

# New York Showfronts

By DON DE LEONARD

NEW YORK — When Jose Ferrer, who plays Iago to Paul Robeson's Othello, finishes picking the cast for Lillian Smith's "Strange Fruit" which he hopes to present on Broadway, it is quite likely that William Stevens Bryant will have drawn the assignment to portray the defiant Ed, brother of the frustrated Nonnie.

And Willie should turn in a good job for throughout the 22 years he has been in show business, the handsome 36-year-old actor and comic has done about everything there is to be done on the stage, except to sing. He should be able to breathe life into Ed.

It might be a good omen for "Strange Fruit" because in all his career, Willie has appeared in only two shows that were not hits. They were "Dat Gits It," his first play, and "Blue Holiday," the recent production that lasted less than a week on Broadway.

Willie's initiation into the field of entertainment was in an unusual way. He was born in New Orleans and had been taken to Chicago at an early age. At ten he was working as a candy boy at the old Grand Terrace, 31st and State Streets in Chicago, and between times he would imitate the actors and actresses. He became an expert mimic and used to boast that he could play the part of any actor or actress in any cast.

The Grand, at the time, was presenting stock shows, and at intervals, the Barker would make his spiel and the boys would flock down the aisles to get the wares. One night the Grand's manager, taken ill and the manager of the Theatre began looking around for someone to do the barking. He turned to Willie and said: "You have been mimicking everybody now get up here and tell the folks about our candy."

Willie said he realized that he had to "pitch" or he would be out of a job, so he got up there and "pitched," and he has been doing it successfully ever since.

At the Grand, Willie met the old time groats of whom he declares: "The Whitman Sisters, with whom Willie launched his career, have contributed most to the Negro in show business."

Alice Whitman was the great woman buck and wing dancer; Jack Ginger Higgins was the greatest dancer, with his tango twist, which nobody was ever able to duplicate.

Billy King was the greatest situation man; Boots Hope was the greatest lib man, and could talk faster than any other human being;

Mamie Smith was the greatest blues singer; Butter Beans and Susie were the greatest comic team;

Drake and Walker were the first team to present a band on the stage; Burns and Russell had the longest run at a theatre, remaining at Gibson's Standard Theatre in Philadelphia 11 years.

Next to Billy King, Willie picks Billy Higgins as the tops as a situation man, and admits that he got his start by imitating Higgins. For a long time it was believed Willie would be a black face comedian. Willie gives the answer by saying he never liked the "voodoo

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Above are shown principals in the unique "Arts of the Theatre" festival scheduled to take place at Hampton Institute next week.

Designed to demonstrate the relative effectiveness of various theatre arts, including the dance, the cinema, and the drama, the festival will open Monday evening (July 23) with a recital by Miss Primus, followed on Tuesday night by a presentation of Dr. Dorsey's folk choral symphony, "Jake and Sue," and "The Forgotten Village," an outstanding modern film. Dodson is directing a group of young New York actors in production of "Outward Bound," a contemporary drama, and Shakespeare's "Hamlet," with Gordon Heath in the title role, which will be given later in the week. Sallstad, a member of the faculty of Stephens College, is codirector of the festival.

In a first rate performance he is to talk terms with Ferrer upon the latter's return from Georgia where he is conferring with Miss Smith. After "Strange Fruit," Willie will go to work on his own little cabaret in which he will devote much time to training and encouraging young performers. He said he got the idea from the Whitman Sisters who, perhaps, did more in this regard than any other group or individual.

Willie gave up his band in 1939 in order to take a "shot" at Broadway, which had long been his dream. A dream that came true when Ethel Waters picked him to play Gilley Blutton in "Mamba's Daughters," the play in which he seduced one of Mamba's daughters, played by Fredi Washington.

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## I'VE BEEN AROUND

By TED YATES

CONSIDER THE SOURCE

The town's ripping with tongue wagging as several B-way producers are angling to put on another all-Negro musical comedy. It seems that the intelligencia is resentful of the cast of characters of the last two ("Blue Holiday" and "Memphis Bound") and words spreading too that if a show is to be staged in the near future that writers like Fredi Washington, Abe Hill, Joe Bonie and Izzy Rowe should be called in (first) to read the script and to okay the prospective cast. Your good-news-boy not mentioned as one who would know anything about show biz. Of course, there is the possibility that he has no idea (first, again) had nothing to do with all this prattle-tattle. Don't make me laugh, brother.

It seems that "Blue Holiday" had no plot and was a jigsaw puzzle dramatically and musically speaking from away back "Memphis Bound." On the other hand, had dissent amongst the players. Word smoking, disorderly conduct (backstage) and a series of misunderstandings between certain leading performers and the writers from the B-way Theatre to the Belasco Theatre closed the play. Of course that all could be just idle talk and we don't have to believe a word of it. But it is high time that Negroes would stop being exploited and do something constructive on the stage like "Arms and the Man," "Porgy and Bess," "Shuffle Along," "Dixie to Broadway," "Runnin' Wild" and any number of high class revivals of yesteryear. And in mentioning "Porgy and Bess" we see where one of its stars of the original company, that is) Anne Brown will appear in the 1945 star-studded American Negro Music Festival in Cominsky Park in Chicago on July 29. Miss Brown, most charming person was recently interviewed by the editors of LIFE magazine and soon will get "a spread" in that pictorial publication.

Like the now immortal "element about the weather, which I mentioned the fact that Atlanta is his home town. Dyer and Sherman are two old-time fighters with a ven for striking out for themselves. A natural urge, don't you think? Experts in the field, each can handle minks, snakes, and enemies with the same ease as with the far cheaper, popular-priced established mechanics. Dyer and Sherman are forces just as easily and naturally as a bolt spinning into place.

In Africa, Europe, Asia, Australia, and the many islands of the Pacific, Negro and white have served and fought beside each other. In our war plants both races have contributed to the production of a miracle which admittedly saved the world from Nazism and Fascism. I have seen white men and colored, working together in single labor gangs, lifting, straining under the material that beat the Germans and is crushing the Jap.

If cooperation between the white and the Negro is essential for the successful prosecution of a war to have democracy, why not preserve that collaboration so that we may keep our democracy won at so high a cost?

The humble beginning of the firm of Dyer and Sherman are very definite steps in the right direction. . . . More power to them!

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### Lillian Smith, Marion Anderson Patrons For Hampton's Festival

MISS Lillian Smith, author of "Strange Fruit," Miss Marion Anderson, singer, and John Wildberger, Broadway producer, as well as Miss Hilda Simms, Hampton Institute alumna and star of "Anna Lucasta" are listed as honorary patrons of the week-long "Arts of the Theatre" festival which will open at Hampton Institute next Monday (July 23) with a recital by Miss Primus, noted dancer.

The festival will demonstrate the relative effectiveness of the various theatre arts, including the dance, the choral symphony, the cinema, the modern drama, and the classical play. It is being sponsored by the Hampton Institute, summer school and directed by Robert J. Sallstad and Owen Dodson.

President and Mrs. Ralph P. Bridger are honorary patrons of the festival, as are J. Henry Scattergood, Dr. Channing H. Toms, Dr. Chester B. Emerson, Dr. Morgan F. Norris, Dr. J. M. G. Ramsey, Capt. Lewis L. Straus, Willard S. Townsend, and Ralph B. Johnson of the Hampton Institute board of trustees.

Erneston Hughes, poet and playwright, Canada Lee and Frederick Neil, Broadway actors, Arna Flanston, writer, Commander and the Altemus S. MacLean, former director of Hampton Institute, Rosamond Glider of Theatre Arts Monthly, and Miss W. M. G. Charles of Stephens College are among the persons actively interested in encouraging a wider appreciation of the arts of the theatre who are listed as honorary patrons for the festival.

Mr. Bradshaw and Mrs. Apollonia are patrons of the festival. The festival will demonstrate the relative effectiveness of the various theatre arts, including the dance, the choral symphony, the cinema, the modern drama, and the classical play.

NEW YORK (U.P.) — The Jersey Rounce maestro, Tiny Bradshaw, with the Apollo with a full revue of the Edwards Sisters and Bob Parrish, star of the Latin Quarter.

A time-saving way to keep your car bright is to have a little premium pan filled with hot soda water near the dishpan and put into it a few pieces of lemon and a few other food.

Shine increases the vitamin content of tomatoes except when the plants are undernourished and suffer from loss of foliage say the experts.

uled for them — one will be provided a special effect of General Amusement. During his first performance played a Chesterfield and show, did a soldier performance and field the day before.

and during his second week, played a second Chesterfield show plus the Street Dance. "Zanzibar" is a feature in the song sheet hit Parade (August) Louie, with his brand new band.

ed some of his debut at the Zanzibar in September which makes the first nightclub they have played in New York area.

OTS AND DASHES — Marva Louise getting a big boost in Hollywood at Shepp's Playhouse. The emcee, Carter-Moxine Sullivan, four seems ready to go. Louise Edwards of the Edwards Sisters bringing The Manhattan Debs, appearing at the Paramount in Times Square, confronted movie star Simon Simons in front of stage door. Simons flustered in French. "Oh you frightened me, children, you frightened me! The children are 19 years old! Leopold Stokowski asked Wm. Grant Still to write a fanfare for his patriotic concert in Hollywood. Benj. Still wrote 16 measures of piece dedicated to the 99th Fighter Squadron. Other composers added their patriotic numbers for the occasion. The scenes with Mantan Moreland and his partner in "Crime Son. Carter wrote one of these Charlie Chan mysteries just WASN'T funny.

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### Heath I O Play Hamlet in Hampton Drama Festival

Hampton Institute, Va. — Gordon Heath, staff announcer for Station WMCA in New York City, and a former student at Hampton Institute, will play the title role of Hamlet next week, during the "Arts of the Theatre" festival at Hampton, July 23-28.

The streamlined production of Shakespeare's masterpiece will climax an unusual series of events at Hampton there in one week outstanding examples of the dance, the folk choral symphony, and the modern and classical stage will be presented in an effort to crystallize for the summer school student body of the college the relative effectiveness of each of these dramatic media. A dance recital by Pearl Primus, John Stenbeck's "Forgotten Village" and "Jake and Sue," and Sutton Vance's "Outward Bound" will precede the performances of "Hamlet" which will be given in Garden Hall on the evenings of Thursday and Saturday, July 26 and 28.

Heath, who is a native of New York City, attended the Ethical Culture School, the High School of Music and Art, and the College of the New Theatre School before enrolling as a student at Hampton Institute in 1942. While at the Virginia college he appeared as the male lead in Shaw's "Major Barbara" and was active in the Communications Theatre, winning the Rex Williams trophy.

Previously a script writer and actor in NYA projects over WMCA, Heath also wrote scripts for and acted in the "I'm Your Neighbor" series on WNYC last year; has narrated and acted on the "Ave Maria" hour over WMCA since last October; was narrator for the Pearl Primus show at the Belasco theatre last fall; and has appeared on television programs.

Appointed as WMCA's first Negro announcer in March of this year, Heath also was codirector of and acted in Dodson's "Garden of Time," presented by the American Theatre not long ago.

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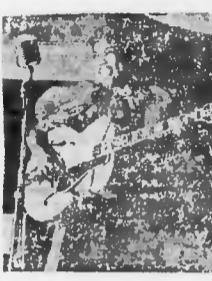
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LUCKY MILLINDER



Sister Rosetta Tharpe

"WHO THREW THE WHISKEY IN THE WELL?"

THE DYNAMASTRO

# "LUCKY" MILLINDER

AND HIS Blazing ORCH

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## "SISTER" ROSETTA THARPE

THE HOTTEST VOICE ON RECORDS!

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DENNIS O'KEEFE CONSTANCE MOORE

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Watch for these great Republic hits at your favorite theatre