

Forum

Dr. Gill: Shertzer racially biased

As a Ph.D., a drama critic, a published theatre historian, a professor of dramatic literature, and an actress, I am saddened at Jim Shertzer finding the casting of Gregory Lamont Allen, a talented Afro-American actor, in the North Carolina School of the Arts production of Anton Chekhov's "Uncle Vanya," "troublesome." The result of this unfortunate bias reflected itself in the small audience that ventured out Sunday afternoon to the matinee. Powerful and brilliant critics before Shertzer -- Atkinson, Hammond, Woodlcott -- have done the same damage, and while damage to the artist is sometimes irreparable, perhaps even worse is the damage done to most people. On a much larger scale than the discouragement of one man is the equally important fact that much of what mainstream America (and the world) believes about Afro-American people is what they perceive from the stage and the screen. If they see us only as Sambos, Uncle Toms, Exotic Primitives, Tragic Mulattos and Aunt Jemimas, then the entire world stands to lose, since far too few whites and blacks really know the other. Perception is the only reality with which we interact.



COMMENTARY

By GLENDA E. GILL

The great Ira Aldridge, an Afro-American tragedian, had to cross the Atlantic in the 1800s in order to play Shakespeare. Certainly, Shakespeare must have intended that Afro-American actors play his roles, since he created Afro-American characters -- Titus Andronicus, Othello, Aaron the Moor and, some feel, Caliban. Afro-American actors have also played Hamlet, Macbeth and King Lear with credibility and success. Sydney Hibbert, on the NCSA faculty, played an elegant Thane of Cawdor at Wake Forest the fall of 1985. In the very early part of the 20th century, when the great Paul Robeson, then a relative unknown, played opposite a white female in Eugene O'Neill's "All God's Chillun Got Wings," audiences threatened, before opening night, to tear down MacDougal Street on which the famed Provincetown Playhouse stood. The following morning, newspapers declared, "MacDougal Street still stands." So does an unfortunate bias

Remembering Dr. King and his dream

CHRONICLE MAILBAG

Our Readers Speak Out

The dawn of peace

To The Editor:

President Reagan is to be congratulated on signing the INF Treaty and seeking 50 percent reductions in all nuclear weapons with the Soviet Union. These are only the first small steps toward eventual and inevitable disarmament by all sides. Gradual, multi-lateral disarmament is dictated and demanded by historical and technological trends as well as economic and social imperatives. Also, if our self-proclaimed spiritual values and beliefs are to survive and continue to have meaning, then world peace must come or else our religious ideals will ring hollow and become the useless, self-serving mumblings of a morally bankrupt civilization.

Those sincere but misguided people who have built their lives, careers and politics on fear, hatred, prejudice and sometimes conflict -- such as some politicians, editorial columnists and the so-called "peace-through-strength" crowd -- will oppose these early moves toward real world peace while claiming that their weapons build-ups and arms races have laid the groundwork for negotiations, but nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, they have always stood in the way of real peace or serious negotiations with the Soviet Union. Instead, it has been the repeated, insistent and growing demands for peace by millions of average Americans and a lurch toward economic and social crisis

in Winston-Salem. If Mr. Allen cannot play the title role in the North Carolina School of the Arts production of "Uncle Vanya," we are in dire need of redemption as human

and Afro-American actors, like Chekhov's characters in "Uncle Vanya," fumble through life, dream ineffectually, live idle lives, experience unrequited love and drink in

desperation. Conversely, we have heroes, drink in moderation or not at all, have fulfilled love affairs and marriages and meet goals. But Chekhov does not write of the latter. For those who do, Afro-American actors are denied, frequently, the opportunity to play positive, strong, images.

I invite Mr. Shertzer to look more closely at the casting of major regional theatres like the Guthrie and the Arena, where Afro-American actors are cast, credibly, in non-traditional roles. Earle Hyman, a native North Carolinian, who has played more Shakespeare than any other actor of color, just played Lear in Dallas last summer. James Earl Jones is the only major Afro-American actor on the stage trained in classical theatre. The University of Michigan gave him the opportunity. Sidney Poitier never had the chance and, to this day, cannot play Shakespeare. Perhaps as magnificent an actor as Poitier, when a younger man, had a director not as enlightened as Yuri Belov, or a critic in the house, with pen in hand, perched to say he had no right to be. As a woman ending her 25th year in the teaching profession, trained in theatre and drama, I wish to applaud Mr. Allen's very well done performance this weekend, and particularly Mr. Belov for an exceptional job of directing. The scene design, the other actors, the lighting and the sound effects all enhanced Mr. Allen. I sincerely hope and fervently pray that Mr. Shertzer will be more insightful in his future brilliant and influential columns.

Dr. Glenda E. Gill is an associate professor of English at Winston-Salem State University. (Photo courtesy of James W. Wilson)

by both the USA and the USSR that have forced Mr. Reagan from a position of open hostility to "constructive engagement" with the Soviet Union.

The nationalistic phobias and military power preoccupation of the "peace-through-strength" sloganists have never contributed to peace, contrary to their exaggerated claims. Their weapons build-ups and arms races have weakened and drained the economic and social fabric of our country. Their fears and hatreds have drained away vital financial, physical, human and technological resources from peaceful pursuits and human needs. Their CIA covert operations, military adventures and military-industrial complexes have sold out our spiritual and democratic values to the lowest bidder and exiled our younger generations in a moral wasteland.

While trials and tribulations still lurk ahead, the INF Treaty and other arms reductions sure to follow are early signs that the USA/USSR and the world in general are finally starting to grow up. The future belongs to love of fellow man and neighbor nations, faith in non-violent solutions and our spiritual roots; courage in our abilities to weather disagreements and find non-military solutions. World peace is starting to dawn into this single, interrelated sphere spinning through space, and fear, hatred and prejudice are gasping their last desperate breaths. All we have to do is hang on, care, and give peace our individual helping hand.

Edward F. Engle
Winston-Salem

The Winston-Salem Chronicle presents our 1987

YEAR IN REVIEW

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1988

SPECIAL KEEPSAKE EDITION HIGHLIGHTING 1987'S MOST SIGNIFICANT COMMUNITY EVENTS

- Man and Woman Of The Year will be announced
- Male and Female Athletes Of The Year will be chosen
- Presenting our Community Service Award
- Honoring outstanding high school athletes
- Best photos, top stories and notable quotes of 1987

For extra copies or information concerning advertising opportunities, call the Winston-Salem Chronicle Business Office (919) 722-8624.

Winston-Salem Chronicle

The Twin City's Award-Winning Weekly

P.O. Box 3154, Winston-Salem, N. C. 27102 (919) 722-8624

Underwrite a miracle.



Individuals with mental retardation have always been told, "You can't do it." Through Special Olympics, you can tell them they can do it.

Since Special Olympics International was founded in 1968, it has grown into a worldwide sports movement that brings pride, confidence, courage and determination to more than one million children and adults with mental retardation in over 20,000 communities throughout the United States and over 72 countries around the world. In your community, the spirit of Special Olympics

is making miracles happen. There are many ways that you can help underwrite this miracle, ways that also take into account your personal finances and the new tax law. Some of these ways are listed in the coupon below, and we would be glad to discuss these or others with

you at your convenience. Please call or write today to learn how you can help spread the spirit of Special Olympics. The need has never been greater -- and your help has never meant more.

Please send me information about how I can underwrite a miracle through Special Olympics by:

- Making a gift of securities, bonds, or cash
- Making a gift of personal property
- Making a gift of land
- Naming Special Olympics as beneficiary of an IRA plan, pension plan, life insurance policy, or in a will
- Transferring securities, bonds, cash or land in return for income
- Establishing a trust to ultimately benefit my children
- Transferring my home to Special Olympics but continuing to live in it
- Please call me to discuss the ways I can contribute

Name _____
Address _____
City _____
State _____ Zip _____
Telephone (____) _____
Best time to call _____

Please write or call today:

Steve I. Schneider
Special Olympics International
1350 New York Avenue, N.W., Suite 500
Washington, D.C. 20005

(202) 628-3630



To The Editor:

"The Dream"

Bells toll,
Hearts strain,
Solid cold,
Autumn's pain.

Black veil,
Salt rain.
Joyful wails,
Broken chains.

Black white,
Yellow red,
To the light,
I am led.

Death wean,
Death be,
The dream,
Forever free.

John Meredith

As we honor Dr. King, let us remember the dream. A dream not just for blacks, but a dream for all of mankind.

Dr. King was not the first human being to give his life for this dream; neither will he be the last. The blood, sweat and tears of all of mankind will one day allow this dream to be reality.

What if this day became the first truly international holiday, celebrated by all the nations of the world? Would it be asking too much to have on this day no hatred of your fellow man, no fear of your fellow man and no war against your fellow man?

The memory of Dr. King and so many other great men around the world will never die. Their memory will compel mankind to fulfill the dream or die.

John Meredith
Winston-Salem