

The North Carolina Black Repertory Company Hosts 17 Black Theatre Companies In The 1st Biennial 1989 National Black Theatre Festival Aug. 14-20th

The North Carolina Black Repertory Company will host the first biennial 1989 National Black Theatre Festival August 14th through August 20th in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Produced by Artistic/Director Larry Leon Hamlin with author Maya Angelou serving as Chairperson, the National Advisory Board includes such members as Debbie Allen-Nixon, Margaret Avery, Ruby Dee, Ossie Davis, Tony Brown, Vinette Carroll, Arsenio Hall, Cab Calloway, Rosemary Harris, Bill Duke, Antonio Fargas, Faye Hauser, Robert Hooks, Woodie King Jr., Wynton Marsalis, Ron Milner, Brock Peters, Lloyd Richards, Esther Rolle, Howard Rollins and Samm-Art Williams to name a few.

Television host Oprah Winfrey will be the special guest at the opening night gala banquet on August 14th. Miss Winfrey will also be honored at a reception immediately following the opening night performance of the Black Theatre Festival. Other guest celebrities attending the festival who will also be honored with a special day are: Ruby Dee/Ossie Davis (August 15th), Lou Gossett, Jr. (August 16th), Cicely Tyson (August 17th), James Earl Jones (August 18th), Roscoe Lee Browne (August 19th).

A reception in honor of the guest celebrity will immediately be followed by the evening performances.

The 1989 National Black Theatre Festival will feature some of the oldest and most critically acclaimed Black Theatre Companies in America. Among the 17 companies represented will be: African-American Drama Company (San Francisco) Play: "Can I Speak For You Brother." Bullins Memorial Theatre (Oakland) Play: "Son, Come Home." Carpetbag Theatre of Tennessee (Memphis) Play: "Dark Cowgirls and Prairie Queens"/"Cric? Crac!"; Crossroads Theatre Company (New Jersey) Play: "Woza Albert." Herlem Jazz Theatre Of New York (New York City) Play: "Do Lord Remember Me." Cultural Odyssey of California (San Francisco) Play: "I Think It's Gonna Work Out Fine." Jomandi Productions (Atlanta) Play: "Sisters." Just Us (Atlanta) Play: "Club Zebra." National Black

Theatre (New York City) Play: "The Legacy." National Black Touring Network (New York City) Play: "I Have A Dream." Negro Ensemble Company (New York City) Play: "From The Mississippi Delta." North Carolina Black Repertory Company (Winston-Salem) Play: "Don't Bother I Can't Cope." Nucleus Theatre Of New York/California Play: "Stepping Into Tomorrow." Oakland Ensemble Of California/Junebug Productions Louisiana (Joint Production) Play: "Jody's Got Your Gal and Gone." Penumbra Theatre Company (St. Paul, Minn.) Play: "Malcolm X." Philadelphia Freedom Theatre (Phila., Pa.) Play: "Under Pressure."

In addition to performances there will also be a series of free workshops and seminars that will cover such topics as Staging African Dramatic Literature, Playwrights On Play Writing, The Effects Of Non-Racial Casting On Black Theatres...Today, among others.

The workshops and seminars will be important in creating an agenda dedicated to the continuity of Black Theatre in America for the next decade.

The North Carolina Repertory, founded in 1979, become the state's first professional black theatre company. Producer Larry Leon Hamlin says, "The NB-TF will be a tremendous assistance in helping Black theatre to re-establish its momentum, find its center and successfully move forward with its mission, securing its goals and objectives. It is rare indeed to have an opportunity that allows black theatre to come together. Most Black theatres feel that they are alone against the world, not realizing that many black theatres are having the same identical struggles. That is what happens when Black Theatre allows itself to become fragmented and isolated. Such isolation and fragmentation must come to an end. The company plans to produce the festival every two years." Chairperson Maya Angelou says, "All sorts of people are coming -- you'd be amazed at the amount of the black regional theatre in this country. Just amazed! We hope to create a climate in which people can

come together and make contacts; where producers can see actors, directors can meet producers, set designers can meet lighting designers. A really wonderful climate!"

Performances for the festival are being sponsored in part by Winston-Salem State University; North Carolina School of the Arts; Wake Forest University; Arts Council, Inc. of Winston-Salem/Forsyth County; the Theatre Arts Section of the North Carolina Arts Council; and Smith, Jones & Associates of Chicago, Winston-Salem Foundation, James G. Hanes, The Memorial Foundation, Anna Hodgins Hanes Foundation, Expansion Arts of National Endowment for the Arts, Southern Arts Federation, North Carolina for the Arts, Southern Arts Federation, North Carolina General Assembly, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources.

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sponsored researchers to find treatments and cures for muscle disease. One of the most promising experimental techniques now under investigation is "myoblast transfer therapy." This technique involves the injection of healthy immature muscle cells, called myoblasts, into diseased muscle in an effort to produce hybrid muscle cells that display healthy characteristics. The procedure has shown results in laboratory mice. "The people of Las Vegas can take great pride in their contribution to this major research undertaking," said Mr. Teepen. "Scientists are closer than ever to developing a treatment or cure -- if increased public support of MDA's work can be achieved."

The Association currently sponsors more 500 individual research projects worldwide. The MDA clinic serving the Las Vegas area is located at University Medical Center.

Mr. Teepen said that anyone interested in volunteering for the Labor Day Telethon should call the local MDA office at 737-3103.

The New Robert Townsend -- A Heartbeat Away

(New York, N.Y.) Independent filmmaker actor Robert Townsend has made his mark in movies and cable television. Following a starring role in "A Soldier's Story", Townsend went on to write, direct and produce "Hollywood Shuffle" which grossed some \$5 million.

produce three HBO specials and direct Eddie Murphy's "Raw" concert film. Yet, Hollywood's unwillingness to accept Townsend as a major player in the filmmaker arena has sent his latest film project "The Five Heartbeats" into cardiac arrest. It's a common battle that is

all too familiar to the Black filmmaker looking to strike a deal with a major motion picture house for seed money or marketing and distribution vehicles. Yet, filmmakers like Spike Lee, Keenen Wayans and Townsend, despite combined box office grosses of more than \$50 million, still find themselves fighting the same battle of having to prove themselves to movie companies with each new film they create.

"Sometimes," observed Townsend, "as Black filmmakers, we're made to feel as if we're in the 'Special Olympics', and we should be grateful just to get the picture written, filmed and released." "Forget about the quality of the product. But that's not my vision for 'Heartbeats'. I'm thinking classic film here of epic proportions. Unfortunately, I haven't found a film company that shares my vision...yet."

What Townsend wants is control of the creative and finished product -- the very same elements that afforded him space to successfully produce "Hollywood Shuffle" on a shoestring budget.



Robert Townsend

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