

Kuumba Mmelita

A FESTIVE OCCASION

Artistic expressions, cultivated through years of hard work, were exhibited to an appreciative audience under open skies at the Kuumba Mmelita Sunday on a lawn of North Carolina Central University. Bathed in bright sunshine and rhythmic vibes from

exterior of heads, in a way that just didn't pierce the ear's inner canal. Mrs. Martha Hayes, her 12 year old daughter, Gwendolyn, and 14 year old son, Henry, styled and set hair for free. Mrs. Hayes operates Cape Fear Beauty Institute and Hair Weaving in Fayette-

sed the lawn laden with cameras, catching a candid shot here and a portrait there.

"Hey Robert, how about a portrait of you and the daughter?" Silas Mayfield asked of a friend who posed for four or five different shots. Mayfield, a 1972 Central graduate in geography and a former law student, says he's heading to be one of the best portrait photographers in the world. But right now he's sharpening his skills on portraits, weddings, banquets, and dinners.

Dancers representing Kay Sullivan's Dance School caught several photographer's shutters as they danced creative dances to Duke Ellington's classic tune, "Satin Doll", and the more contemporary "Magic Mind" by Earth, Wind and Fire. The youthful dancers have been taught several years by the hard working instructor, some since early childhood.



noon to early evening, heads bobbed and weaved to jazz; watched graceful dancers; dined, and enjoyed several graphic works displayed on little tables dotted around the natural amphitheatre.

Just as music is a culture's lifeblood, rhythmic expressions from the North Carolina Central University Jazz band did the hard work of attracting to the lawn several hundred people within an hour. Many who attended said they had planned to do other things but just couldn't pass up the festive air.

The 30-piece jazz group performed several popular tunes including "A Child is Born", a Thad Jones tune, and "Bluesette" written by Toots Thielman. Conducting the orchestra was youthful NCCU Professor William Moon, assisted by his brother, Edward Moon. Both men are natives of Nashville, Tenn., and have been at NCCU less than a year.

As music from the band flowed, music of a different type was being made on the



ville. She is teaching her children the craft, that she says is not being taught well by many schools in the state. She formerly operated three beauty salons in Fayetteville, but so inexperienced were her workers, she says she decided to train cosmetologists instead. Her hair weaving school is reported to be the only one in North Carolina.

Photographers criss-cros-

When she is not instructing the dancers, Mrs. Sullivan operates Pine Knoll Rest Home.

The creativity of Renee Wilson's crewel embroidery caught the eye of many of the artists and art lovers. Like many of the participating artists, for Ms. Wilson, this was the first time any of her work has been displayed. The modest mother remarked that she is

Photos by William Covington



"trying to develop the craft so that eventually I can sell it and support myself." An eye-catching bird, made by a fine thread woven in and out of a cotton background giving an etched effect brought a number of compliments. Ms. Wilson is employed by the School of Social Work at UNC and lives in Greensboro.

who "felt a strong need to maintain our black culture" said Valerie Barnwell, a member of the group, and chairman of Duke's Black Student Alliance.

It's not every day that you'll experience so much talent, all in one setting.

A scene from Rebecca Ransom's play "Bobby Bolden's Blues" was performed



Colorful leather goods were displayed for sale by Marvin Kelly, now a resident of Alexandria, Va., a founder of Blackfria, a Harlem (New York) cultural organization. All kinds of leather goods are produced by the artist who says black artists can make a living selling their art, if the art is functional and serves the needs of the people.

"An artist must relate his work directly to the people who are to sustain his work", said Kelly. He said that rich patrons and the government have cornered the art market. "Much of the funding of art stifles an artist's creativity. Many artists are trying to create so that they can get grants, not so that they can reach people."

While there were many out-of-town artists, the majority of the artists were Durham based. Yusef and Friends, a well-known local jazz group, Rachiim's Trio (expanded to include about ten artists) performed several well-known tunes and some originals.

Jazz vocalists Debbie Joyner performing with NCCU's Jazz Band, and Eve Cornelius with Yusef and Friends, warmed up an already eighty-degree day a few notches on the Fahrenheit scale.

"Dance Black", a group of Duke students, directed by choreographer Sharon Madison-Sultan, created movements depicting the history of black dance from Africa — the Carribbean movement — and jazz in the U.S. to Ralph McDonald's "The Path". The group was founded about four years ago by black Duke students



with the disadvantages of immovable microphones and no stage props. Nevertheless, the author's warm feel for Bobby Bolden, an early jazz musician, came through the lines. The cast includes Yusef Salim, Minnie Forte, Eve Cornelius, Amad Shabazz, and Hayes Sameer.

Lance Jeffries, a nationally known poet, took the stage in the hottest part of the afternoon, reading two works — one of a former student and another about 'Trellie', a beautiful black woman, the poet's wife. Accompanied by percussionist Monsieur's vibrant and moving notes, the experiences of this Afro-American bridged several generations who watched and heard.

Poet Jakr Shelton was one of the performers who were critical of negative experiences in black lifestyles and suggested alternative behavior.

"Mama is Still Mama" was satirical verse about young people who become educated and somehow forget the one who made it possible — "Mama".

For many, the Kuumba Mmelita was a pleasant diversion from Sunday afternoon in front of the

tube or on the phone, described as favorite past-times.

Celestine Beckett remarked that she would "have been asleep, because Durham is pretty dull on Sundays." Ms. Beckett said a friend invited her to attend.



The people who made it possible, received some recognition near the program's end, but nothing commensurate with the time they spent producing the event. Ms. Barbara Taylor and Ms. Wendy Merritt, the program's producers, were kept busy all day with last minute scheduling, setting up exhibits.

Masters of ceremony Walter Norflett and Shanga (Donald Baker), smoothed over the day's difficulties making everything seem that it was planned that way.



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