

Entertainment

BILLIE ROWE'S NOTEBOOK

N'YORK CITY — The only male characteristic about B'way's "Tony" is its nickname. Born out of love and desire to immortalize the late Antoinette Perry, actress, director and philanthropist, this American Theatre Wing's answer to the Motion Picture Academy's "Oscar" has become just as sought after. On the threshold of its 39th yr., "Lady Tony" is an accepted world class recognition stamp of the supreme talent that is laced through the full gamut of the live theatre in N'York. A glaring example though of the lack of full ethnic participation is the nomination of just four Afro-Americans, and none outside of the performing category.

Personable Theresa Merritt, star of the B'way hit, "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom," was nominated to seek a majority of the 620 judges' votes as having given the "Outstanding Performance by a Featured Actress in a Play." Charles Dutton, a central character in the same production is a nominee to seek the top award for "Outstanding Performance by a Feature Actor in a Play." "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom" was among three others nominated to vie for the "Best Play" award. "Big River" is Ron Richardson's first plunge into the B'way stage pond. So, coming up with a "Tony" nomination wasn't even a part of his wildest dreams. Well, he's in there with two other cast members from "Big River," the musical recreating the adventures of "Huckleberry Finn." They are among four from which one will receive the coveted "Tony" as having given the "Outstanding Performance as a Featured Actor in a Musical." It is also a good first for the lovely Leilani Jones from Hawaii. Her debut performance in "Grind" has earned her a first ever "Tony" nomination for "Outstanding Performance by a Featured Actress in a Musical."

ROUGH CUT — The American Theatre Wing's decision to clip three categories from the '85 competition was a rough cut to superstar Ben Vereen. It

wiped out his and Lester Wilson's expected sure shot nomination — he in the "Leading Actor in a Musical" spot and Lester in the "Outstanding Choreography" niche. Vereen gives a super performance in "Grind" and in this book, Lester is the Rembrandt of the choreography art. Interesting that there should be a "Best Musical" category without a leading actor and actress to go with it, or an awardable choreographer. It's like offering a body without head or feet. The decision to cut these categories wiped out twenty corresponding nominees to go with the five musicals in the race to capture a "Tony" for one or more reasons.

NO RESPECT — A number of us got no respect in our own hometown when the H'wood based Motown entertainment conglomerate leveled its big guns on Harlem to highlight the 50th ann'y of the Apollo Theatre. The shrapnel from the explosion left a lot of wounded egos and scared feelings within our borders. Notwithstanding, our town,

Teens listen to Wonder drunken-driving song

Stevie Wonder knows the dangers of drunken driving.

When he was 14, a drunken driver plowed into his mother's car, knocking Wonder and his sister unconscious.

The Grammy-winning superstar, blind since birth, told his story last Thursday in Washington, D.C., to 1,000 spellbound high school students.

Wonder, 35, was at Kennedy Center to premiere a music video featuring his song *Don't Drive Drunk*. He donated it to a public service

campaign sponsored by the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Ad Council and Chrysler Corp.

The five-minute video and shorter versions begin airing today on TV stations and rock video channels. Michael Jackson kicked off the campaign last year by donating *Beat It*.

Wonder also treated the screaming audience to an impromptu version of *I Just Called to Say I Love You*.

"As long as I live I will write songs that deal with love," he said. "It's a way of me saying I love you."



By Lee Anderson

MESSAGE TO STUDENTS: Pop singer Stevie Wonder offered high school students a song and warning about drunken driving.

future. Thanks to Chuck Sutton and Elizabeth Tarry Patton for finding some honor for this scribe in his own environment. To the older habitues of the Apollo, the Motown beat is foreign to their ears. However, the Berry Gordy-founded wax work's stars have development a large enough cadre of youthful fans to insure the success of the upscheduled 3-hours NBC-TV show of the event. Then too, Bill Cosby has laced in enough immortals, Sammy Davis, Jr., Billy Eckstine, Sarah Vaughan,

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