

Breaks are few and far between

▲ African-Americans find they just can't get a break on Broadway or in Hollywood

By SHERIDAN HILL
Managing Editor

African-American playwrights and actors face tremendous obstacles in getting even the first opportunity to showcase their talents.

While Maya Angelou says she was able to interest Broadway agents in *And Still I Rise*, (but did not like their offer) she is the exception to the rule.

Larry Leon Hamlin, the founder of North Carolina Black Repertory Company and the National Black Theatre Festival, is a playwright/producer/director/actor who knows full well the difficulties faced by African-Americans in theatre.

"The problem is we don't have a lot of African-American producers. I get inundated with demands to produce the works of African-Americans. I get scripts every day.

"African-American playwrights aren't at the top of anyone's agenda."

Being black makes a difficult business next-to-impossible.

In fact, the National Black Theatre Festival is one of the few places that black playwrights can have their work produced: 20 different plays are selected for the

festival.

Rosalind Cash, an original member of the Negro Ensemble Company, broke many color barriers in theatre and carries the battle scars to prove it. Cash was in town last week for the opening night of *And Still I Rise*.

"Actors of color are given no regard in Hollywood," she says. "It takes a certain kind of fiber to withstand the assault on your person. I say this not out of bitterness, but out of triumph. My feelings are forged from an "up in your face" experience."

Cash has an impressive record of stage, television and motion pictures, including starring with Charlton Heston in *The Omega Man*. At one point in her career, she was told that blacks weren't being used in theatre or television anymore.

"I asked them, how could a race of people go out of style? I hung in there. I've had some lean days. I've gone to Vienna, done movies, had no work for a year, then worked on *A Different World*, had a play that was a flop, a play that was a hit, and went to play Cleopatra."

Cash says Hollywood "throws away" white female actors when



Rosalind Cash, a veteran actress and an original member of the Negro Ensemble Company, attended *And Still I Rise* last week.

they're 35: "what do you think they do to us?" she asks.

But she is adamant that the only way to make it is to never say die.

"We as a people, it came hard for us to get to where we are. We

can finally make a movie, but we can't get it distributed. Once we get the distribution gears in place, it will be all over. The African-American is so talented, they gotta do everything to restrain us."

Concert series features blues women

"Women of the Blues" will be the theme for the Piedmont Blues Preservation Society's 1992 fall concert series. The first show of the series will take place Saturday, September 19, at Central Station, in the Sheraton Hotel, 300 Green Street in downtown Greensboro. Chicago blues singer Valerie Wellington and her band will perform at 9 p.m.

Wellington has played the Chicago Blues Festival and virtually all the major blues festivals across the country. She has four blues albums to her credit, including her latest release, *Life in the Big City*. The Chicago native has also captured four W.C. Handy nominations, for female blues artist

of the year.

Valerie Wellington is also an Emmy award-winning actress, having won that distinction in the PBS presentation, *Precious Memories (A Stroll Down 47th Street)*.

Tickets for Valerie Wellington

are \$7 for Piedmont Blues Preservation Society members, and \$8 for the general public. They can be purchased at Bump's Blues Shack and Schoolkids Records and Tapes in Greensboro, or by calling 272-5837. The "Women of the Blues"

concert series continues Saturday October 10 with Melvia "Chick" Rodgers and Masheen Company. The series wraps up Saturday, November 14 with Big Time Sarah. These shows will also be held at Central Station starting at 9 p.m.

Hooper Funeral Home

is pleased to announce the addition of Miss Jeanette A. Davis to its staff.



The management and staff are pleased to welcome Jeanette A. Davis to the staff of Hooper Funeral Home said the manager, Gregory T. Burrell. Miss Davis has been employed as a Funeral Directress and Embalmer. She is a 1986 graduate of Winston-Salem State University, and a 1988 graduate of Gupion-Jones College of Mortuary Science in Atlanta, Georgia, and formerly employed by Russel Funeral Home. Miss Davis is also an autopsy assistant at Forsyth Memorial Hospital.

"I am happy that Hooper Funeral Home is giving me the opportunity to expand my career in this industry," said Miss Davis. "She will be working very closely with me to help us provide the most professional service in the city of Winston-Salem," said Burrell. She is a member of New Jerusalem Baptist Church, and Beauty of the West Chapter 36 Order of Eastern Star Prince Hall Affiliation. She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Jessie Davis Jr.

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Larry Leon Hamlin

artistic director of the North Carolina Black Repertory Company

A Benefit for the 1993 National Black Theatre Festival



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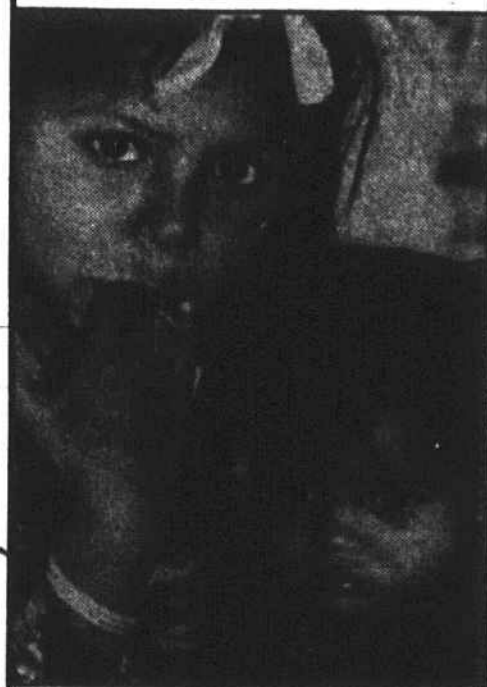
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