

Exhilarating Holiday Musical Back By Popular Demand

Celebrations: An African Odyssey, the magical holiday musical by Ricardo Pitts-Wiley that began a new Christmas season tradition in Winston-Salem last December opened Friday, December 6, 1991, at the Arts Council Theatre, 610 Coliseum Drive in Winston-Salem.

Celebrations: An African Odyssey has joined such old favorites as "Messiah," "The Nutcracker," and "A Christmas Carol" as critically acclaimed holiday performance "must-sees" in the Triad. This powerful musical entertainment embraces its audiences with a simple message of universal love, peace, and understanding through a delightful combination of African, African-American spiritual, and gospel music, song and dance.

Celebrations: An African Odyssey illuminates the journey of a beautiful, young African Princess whose determination to find out the complete story of the Baby King (Jesus) leads to her capture and enslavement by the "people-stealers," (American slave traders). When her journey takes her from her native country of West Africa and her people, the M'Cuta, to an American slave plantation, Princess Jaharri finally finds the "Lost King" and resolves the mystery of the "Baby King." She must now find a way to return to her homeland and her people to share this wonderful story.

An exuberant cast of over twenty members will again take audiences on an unforgettable journey...an African Odyssey, into the lives of some incredible strong and determined people in Africa and in America.

The story begins in West Africa with the M'Cuta celebration of "New Time," a twelve-day celebration of song, dance, and feasting, for the birth and rebirth of the land and of the people. For the second time, the "New Time" celebration is marred by the incursion of the "people-stealers," into the tribe and the royal family. The first time the king of the M'Cuta is stolen; this time it is the beautiful Princess Jaharri. Ironically, it is the capture of Princess Jaharri that leads to her solving the mystery of the "Baby King," and the "Lost King." After sharing the strength of the slaves that she encounters during her enslavement, and being reunited with her grandfather, King Bari, Jaharri's determination to be free allows her to take the same ship that took her away from freedom and her people back home again!

This exchanging holiday extravaganza is for the entire family, especially children. According to the playwright Ricardo Pitts-Wiley, when *Celebrations* was written, he was constantly thinking of his own son, who was 7 months at the time... reminding himself to write for a child. Ultimately, anyone can appreciate the lasting value of this "people show," which truly is a celebration of strength and survival.

Additional performances of *Celebrations: An African Odyssey* are December 13, 14, 19, and 21 at 8 p.m. and December 15 and 22 at 3 p.m. in the Arts Council Theatre, 610 Coliseum Drive in Winston-Salem. For reservations and group rates, call 723-7907 between the hours of 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday through Friday.



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