



From left: Mari White, who will be replaced by Suzette Azaria Gunn in the upcoming Winston-Salem production, along with Marcelle Gover and Aura Vence in a scene from the play.

'HIGH' HOPES

Black Rep launches 2010-11 season with NBTF favorite

BY LAYLA FARMER
THE CHRONICLE

The North Carolina Black Repertory Company (NCBRC) is hoping to start its 2010-11 season off with a bang.

The company is bringing "The High Priestess of Dark Alley," a popular production from the 2009 National Black Theatre Festival, back to the local stage Aug. 20-22. Penned by Jackie Alexander, an actor, writer, producer and director, "The High Priestess" premiered at the Billie Holiday Theatre in Brooklyn, N.Y. and enjoyed a six-week, sold-out run there before coming to the NBTF — which the Black Rep produces — last summer.

"We just had a good time," Alexander said of the play's first Twin City run. "(Coming back) is work, but it's like a vacation, because we're going to a place where we felt nothing but love, and you want to perform for those people."

"The High Priestess" explores the issue of intraracism (light-skinned versus dark-skinned) in the African American community through the perspectives of a Creole mother and her two beautiful daughters. It is an intricate story of love, loyalty and the things that matter most in life.

Actress and West Indies native Marcelle Gover will again assume the role of the High Priestess, which Alexander wrote specifically for her. Gover said she is glad to be reuniting with the 2009 cast, which remains intact with the exception of Suzette Azaria Gunn, who will make her premiere as Claire Charbonet.

"I'm excited because I get to see everyone from the production again," Gover declared. "We always have such fun. It's just so nice to be together. We have a lovely group of people."

Alexander has since been commissioned to write three new plays for the award-winning Billie Holiday Theatre, which will devote its entire 2010-11 season to his works.

NCBRC Executive Director Gerry Patton said she selected the play as the season opener because she felt it would appeal to the 20- and 30-something demographic that the company is trying to court.

"We're just looking to bring additional people into theater that are perhaps not as involved as we would like them to be," Patton said. "I think one of the ways to do that is to provide plays that speak their language."

Alexander, a native of New Orleans — where "The High Priestess" is set — says



Suzette Azaria Gunn

the play has been well received by Patton's target demographic in New York City.

"The play is probably the reason why the (Billie Holiday) Theatre commissioned me to write ... new shows, because it brought in this whole new audience, the young professionals," he said. "I think maybe it's because I write in their language. I write the way they speak."

The appeal to the younger audience is part of an overall repurposing effort that the NCBRC is undergoing in order to stay vital.

Ticket sales were not where they needed to be last season, and Patton says the company needs to rally its revenue in the season preceding the biennial NBTF, slated for August 2011.

The company has created a Facebook page, which has more than 1,700 fans and is hosting a Premiere Party for "The High Priestess" at Noma Urban Bar & Grill on Aug. 19, the day before the play opens. Despite the changes, the company is staying true to its original mission of bringing quality theater to the local community, and still adheres to the motto "Black theatre is for everyone," Patton said.

"The play is attractive to that (younger) age group, but it's not limited to that age group," she noted. "...We're trying to make as many connections as possible because it's really important for us to build our audience base. We have to do that to survive."

Alexander said he is looking forward to returning to Winston-Salem.

"We're just grateful and excited to be coming down," said the NYC resident. "We're going to give them a great show."

"The High Priestess of Dark Alley" will be staged August 20 at 8 p.m., August



Jackie Alexander

21 at 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. and Aug. 22 at 3 p.m. at the Arts Council Theatre, 610 Coliseum Drive. For more information or to purchase tickets, which are \$18- \$22, visit www.nbtf.org or call (336) 723-2266.

Foster

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shops and galleries; others were looking for the experience of riding in a rickshaw. One of his most interesting fares was a family visiting from out of town. They excitedly boarded the rickshaw with no destination in mind. They just told Foster to peddle so that they could take in the sights.

"If you're sitting back and just enjoying the breeze, it's quant, it's pleasant," said Foster, describing the rickshaw rides.

Foster, a registered nurse at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center, is a lifelong bicycle enthusiast who once took part in bicycle road races. After seeing cycle rickshaws in Charleston, S.C. while on a vacation with his wife and children, he got the idea of turning his love of cycling into a business. He made calls to owners of rickshaw businesses in other cities around the country to learn the ins and outs of pedicabs. Foster then ordered a rickshaw from a company in England.

Foster's Sweet Ride Rickshaw is a part-time gig that Foster does only when his nursing job and family responsibilities allow, but he takes the rickshaw business seriously.

"The more consistent I am with it, the more serious people will take it," said Foster, who charges \$5 per person for the first five blocks and \$1 for each additional block.

He pedals downtown from his West End home several evenings a week. He'll ride down, and sometimes park, on streets with a lot of foot traffic. On a good night, a string of pedestrians will hail him, sending Foster peddling clients from one end of downtown to another.

Weather is not a hurdle for Foster, who is used to riding in the steaming heat, the dead of winter and even in the rain. He's got a rain cover to keep passengers dry in stormy weather.

Adam Leonard is among those who've ridden in Foster's rickshaw. He was among a group of Foster's friends who took the pedicab from BB&T Ballpark to an eatery on Burke Street. Leonard rode with another friend during the ride and said he was impressed. Not only is it an environmentally friendly way to get around, he said, but it's also an enjoyable ride.

"I think it's a really unique way to see the city," said Leonard. "It's really smooth,



Chris Foster, a nurse at Baptist Hospital, just started his rickshaw side business.

it's really comfortable in the back seat...It's such an awesome, awesome experience."

Foster said his rickshaw is designed not just for a comfortable ride, but a safe one too. The sturdy passenger compartment can haul up to 500 pounds and has bright flashers on both the front and back end to make it visible in the heaviest of traffic. It also has reflectors on all sides of the compartment and passenger seat belts.

Foster has big plans for his rickshaw business. He's trying to solicit local businesses to advertise on the side of his rickshaw, the same way that companies buy ad space on buses and atop taxis.

He's hoping to expand the business with other drivers and maybe even more rickshaws. Foster is also contemplating using his rickshaw for deliveries, weddings and for working special events in other cities, such as the High Point Furniture Market.

To schedule a ride with Foster, call 336-671-4320.

Curbside Garbage Collection is Coming to Winston-Salem

Starting this August, the Winston-Salem Sanitation Division will begin phasing in curbside garbage collection for all households. Residents may request an exemption if no one in the household can roll out the cart.

- All city households will have free use of a sturdy 96-gallon rollout cart.
- Curbside collection is a more efficient way to collect garbage.
- Curbside collection will save fuel, cut truck emissions and reduce employee injuries.
- Curbside collection is less affected by winter storms.
- Some neighborhoods may have a new garbage collection day.

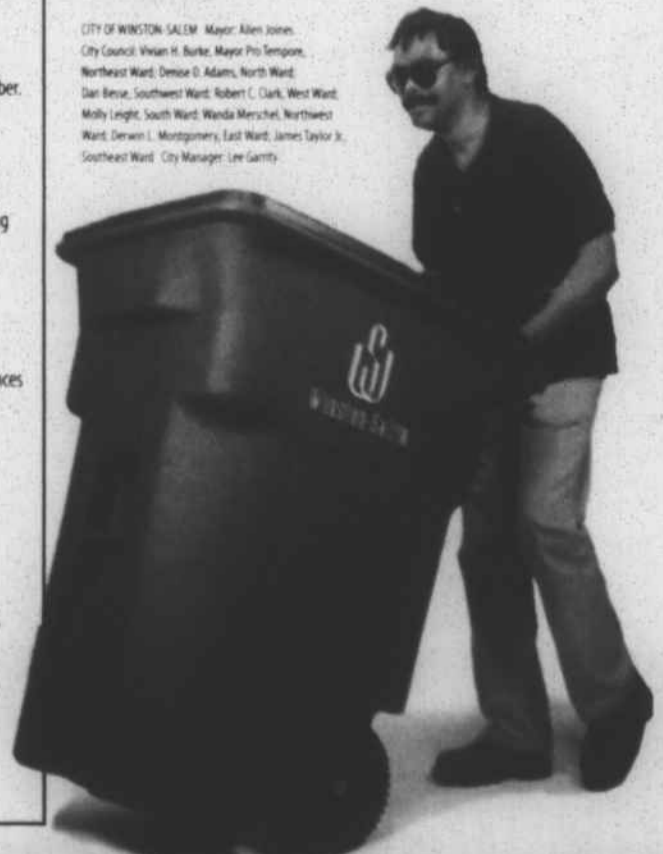
For more information, go to www.CityofWS.org or call City Link, 727-8000.



Winston-Salem



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FAQS ABOUT CURBSIDE GARBAGE COLLECTION

When will the city start curbside collection?

City households will convert to curbside collection as the carts are delivered. All city households should be converted by the end of October.

When should I put the rollout cart out?

Your cart must be at the curb by 6 a.m. on your collection day and no earlier than 5 p.m. the night before. Carts must be removed from the curb by 8 a.m. the day after collection. Exceptions will be made during schedule changes due to emergencies or holidays.

What happens if my cart is not out by 6 a.m.?

It is possible that your garbage will not be collected that week. Remember that the city has assigned you a day for collection, not a time. Although our crews have a routine, there are special circumstances that could cause them to come earlier or later than usual.

One 96-gallon container is not enough for me. Can I get another rollout cart?

Households may request a second or third cart. However, an annual service fee of \$40 will be charged for each additional cart.

Can I place excess garbage next to the cart at the curb?

No. All garbage must fit inside the cart. If you have more than will fit, retain the garbage for collection the next week.

Do I still need to bag my trash?

Yes. All trash must be bagged before being put in the rollout cart. City ordinance requires that garbage be bagged to prevent windblown litter and discourage vermin.

Urgent news for people who took ACCUTANE

Accutane, a drug used to treat acne, has been linked to serious abdominal illnesses, even months or years later, including Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD), Ulcerative Colitis, and Crohn's Disease. If you have suffered from any of these conditions after taking Accutane, call us now about monetary compensation at 1-800-THE-EAGLE (toll-free). We practice law only in Arizona, but associate with lawyers throughout the U.S.

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