

Profile: Malcolm- Jamal Warner 2003 NBTF Co-Chair



File Photo

Malcolm-Jamal Warner at the 2001 National Black Theatre Festival.

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

After appearing as a regular on the highly successful sitcom "The Cosby Show," Malcolm-Jamal Warner has broken away from the stereotype often associated with former child stars. He has not only achieved continued success in his acting career, but has also received accolades in several new creative ventures, including playing bass for his band, Miles Long; his performance poetry gigs; and civic-minded advocacy appearances.

Warner starred on stage in the original play "Cryin' Shame"; in "Freefall" at the Victory Garden Theatre in Chicago; in the off-Broadway play "Three Ways Home" at the Astor Place Theatre; and in "A Midsummer Night's Dream" at the La Jolla Playhouse.

A seasoned director, Warner directed episodes of "Malcolm and Eddie" and has also directed episodes of "The Cosby Show," "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air," "All That," and "Sesame Street." He also directed, produced, and hosted the half-hour tribute to "The Cosby Show." Additional directing credits include Saturday Morning teen magazine "All Ax-S," featuring Jaleel White and Kriss Cross and Nickelodeon's "Keenan and Kel."

In addition to hosting midnight poetry jams at this year's festival, Warner will also perform in his one man play "Love & Other Social Issues." The production is a commentary on live, love and transitions as seen through the eye's of Warner.

"Love & Other Social Issues" will be staged Aug. 8 and Aug. 9 at 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. at NCSA's The Arena. Tickets are \$35.

Fourth Street is a work in progress

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

The Fourth Street that theatergoers will see during this year's National Black Theatre Festival is vastly different than the Fourth Street they saw during the last festival in 2001. The city has invested tons of energy and millions of dollars in order to make the street look worthy of being downtown's main thoroughfare. And there is still much work left to do.

The most obvious change is the look of the street. Workers spent months last year narrowing the street to extend sidewalks. The wider sidewalks have allowed downtown restaurants to have sidewalk dining. City officials also think the wider sidewalks give shops and other businesses a more attractive appearance. Trees and benches have been added along the main section of the street to give people something to look at and a place to rest. It's also now a two-way street, as is its sister street, Fifth Street.

Despite all its changes, Fourth Street is still very much a work in progress. While an assortment of clothing stores, eateries and cafes call the street home, there are still many vacant buildings that have long been in need of tenants. The city is backing a so-called "restaurant row" to jump-start revitalization efforts on Fourth. The goal is to have at least 10 new restaurants open along Fourth, between Main Street and the Stevens Center. The city is throwing in money to help people who want to open restaurants.

Several new restaurants have already opened. One of the most anticipated eateries is behind schedule, though. A Caribbean-style eatery bearing



the name of basketball star Tim Duncan is slated to open in the new One West Fourth building. Duncan, a standout on the world championship-winning San Antonio Spurs, is popular in this town as a result of years playing at Wake Forest University.

City erects permanent marker to honor Hamlin, NBTF

BY T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

Last September, as Mayor Allen Joines was about to unveil a historic honor for her son in the heart of downtown Winston-Salem, Annie Hamlin Johnson's mind wandered back in time.

She remembered the trials and tribulations her son overcame 13 years ago to bring a theater festival featuring top-name actors to a mid-size Southern city such as Winston-Salem.

She also thought back to when her son and two daughters were just kids. Being a natural thespian herself, Johnson on Saturday nights would set up a fake stage in the family's home to show her children how to entertain. Her son, she said, had star potential and high hopes even then.

By the time Joines and other city officials had removed a black cloak to reveal a permanent marker honoring Johnson's son and the biennial theater festival he conceptualized and brought to fruition, Johnson's face was already covered with tears. Friends and family members lovingly patted her on the back as she made a futile attempt to capture most of the tears in Kleenex.

"They are tears of joy," Johnson said. "I feel he deserves this. He worked very hard. I am proud of him and all my children."

Larry Leon Hamlin, Johnson's son, is no stranger to honors. In the past year, he has been honored with the key to Reidsville, his hometown, and an award from the Hollywood branch of the

NAACP. But Hamlin said he was greatly touched and impressed by the honor from the city — a weatherproof marker in front of the Stevens Center that features the colorful seal of the National Black Theatre Festival and an inscription praising Hamlin for his work.

"I hope that this...becomes an

wood, where the names and achievements of local artists will be carved into the sidewalk."

Joines said the city wanted to do something more for Hamlin. That is why his honor will be at eye level for pedestrians instead of under their feet.

"We thought it was very important to begin the recognition

Visitors Bureau said that High Point's furniture market is the only event in the Triad that draws more visitors and dollars.

The festival also helped to show city officials the potential of the downtown area. During the one-week festival, the energy level downtown picks up substantially as NBTF visitors take



Mayor Allen Joines, right, reads the marker to Larry Leon Hamlin; his wife, Sylvia; and Mayor Pro Tem Vivian Burke as others look on.

inspiration for all of the artists of Winston-Salem. If you do excellent work, somehow, someday the world will recognize it," Hamlin said.

Joines said the Hamlin marker is the first in a series of tributes to local artists along Fourth and Trade streets. City officials hope to construct a walk of fame similar to the famous one in Holly-

program with the National Black Theatre Festival," Joines said.

Much was made at the outdoor ceremony about the millions the NBTF has pumped into the local economy. It is the largest festival in the Triad, Joines said. Since the first festival in 1989, the event has generated more than \$40 million for the local economy. The city's Convention and

advantage of sidewalk dining and enjoy other outdoor activities. The city now has invested millions in revitalizing downtown, hoping to make the area vibrant and attractive year-round.

"The National Black Theatre Festival also supports our effort to make downtown an exciting and viable place for the citizens of Winston-Salem," Joines said.