

Black Rep to present Passion of Christ in a gospel opera

BY TEVIN STINSON
THE CHRONICLE

Just before the official start of spring and the 2016 Easter season, the North Carolina Black Repertory Company (NCBRC) has announced it will present the American premiere of the celebrated gospel opera "The Gospel According to Broadway."

A continuation of "Black Nativity," the production tells the Passion of Christ narrative by blending 300 years of African-American sacred music with the moves and music of well-known Broadway works. Opera is a story told in song and dance. The Passion of Christ in song and dance will be under the co-direction of two Broadway veterans: Mabel Robinson and Chapman Roberts.

Roberts has worked as a special events musical direc-

tor and supervisor for President Barack Obama, Ronald Reagan's Kennedy Center Honors, the Harlem Gospel Singers and American Idol among other venues. He came up with the concept for this gospel opera. It was first performed in London.

With this gospel opera, European opera singing techniques are mixed with African-American sacred music techniques.

"We will re-create a church atmosphere at the theater," Roberts said in a YouTube.com interview. The audience "should be prepared to have church."

In this gospel opera, three women are united in their grief and their faith: Mary, the mother of Jesus; Claudia, the wife of Pontius Pilot; and the mother of Judas Iscariot.

Robinson, well known throughout Winston-Salem and across the nation, retired from her post as NCBRC's long-

time artistic director earlier this year. Robinson will use her background as a dancer, choreographer, playwright and director to craft meaningful moments on the stage to accompany the production that was honored in 2007 by the BBC Concert Orchestra, Michael Terry Singers USA, and London Community Gospel Choirs.

Robinson said the show is a must-see production. She mentioned the play will be "spiritually uplifting" for all those who see it.

"The Gospel According to Broadway is both electrifying and spectacular," Robinson said.

The production will be presented March 16-20 at the Arts Council Theatre located at 610 Coliseum Drive. Tickets are available at ncblackrep.org. For additional information call the North Carolina Black Repertory office at (336) 723-2266.

Souls to the Polls at St. Paul UMC on Saturday

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

Democracy N.C. and the local NAACP will be conducting Souls to the Polls Saturday, March 12, at St. Paul United Methodist Church.

This is St. Paul's first year as an early voting site and organizers are hoping to attract voters to cast their ballots at the church on the final day of early voting. Volunteers will be providing refreshments and nonpartisan voting information. The event will be held at St. Paul, 2400 Dellabrook Road, when polls are open from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. While Souls to the Polls is commonly done on Sunday,

that's not an option in Forsyth County since there are no Sunday hours for early voting.

Democracy N.C. Field Organizer Linda Sutton said people should come out any way they can during early voting to exercise their hard-fought right to vote during a vital election.

"Voting is the hallmark of what this country stands for," she said. "It's the hallmark of democracy."

Sutton said St. Paul had the lowest turnout when the satellite early voting sites opened on Monday, and she is hoping to increase its turnout with the event.

Since same day registration is still in effect due to a court action, eligible voters can register on the spot. For

voters who are registered, if a problem is discovered with their registration, it can be fixed during early voting.

Though most voters are required to show a government issued photo ID like a driver's license, the N.C. Board of Elections is promising no voter will be turned away because they lack an ID. Voters who are unable to get an acceptable ID can still vote by providing their date of birth and the last four digits of their social security number (or by presenting their voter ID card or an acceptable document bearing their name and address like a utility bill), and sign a declaration stating the impediment that prevented them from getting the ID.



Photo by Todd Luck

Political signs promote candidates in front of the Forsyth County Government Center on Monday, March 7, because an early voting site is there: the Board of Elections.

Vote

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the changes, many who showed up to cast their ballot early at St. Paul United Methodist Church had a state-issued ID.

"The training we received was very helpful. So far we haven't had any issues," Jones said.

Before receiving a ballot, or even walking into the voting place, citizens must present a state issued ID. Voters who can't produce an acceptable ID can cast a provisional ballot.

While many worried that the new voter ID process would make the voting process longer than it should be, many early voters said the process was quick and easy.

Isabell Williams of Winston-Salem said the process went smoothly.

"I didn't have any issues," she said. "I prefer to cast my ballot early to beat the large crowds."

According to reports, in just the first four days of early voting, more than 160,000 citizens have already voted for the upcoming primary election, which includes presidential, state senate, U.S. Senate, local races and a statewide bond issue that is expected to cost around \$2 billion.

As a result of redrawn district lines, a separate primary will be held June 7 for U.S. House of Representatives.

After casting his ballot at the Forsyth County Board of Elections center

on the first day of early voting, Robin Simmons of Winston-Salem urged others to take advantage of early voting as well.

"It's much easier and you don't have to worry about long lines," she said. "I always participate in early voting. It's a lot less hassle."

Listed below are locations where you can submit your ballot for the March 15 primary. The early voting period ends on March 12 at 1 p.m.

•Brown & Douglas Recreation Center, 4725 Indiana Ave., Winston-Salem

•Clemmons Library, 3554 Clemmons Road, Clemmons

•Kernersville Senior Center / Library, 130 E. Mountain St., Kernersville

•Lewisville Library, 6490 Shallowford Road, Lewisville

•Mazie Woodruff Center, 4905 Lansing Drive, Winston-Salem

•Old Town Recreation Center, 4550 Shattalon Drive, Winston-Salem

•Polo Park Recreation Center, 1850 Polo Road, Winston-Salem

•Rural Hall Library, 7125 Broad St., Rural Hall

•Southside Library, 3185 Buchanan St., Winston-Salem

•St. Paul United Methodist Church, 2400 Dellabrook Road, Winston-Salem.

•Forsyth County Board of Elections Center, 201 N. Chestnut St. Winston-Salem



Photo by Tevin Stinson

A poll worker helps citizens cast their ballots at the Forsyth County Board of Elections on Friday, March 4. This is the first time N.C. voters are required to show photo ID to vote.

People

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Sylvia Jones
Winston-Salem

"Yes. I encourage everyone to vote because so much has been sacrificed for us to have this right."



Darian McRae
Winston-Salem

"No I haven't voted. I don't think I'm going to vote this year because none of the candidates seem to be willing to address the issues that have plagued the African-American community."



Earl Key
Winston-Salem

"I haven't voted yet, but I do intend to before early voting ends."

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