

UNIVERSES Live! From the Edge



UNIVERSES Live! From the Edge

Salem College
- The Drama
Workshop Theatre

Tues, Aug. 4	8 p.m.
Wed, Aug. 5	8 p.m.
Thurs, Aug. 6	8 p.m.
Fri, Aug. 7	8 p.m.
Sat, Aug. 8	8 p.m.

\$41

*The members of
UNIVERSES work
their magic on stage.*



San Francisco's Cultural Odyssey's relationship with the National Black Theatre Festival extends all the way back to the festival's inception in 1989. The cutting edge theater company has presented at every festival, a streak that will continue this year with "UNIVERSES Live! From the Edge."

UNIVERSES is a New York-based poetic musical theater ensemble whose main members are Steven Sapp, Mildred Ruiz, Gamal Abdel Chasten and William "Ninja" Ruiz. It was founded in 1996; the ensemble's NBTF show will celebrate its 20th anniversary with a retrospective of some of its most popular and acclaimed work. Excerpts from "Ameriville," commemorating the 10-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, and "Party People," an ode to the Black Panthers and Young Lords movements of the '60s, will be included, as will a preview of UNIVERSES' upcoming show, "The Unpublished Poetry of August Wilson."

UNIVERSES' unique blending of poetry, theatrical elements and music (everything from hip-hop to boleros) has earned the group kudos and invitations to perform around the globe. All of the group's core members grew up in public housing in New York City and immersed themselves in the inchoate spoken-word scene of the

early 1990s, when each of them began performing at the famed NuYorican Poets Cafe. With the help of the New York Theatre Workshop, the ensemble graduated from performing short vignettes to delivering full-fledged theater shows.

UNIVERSES' first major show, "Slanguage," was hailed by the Boston Herald as a "linguistic fireworks display," while the *New York Times* proclaimed that the members delivered the "poetry of the city, minted in the urban furnace where the flint of real life strikes the sparks of creation from concrete pavement and steel tracks."

Cultural Odyssey was founded by Idris Ackamoor, who serves as executive and co-artistic director, in 1979. His partner in creativity, Co-Artistic Director Rhodessa Jones, signed on in 1983. Together, they have developed a variety of original productions that demonstrate their vision of "Art as Social Activism" and have supported and presented the endeavors of other creative artists. ■