

ENTERTAINMENT



EXCITING COUPLE—Phylcia and Ahmad Rashad, whose '85 engagement was confirmed via national television, are an exciting couple. Phylcia shares the spotlight on Thursday night on the Cosby Show with Bill Cosby, while hubby Ahmad is a commentator for NBC on the NFL.

Creative Opportunity Theater Group Molds Child Actors

BY JUDITH S. ANDREWS
Special To The CAROLINIAN

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Eddie Robinson is a 10-year-old who has been dancing since kindergarten. What he wants most in life is to make it on the stage and, by most accounts, he is well on his way.

He has recently been called back to audition for a television series and has a coming role in a play about Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., the late Harlem legislator.

Like Eddie, 12-year-old Kellie Williams has been performing for most of her young life. She appeared in August Wilson's celebrated play, "Joe Turner's Come and Gone," and was recently in Philadelphia filming a television drama titled "Lost and Found."

Another 12-year-old, Eric Coles, is looking forward to his first television role in ABC's new series "A Man Called Hawk."

All three of these children polish their performing skills as members of the Kelsey E. Collie Playmakers Repertory Company, which is recognized in the nation's capital as

the premier training ground for talented black youngsters with theatrical ambitions.

Founded in 1976, the repertory company is an outgrowth of the Howard University Children's Theater Workshop, an annual summer program that attracts youngsters ages 7 to 17 from around the nation.

The Playmakers meet each Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. in Howard's College of Fine Arts, which has produced the likes of former "Fame" television star Debbie Allen and Phylicia Rashad of "The Cosby Show."

While the summer theater has open admissions, an audition is required for admission to the select Playmakers group, primarily composed of 34 talented youngsters from a variety of urban and suburban homes in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.

With kids like Robinson, Williams and Coles, who get called regularly for both in- and out-of-town auditions, this company of performers has gain-

ed a reputation that keeps Kelsey E. Collie, a Howard drama professor, in touch with Hollywood and New York producers when they are looking to cast black kids.

"Recently, Lyn Stalmaster, a Hollywood casting director, was looking for two little boys for a movie and he called us," says Collie, with a look of obvious delight on his face.

"Right now, here in Washington, we have the greatest number of black kids who are trained and ready to audition," he stresses.

Collie believes his kids are successful more often than not in auditions because of his comprehensive approach to theatrical training. "We teach everything, not just acting. We have courses in voice, dance, and most importantly we train them how to audition," he emphasizes.

Take dancer Eddie Robinson for example. He never considered himself much of a singer but is now taking voice lessons from one of several instructors who work each week with the kids. In a profession

where performers are always looking for that all-important edge, he believes singing will give him an added dimension when he is called to audition.

Ervin Williams, who has had his daughter Kellie before the bright lights since she was four years old, says that she approached a recent screen test with confidence because of her work with Collie and the Playmakers.

"It's possible a Disney movie could come out of this for her," says the proud father. "We can't break away from this group even though Kellie has been earning pretty good money for several years."

While all of these kids in the repertory group may not go on to stardom or even have the chance to earn large sums of money, what they do receive is a strong sense of themselves as doers and capable individuals. They also get the opportunity to travel.

Last year, they made appearances in Miami and the Bahamas. They plan to perform this year in Toronto.

School Of The Arts To Conduct Area Auditions

WINSTON-SALEM—The North Carolina School of the Arts will conduct auditions and interviews for prospective students in the Raleigh area as well as the eastern part of the state on Saturday, Feb. 11, in Raleigh. This is part of an annual regional audition tour across the state for the School of the Arts.

Other auditions/interviews are scheduled for Feb. 25 in Charlotte and March 4 in Hendersonville.

These auditions/interviews are for students who wish to enroll in the School of the Arts' professional artist training programs in dance (high school and college), drama (college only), design and production (college only) and visual arts (high school only). These auditions are reserved for North Carolina residents only.

"We're continuing our practice of scheduling regional auditions to allow prospective NCSA students the opportunity to audition or interview closer

to home," said Edward T. Brake, executive director of enrollment and admissions at NCSA. "Winston-Salem is an excellent central location in the state, but it's still a long drive from Asheville or Rocky Mount. We don't want any North Carolinian to miss his or her chance to become an NCSA student by not being able to make it to Winston-Salem to audition."

"By taking our auditions on the road to these regions of the state, we hope to reach all talented students—including those in rural areas," Brake continued. "We want to encourage talented North Carolinians to take advantage of the great opportunity that exists for them right in their own backyard, at the School of the Arts."

Students interested in auditioning/interviewing must make arrangements in advance with NCSA's admissions office, 1-770-3291, P.O. Box 12189, Winston-Salem 27117-2189.

Chuck Davis Brings Dance To Laodicea

The Laodicea Black Arts Cultural Society, under the auspices of Laodicea United Church of Christ, will sponsor the Chuck Davis and Durham Arts Council African dance troupes on Saturday, Feb. 4, at 5 p.m. Both dance troupes will present dancing, poetry and drama; some of the presentations will feature students from Enloe High School. This event is in celebration of black history and will be held at Wake County Opportunities, 567 Hargett St.

Admission will be \$2.50 or \$1.50 with four canned goods. The canned goods will benefit the Wake Opportunities Food Pantry. The public is invited for a wonderful and exciting night of entertainment.

Melba Moore Closeup: Talented Star On Move

Melba Moore is such a diverse individual that her talents span various areas in the entertainment world. Ms. Moore has recently been doing a lot of television projects in addition to working on her coming album.

Melba will be seen on the tube in different television programs as a presenter, a performer, and co-host. In January, she and "L.A. Law's" Blair Underwood appeared on the Johnson Publishing Co.'s Black Achievement Awards as performers as well as presenters. Underwood got some help from Melba with his television singing debut when they performed "Everything Old is New Again." She looked spectacular in a fuchsia/silk organza off-the-shoulder minidress ensemble.

While it's cold and blustery in February, Cleveland residents will get a warm vacation treat as they watch Melba on AM Cleveland's Princess Cruise Ship Caribbean getaway special. Melba will be seen performing "Love and Kisses" as well as "Falling" in an Akira Jevender strapless chiffon tunic over

darker lavender leggings.

If you don't live in Cleveland, you can still see Melba in a tropical setting in Santo Domingo. The beautiful island is the background setting for Melba as she stays at the Casa da Campo. This luxurious resort has the ultimate accommodations—an entire villa, with maid service and security for each guest.

Curious star-watchers will get an inside look when "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous" spends a day with Melba. "Lifestyles" will show her shopping in New York, having lunch with her daughter, and brainstorming with her Capitol Records team.

Melba's fans who enjoyed her in the hit Broadway play "Hair" will get to see her talk about the '60s on "Hour Magazine's" '60s special. She performed "Hair" and "Good Morning Star Shine" from the musical.

Flori Roberts has not only centered an entire magazine campaign around Melba, but the company has also created a lipstick, nail enamel, and blusher called Red Melba. Women of color will be able to purchase these products in the spring.

Marsalis Profiled As Double Winner

A "Great Performances" presentation of "Wynton Marsalis: Blues and Swing" profiles the first artist ever awarded Grammys in both the classical and jazz categories in the same year. At 9 p.m. Monday, Feb. 27, Marsalis approaches the art of jazz as the extension of the tradition of the great musicians who preceded him: Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Thelonius Monk, Charlie Parker and John Coltrane.

In this Black History Month special, Marsalis talks about these jazz greats and their contributions to music. The program highlights his remarkable talent as a trumpet virtuoso and presents him in concert with his versatile jazz quartet: Marcus Roberts on piano, Robert Hurst on bass, Jeff Watts on drums and Todd Williams on saxophone.

"Wynton Marsalis: Blues and Swing" also follows the artist as he coaches young musicians in a master class at Harvard and a much younger group of students at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts in Washington, D.C.



TRAINING GROUND—The Kelsey E. Collie Playmakers Repertory Company is recognized as the premier training Children's Theater Workshop ground for talented black youngsters in the nation's capital.

"For Colored Girls," Acclaimed Broadway Drama Staged At UNC

CHAPEL HILL—Poet Ntozake Shange's "For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf" will be presented at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill on Jan. 31.

A bonus presentation of the Carolina Union's 1988-89 Performing Arts Series, the acclaimed Broadway drama will be on the Memorial Hall stage at 8 p.m.

First performed in bars and cafes in New York and San Francisco, the drama opened on Broadway in

September 1976. Since 1976 numerous touring companies, a London production and more than 50 regional theaters have presented the drama.

A celebration of being black and female, "For Colored Girls..." spotlights seven women in a series of dramatic scenes, many with dance and song, but most spoken with simple directness and fierce passion.

The play moves through many settings, geographic and emotional. It presents a series of portraits: a school girl's swing through the excitement of her graduation night; an adolescent's search for a black saint by the St. Louis waterfront; and the hypnotic transformation of a carnival

dancer into an ancient Egyptian goddess.

Later, in the city section of the performance, a bitter young woman navigates the streets of Harlem while, in another set, an angry poet severs herself from an indifferent lover. In a scene of horror, a ghetto mother relives the careless murder of her two small children.

Occasionally the language is raw and shocking, yet it is appropriate for the content of the drama. "For Colored Girls..." is filled with music—jazz, soul, salsa.

For tickets or more information, call 1-962-1440. VISA and MasterCard are accepted.



JACKSON ENJOYS HIS HOMELIFE—Singer Freddie is not on the road by spending time at his hi-tech Manhattan Jackson at the age of 31 has zoomed to the top of the music industry with his romantic ballads (including his latest LP, "Don't Let Love Slip Away"). He manages to relax when he

Carolina Blues Still Survives In Birth Area

The Carolina blues—traditional music of mid-'20s Southeastern black culture—still survives, as danceable and evocative today as in the era of its birth. Experience its driving rhythms, expressiveness and complexity in North Carolina Public Television's original production, "Step It Up and Go: Blues in the Carolinas," at 10 p.m. Friday, Feb. 24.

The hour of living history resounds in musical profiles of sisters Etta Baker and Cora Phillips of Morganton; James "Jr." Thomas of Wendell; Anthony Pough, formerly of Gastonia; Thomas Burt of Durham; James "Guitar Slim" Stephens of Greensboro; Moses Rascoe, formerly of Snow Hill; John D. Hoieman of Durham; Algie Mae Hinton of Zebulon; and the Thompson family—Joe, Odell and Nathaniel—of Mebane.

With guitars, banjos, fiddles, piano, homemade wind and percussion instruments, and voices rich in tradition, these remarkable artists reaffirm a music's past and mark new milestones for its future. Despite shrinking audiences and ever-changing conditions, they and other outstanding blues performers persist.

Until the early decades of this century, Southeastern blacks called their instrumentally-accompanied secular music "reels" or "rags," terms used interchangeably to denote differences in tempo. By the mid-'20s, this music had evolved to emphasize lyrics in standard tune structures, and the guitar had replaced the banjo as the music's lead instrument. The result—Carolina blues.



LOVE COMES ALL—Singer Teddy Pendergrass, 38 and his wife Karen, have been married for just 20 months. Preceding their marriage the couple share an 11-year courtship that began when she was a dancer on his concert tour. Pendergrass survived a much publicized '82 auto accident which left the singer paralyzed and threatened his career. Teddy has bounced back with the hit album "Joy" which has already sold over a million copies.