

C E N T E R S T A G E


**Mamady Keita & Sewa Kan
Dances & Drums of Guinea**

Friday, September 22 at 8pm
Stewart Theatre
Co-sponsored by PineCone
\$14 GA/\$17.50 Reserved/\$7 Students

Exhilarating polyrhythmic extravaganza featuring one of the world's greatest drummers. Pre-show discussion with percussionist Beverly Botsford.

Djembe drumming workshop on 9/21.
Call 515-3927 for details.


**Amy Pivar Dances
"The Modest Typist"**

Friday, September 29 at 8pm
Stewart Theatre
\$14 GA/\$17.50 Reserved/\$7 Students

Physical and zany dance/theatre. "The Modest Typist" confronts the conflicts faced by women at the close of the 20th century by recalling the lives of two women who helped shape the century as it began: Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas. Pre-show discussion with dance writer Linda Belans.

NCSU TICKET CENTRAL: 515-1100

Voice/Text Telephone. Open 12-8pm, Monday-Friday.

Ad support provided by The Independent Weekly.

N
O
R
T
H
C
A
R
O
L
I
N
A
S
T
A
T
E
U
N
I
V
E
R
S
I
T
Y

It's a Drag Drag Drag Drag World...



...And we don't mean auto racing. John Leguizamo, Wesley Snipes & Patrick Swayze

Movie Review:

Send Your Straight Friends to See It

By Steve Warren

In one of the oldest of movie plots a small town, simmering with problems and intrigues, is visited by anywhere from one to a magnificent seven strangers who expose what's wrong and set it right.

No small movie town has ever seen stranger strangers than the three who arrive in Snydersville, Nebraska in *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar*. The fabulous trio consists of Miss Noxeema Jackson (Wesley Snipes), Miss Vida Boheme (Patrick Swayze) and Miss Chi Chi Rodriguez (John Leguizamo).

We meet them in New York, where they're vying in a pageant for "Drag Queen of the Year." (You'd think gay screenwriter Douglas Carter Beane could have come up with a more creative title.) Vida and Noxeema tie for the prize, an expense-paid trip to Los Angeles to compete in the "Drag Queen of America" contest. (See previous parenthetical thought.)

Feeling sorry for the "Latin boy in a dress working that tired Abbe Lane drag for all it's worth," Vida insists they cash in their plane tickets and buy a car so Chi Chi can go with them. They choose style over substance, a vintage Cadillac convertible that's not likely to make it across the country.

Sure enough, it breaks down in Nebraska, shortly after an unpleasant encounter with bigoted sheriff Chris Penn, who they leave for dead, perhaps inspired by *Boys on the Side*. Stuck in Snydersville for the weekend they naturally attract attention and more surprisingly make friends.

Vida takes an interest in hotel keeper Stockard Channing, who is regularly battered by her husband, Arliss Howard. Noxeema bonds with an elderly woman (Alice Drummond) who's as obsessed as he with movie memorabilia and trivia, and Chi Chi is courted by sensitive young redneck Jason London.

The queens give the town and its women a makeover while Penn searches the county for them, running down his checklist of "places for homos." How it turns out isn't much of a surprise, but before that there's an odd but strangely wonderful scene of Penn in a bar that transcends the formula and gives unexpected texture to the film.

In another magical moment the car rides alongside a train and our heroes teach hand dancing to the passengers. Such incidents make me glad Beban Kidron (*Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*) was chosen as director instead of Arthur Hiller or hundreds of other hacks who

might have done the job.

On the debit side, Kidron hired her usual composer, Rachel Portman, and let her accentuate the corniness when things start coining together. Whatever edge the early part of the movie had seems far in the past as we sink into the goo.

But it's good while it lasts, and we're not surprised when it all goes soggy because we know *To Wong Foo*. . . was designed to be to drag queens what *Philadelphia* was to AIDS. It's not so much a movie for gays and lesbians to see as to recommend to our straight friends and relatives, especially those who don't yet fully accept us. It presents sanitized and unthreatening queers, but at least not the helpless wimps of a generation ago.

The stars do well by us, all deserving to be named honorary homosexuals. To see what their performances might have been, observe Robin Williams' cameo. He plays a gay man with the same campy shtick he's used repeatedly before; but to be fair, if he'd had two hours instead of two minutes he could have developed his character.

A running subplot has Vida and Noxeema teaching Chi Chi the ropes. "When a gay man has too much fashion sense for one gender," Noxeema instructs, "he is a drag queen." The tacky Chi Chi develops that sense on the road.

Leguizamo is the least glamorous of the three, and probably the most real—as a person, of whatever gender. Swayze is matronly, as befits his character, and gets a few chances to show us Vida's inner pain.

Snipes, who is given the least back story, just has fun being outrageous. None ever break character to wink at the audience and remind us they'll be back playing real men soon, and there wasn't an instant when I couldn't accept all of them as what they were portraying.

Beane's script teems with campy celebrity references, and a few celebs pop up on screen. You can't miss RuPaul (as Miss Rachel Tension), but if you blink you'll miss Quentin Crisp, Naomi Campbell and the eponymous Ms. Newmar. (Wait for the Hollywood sequence. Despite the fadeout and Portman's misleading crescendo, the movie doesn't end when they leave Snydersville.)

If you can see only one movie about three drag queens crossing the heartland, make it *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*. It got here first and didn't play it nearly as safe. But that's last year's news and this year's video, and we all want to keep up with the latest, don't we? So for National Coming Out Day, take someone you love to see *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar*.