

A LOOK BACK: NATIONAL BLACK THEATRE FESTIVAL

Local playwright gains two big accolades within a week

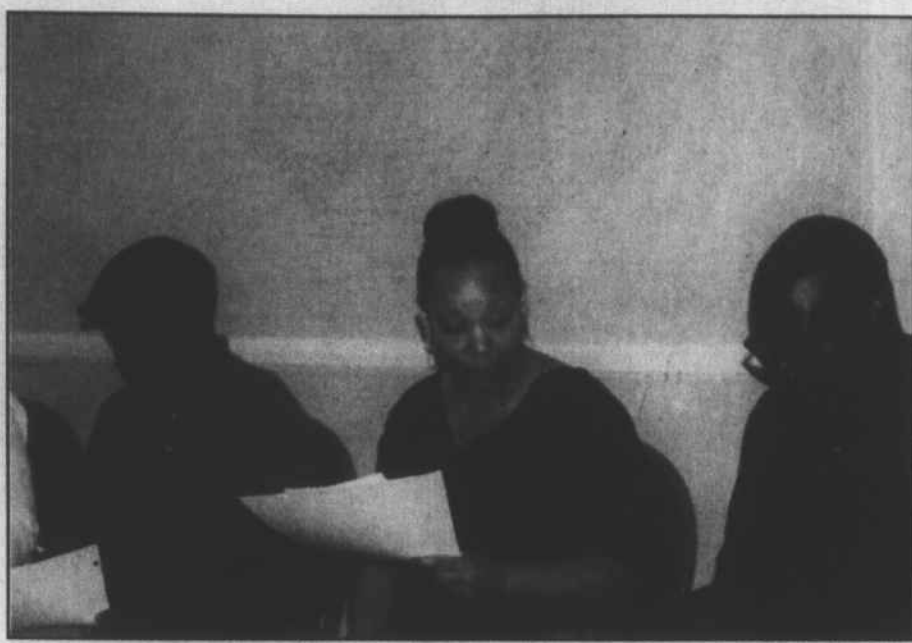


Photo by Donna Rogers

Camille Lowman portrays Dottie for the reading of "Meet Me at Mama's Place" at the National Black Theatre Festival. Adrian Dion Quarles, left, portrays Randy, Dottie's son, and Timothy Howell portrays Thad, Dottie's other son.



Submitted photo

Ben Piggott, middle back row (with light blue T-shirt), stands beside Ronnie L. Sockwell, playwright (with black T-shirt) as the cast members of "Meet Me at Mama's House" gather at the Carl H. Russell Sr. Community Center.

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

"It was like being at the National Black Theatre Festival at the Carl H. Russell Sr. Community Center for two days," Ronald Pickens told Ben Piggott Sr., center supervisor of the Russell Center.

Pickens viewed the play called "Meet Me At Mama's House," which was held on Thursday, July 30 and Friday, July 31.

Piggott said, "This play was something different to bring to the center. It was enjoyable and talked about the importance of family values."

At the Russell Center, the playwright, Ronnie L. Sockwell, and cast received "standing-room

daughter Whitney Sockwell, 26, for encouraging him. She played Dottie (the mother) in the performance at the Russell Center.

The cast members at the Center were: Wallace Hatcher (Randy); Tim Howell (Thad); Esther Rockette, (Aunt Doris); Ronnie Sockwell (Cleve); Whitney Sockwell (Dottie); Teaune Vinson (DeDe) and LaVerne Williford as (Mama Lucy).

The stage production crew was Kristi Hall, Lucille Lewis and Ashley Sockwell.

Director Ronnie Sockwell thanked Ben Piggott for having the vision to show the play to



Sockwell

only" approval for the two-act play. Sockwell then went on to a full room as another cast read his play at the National Black Theatre Festival (NBTF) on Friday, Aug. 7. It was part of the Frank Silvera Writers' Workshop Readers Theatre Series at the Festival.

"I was in tears when I got the email that said I had been selected," Sockwell said Monday, Aug. 10.

At the NBTF, another cast of actors read "Meet Me At Mama's House" to a full Piedmont room at the Marriott Hotel. Passion (she goes by one name) directed the play for the NBTF.

Sockwell directed the play at the Russell Center.

Sockwell, a longtime teacher's assistant in the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools system, said he has been writing plays for years, usually for the churches he attends. He writes prose and poetry, too. In fact, he said, "Meet Me At Mama's House" emanated from a poem he wrote.

He credits his grand-

daughter Whitney Sockwell, 26, for encouraging him. She played Dottie (the mother) in the performance at the Russell Center.

A synopsis of "Meet Me At Mama's House"

"Meet Me at Mama's House" is an emotional account of a mother and daughter's struggle for reconciliation and forgiveness. Dottie Pendergrass is a mother of three teenage children. She faces the challenge of fighting the forces that drove a wedge between her and her daughter, who was sent to live with her grandmother and aunt at a very young age. DeDe, her daughter, is hurt and bitter toward her mother and brothers, who want to love her back into the family. Their attempt to reunite with DeDe seems futile and is negated by a selfish grandmother who is concerned only with money and her influence over those around her. The setting takes place in the late 1950s in a working lower middle class neighborhood. An event that transpires in the beginning of the play changes the lives of the families involved.

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