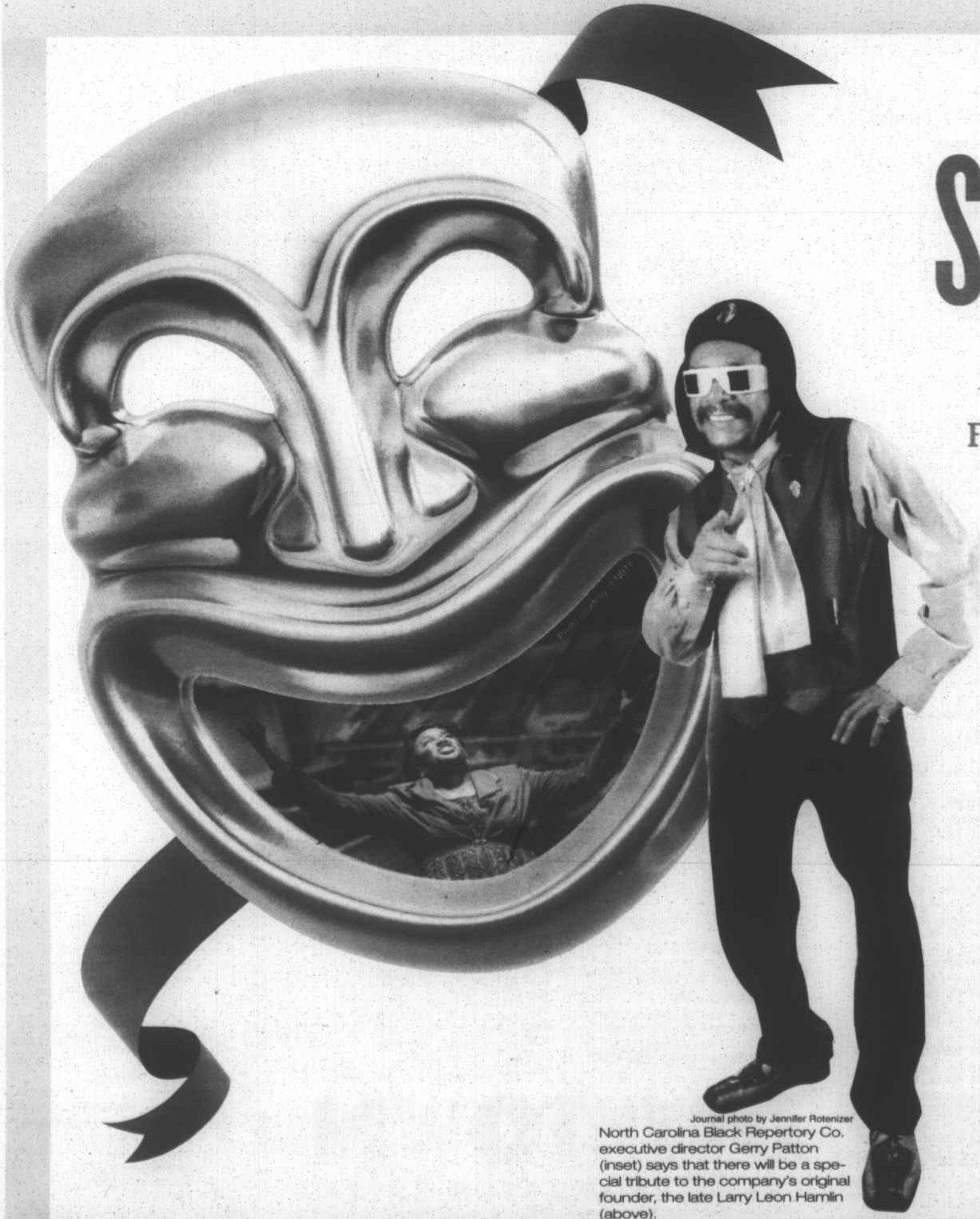
THE NATIONAL FESTIVAL IS BA

Downtown Winston-Salem and the North Carolina Black Theatre Festival go back a long way.

The bi-annual celebration of Black theater celebrates its 25th anniversary this year and, once again, many of the festival's most significant events will take place downtown. Opening ceremonies were held at the M.C. Benton Convention Center, with a celebrity reception following at the Downtown Marriott. Some of the venues for the plays and films this year include the Stevens Center, Winston-Salem State University, the University of North Carolina School of the Arts and Salem College.

North Carolina Black Repertory Co. executive director Gerry Patton began working with NBTF as a volunteer in 1995, before working her way up to her current position. She says that each year the festival grows stronger due to the commitment and passion of those involved.

"When you look at Broadway and you look at the shows, it's not that many great plays about black experience. So the qu



Journal photo by Jennifer Rotenizer
North Carolina Black Repertory Co. executive director Gerry Patton (inset) says that there will be a special tribute to the company's original founder, the late Larry Leon Hamlin (above).