What's Happening

By Ida Peters

The Casino will reopen on Pennsylvania Ave. with gala ceremonies and Freddie Cole and his Trio as main attractios.

Put August 1 on your calendar and watch the AFRO for more details. Vertis Johnson formerly of the Bullets will be manager and MC?

Looking forward on August 6 to talking to the multi-talented cast of a **new revenue "Bubbling Brown Sugar"** coming to the National Theatre in D.C. from a smash Philly run.

"Bubbling Brown Sugar" is a musical revue about Harlem during its Renaissance period of 1910 to 1940 and features music of some of the greatest black composers of the 20th Century.

In this cast will be Baltimore's own **Avon Long**, the original Sporting Life in "Porgy and Bess". He does a tribute to Bert Williams, a funny pantomine of a card player . . . and sings a poignant "Nobody."

Also featured in the cast are Thelma Carpenter who has sung with Teddy Wilson, Count Basie and Duke Ellington. Vivian Reed, singer-dancer-actress of the hit musical "Don't Bother Me I Can't Cope"; Joseph Attles who began his career as a singer-dancer with "The Blackbirds of 1928".

Also Ethel Beatty, Carolyn Byrd, Charlise Harris, Alton Lathrop, Barry Preston, Dyann Robinson, Barbara Robenstein.

Lofton Mitchell is the playwright; Robert M. Cooper, director and Bill Wilson, musical director.

* * *

Roberta Flack is at Painters Mill Music Fair this weekend.

Discovered by Les McCann and Joel Dorn of Atlantic Records in one of the famous jazz spots in Washington, D.C. known as the Bohemian Caverns, Roberta Flack's career began to skyrocket to unbelievable heights as soon as she was introduced to the pop scene with her popular, "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face."

Ever since this first "Meeting, Reaction and Result", also the title of her first album, "Les McCann presents Roberta Flack-First Take," Roberta Flack has gone on to record such hits as "Where Is The Love" with Donny Hathaway and "Killing Me Softly With His Song" written about Don McLean.

Appearing on the same bill with Roberta Flack will be **Return to Forever** with special guest, **Chick Corea**. Corea, named Composer of the Year, Pianist of the Year and Jazzman of the Year by Down Beat International Reader Poll, was also named top Jazz Musician of the World by the 1974 Jazz Forum Magazine Poll. Return to Forever was voted the No. 1 New Group of 1973 by the Concert Magazine Music Critics Poll, and the top Instrumental Combo by Playboy Magazine All-Stars' All-Stars Poll the same year. The band features bass player Stanley Clarke who was named top bassist of the year by Down Beat, Bassist of the Year at the 14th Annual Swing Journal Readers Poll, Japan, and by the 1974 Melody Maker Jazz Poll.

Corea established his reputation as a composer and keyboard virtuoso, playing with such elite musicians as Miles Davis, Elvin Jones, Mongo Santamaria, Herbie Mann and Stan Getz, before starting Return to Forever.

* * *

The Susquehanna Festival Theater located at Harford Community College in Bel Air, Maryland is looking for actors, singers, and dancers to round out their cast of Meredith Wilson's musical THE MUSIC MAN. Needed specifically are mature men and women capable of acting and singing to carry out leading roles in the production. Experience is not necessary, but it is preferred. Male and female ballet dancers are also sought for the numerous dance routines featured in the play. Choreographer for the production is Bob Relman.

Interested persons should call the SFT box office at 839-1000 or 879-8920, extension 11 for an audition appointment or additional information.

Gene Walker (dark suit) conducts Baltimore City Bureau of Music Jazz Band.

. . . and all that jazz

By Bob Matthews

You might not be be aware of it, but Baltimore City has its very own jazz band-honest!

It is headed by Gene Walker, under the auspices of the Bureau of Music, and plays at various locations throughout the city.

Last Sunday, the group played a concert in War Memorial Plaza and was pleasantly surprised to hear the quality of the assemblage. 'Tis a big band-over 15 pieces--and most of the arrangements are done especially for the group.

Must confess, didn't get to hear too much of the program, 'Twas an outdoor concert and the weather didn't cooperate one whit-it poured down rain.

Did hear enough, however, to convince me that Baltimore has a good thing going, and the next time I get the chance, will have to check out the group in finer detail.

* * *

Popped in to hear the Lin Biviano band at the Left Bank Jazz Society's regular Sunday afternoon bash, and reaffirmed my faith that the big band has resurged and is here to stay.

Here was a new band--just a year or so of being together -- and dinged in the mold of the Maynard Ferguson aggregation. In fact, Biviano is an alumnus of the Ferguson band, and uses Maynard in play as well as on-stage presence.

While the band features a sharp brass attack, couldn't quite figure out why it lacked the punch of a Kenton, Rich or Ferguson blast. Finally dawned that there were only two trombones in the group. With four saxes and five trumpets, the body-or midrange--usually punctuated by trombones was not there.

Again there was a big band arrangement of "Midnight at the Oasis," which is fast becoming a jazz classic.

Still, was a satisfying concert. On a scale of 1 would rate them about 7½.

* * *

Next week LBJS presents Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers; followed on August 3 by Heath brothers, Jimmy and Percy plus Kenny Cowell and Billy Higgins.

And, down the road a piece, Maynard Ferguson and his band will be at Wolftrap Farm Park outside DC for a Monday night concert July 28.

African location sidelights 'The Wilby Conspiracy'

One of Kenya's beloved statesmen, Joseph Murumbi, who was President Kenyatta's closest aide during their country's fight for independence, had a key role in "The Wilby Conspiracy." Murumbi Kenya's first foreign minister and a former vice-president, portrayed a village elder who is humiliated and debased by South African security police led by Nicol Williamson.

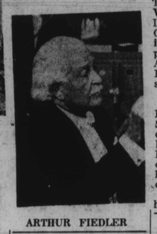
His is a symbolic role for Murumbi to play because in the years when he and Jomo Kenyatta were political "agitators" they were imprisoned by the British. Today, Kenyatta is president while Murumbi, retired from politics, lives in a beautiful house on a hill overlooking Nairobi, Kenya's capital, with his English wife, Sheila. It is a home full of art objects including much priceless Africana, and it also houses the world's finest private library on African affairs.

An acute meat shortage in Kenya, due to a prolonged drought, male vegetarians of the cast and crew of "The Wilby Conspiracy." Poitier, a vegetarian, didn't mind the shortage of meat, but Caine, on the other hand, is a gourmet who enjoys his meat. He missed such Kenyan meat-based specialities as Ugali Stew (stewed beef on top of a big dumpling) and Muchuzi stew (a chicken-based stew). Both are richly spiced.

An African king, whom General Amin of Uganda deposed when he took over, worked as Sidney Poitier's stand-in during the filming in Kenya of "The Wilby Conspiracy. He is Patrick Olimi, who succeeded to the throne of Toro, a kingdom of a million people within the state of Uganda, when his father died in 1965. But King Patrick's reign was short-lived. After the coup Amin's military regime took over from President Obote's civilian administration, and the kingships were abolished.

Patrick's sister, the former Princess Elizabeth, was Amin's foreign minister, until she incurred his wrath and was arrested.

Keogh (Michael Caine) and Shack Twala (Sidney Poitier) are separated by Dr. Mukerjee (Saeed Jaffrey), when the two fight in "The Wilby Conspiracy".



ARTHUR FIEDLER

Music Notes

The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra will present the final concert of its University of Maryland Summer Series on Saturday, July 26.

Cellist Laurence Lesser will be the featured soloist, and Leon Fleisher will conduct. The program, which includes Dvorak's Symphony No. 9 ("From the New World"); Tchaikowsky's Rococo Variations performed by Laurence Lesser and Gershwin's An American in Paris, begins at 8:15 p.m. in the Tawes Fine Arts Theater, College Park. There is no admission charge.

* * *

The final concert in the Baltimore Symphony's Summer Season, to be held on Friday, August 1, will be conducted by Arthur Fiedler, beloved maestro of the Boston Pops and a long-time favorite with audiences the world over.

Mr. Fiedler will have as his soloist the young Israeli pianist, Ilana Vered, who will play Tchaikowsky's **Piano Concerto No. 1** — probably the world's best known piano concerto. Other works to be played on this pops program are Rimsky-Korsakoff's "Procession of the Nobles" from **Mlada**; Bernstein's **Overture to Candide**; Strauss Waltzes. Selections from Gershwin's **Girl Crazy** and orchestral arrangements of pops tunes.

* * *

The Municipal Concert Band, Dr. Leigh Martinet, conductor, Bureau of Music, have the following dates, 8 p.m. to 10 p.m.:

Friday, July 25, Burdick Park, Glenmore Avenue and Walther Boulevard.

Monday, July 28, Patterson Park, Baltimore Street side at Lakewood Avenue.

Charles and 29th Tuesday, July 29. Dell Streets.

Wednesday, July 30, St. Matthew's Church, Norman and Mayfield Avenues.

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The McKenzie report

By Vashti McKenzie

Van McCoy, everybody's favorite hustler looks as good as he sounds. His single "The Hustle" is enjoying tremendous success on the record charts and in the disco's.

The song was developed before the dance, however, a quick survey reveals that everyone's doing it.

McCoy is not a new singer on the horizon. He used to write hits for The Shirelles (remember them?) and then got himself into arranging and producing.

According to outside sources, the list of artists who have had the real McCoy touch applied to them includes Peaches and Herb (Remember "I Will Watch Over You"?), Gladys Knight, the Presidents and the Stylistics.

McCoy will be in D.C. later this month to help his grandmother celebrate her 101st. birthday.

Smokey Robinson, without the Miracles and **Melba Moore** with a new husband and new concert career, are opening for a week of performances at Shady Grove Music Theatre in Rockville beginning July 29.

This is Smokey's first area appearance as a soloist since his three year self-imposed sabbatical from performing. He should be singing many of his old hits, most of them he wrote, like "Tears of a Clown" and "Tracks of My Tears" and some new numbers from his hot album "A Quiet Storm" featuring the single "Baby that's Backatcha."

Return To Forever with guest Chic Corea are with The Roberta Flack show at Painters Mill this week-end.

After Melba's Broadway successes in "Hair," where she worked her way from the tribe (chorus) to the female lead (the first black actress to do so) and in Purlie" where she won in 1970 the Tony Award for Best Supporting Actress in a musical . . . things slowly came to a halt.

Melba was in love with Clifton Davis, now of "That's my Mama" fame and the two did a television series for CBS. After that, she hit the concert trail, opening for Davis Frost.

Soon it was evident Melba was going to have to get herself together. She did. She's in love and married again. She's got new management, Sid Bernstein, the impressario, and a new album "Peach Melba' riding high on the charts.

Melba's back in rare form. This is no time to miss the petite lady with the big voice that goes from a giggle to a growl in one second at Shady Grove.

The Staple Singers, who were riding a few years back on a new wave of success with "Respect Yourself" and appearances in the movies "Wattstax" and Push" after twenty-five years in the business, have signed a contract with Warner Brothers Records.

Bobby Steven of The Checkmates, Ltd. will appear on The Ebony Music Awards Show next month, accepting an award for Gladys Knight and The Pips, whose album "A Songe For You" has been selected as Best Album of The Year in the R and B category.

The show which will air as a 90 minute TV special August 8 features celebrity presenters Fred Williamson, Don Cornelius of Soul Train" and Randy and Janet of The Jackson Five.

Ben Vereen, who drew raves as the star in the Broadway show "Pippin," has been a guest on the Dinah Shore Show so many times, he can be called a regular.

In his recent appearance (check local listings for a day and time) he demonstrates his "Duck" moves and talks about summer variety show debuting in August.

Diana Ross will host the first annual "Rock Music Award" special to be seen live from California August 9. Elton John will also host.

Diana's talent has been electrifying audiences since her Supreme days. She proved her versatility by starring in the movie "Lady Sings The Blues", and receiving an Oscar nomination for her superb performance.

She's been absent from the recording studio and the concert circuit for quite sometime. But Diana has not been idle. She's just finished shooting in Rome Mahogany which her mentor, Berry Gordy ended up directing. It costars Billy Dee Williaman Hollywood's newest black sex symbol. Watch for a fall or winter release.

Incidently, Stevie Wonder has received six nominations in various categories for the Black Music Awards. Labelle received three nominations. The nominees were selected by a panel of rock music critics and progressive radio station D J's. The 1500 members of the National Association of Progressive Radio Announcers will vote by ballot on the winners along with 150 black journalists/critics.

I tell you, it certainly is a cold day in July when Stevie Wonder is classified as a rock artist, Times do change, don't they?

For The Record Isley Brothers

By Frederick I. Douglass

The weatherman is predicting a heat wave. Some people say that it's already here. What's causing it to be hot inside when the weather outside is cool? What caused all those young foxes to faint from overexposure to heat a few weeks ago at the Capital Centre? It's no great mystery. It's the Isley Brothers cooking with all burners on their latest LP, "The Heat Is On." Every summer the Isleys come out with at least one torrid, fiery and scalding hot jam but they have completely outdone themselves on their new album which features three galvanic uptempo cuts and three sizzling, make you want to get closer, like skintight, lights out love songs. Slap this disc on your turntable and you've got an instant party.

Wherever I go — be it to a nitecLub, disco, or a friend's house the minute the isley's 45 "Fight the Power" comes on, people start dancing. People dance to this record in front of record stores. If it comes on the radio in a car, the driver and the passengers immediately start bobbing their heads and snapping their fingers and driving somewhat dangerously. Old people like "Fight the Power" as well as teenagers, little kids and young adults. that's because it has a little gospel, a little jazz and a little dash of everything that has gone down before. It's a scorcher.

Everything on the Isley's new album is a scorcher, so don't settle for the 45. If you do, you will find that you will be buying that good music a piece at a time when you can have it all at once. If you ve got the LP, you can play side one into the wee hours of the morning or until whenever the people get tired of doing the Hustle, Bus Stop, Double Bump and some of the other gymnastic dances currently in vogue. Side one also features two other hot numbers guaranteed to get the people on their feet. The title cut, "The Heat Is On," is stone boogie music that makes you want to dance, dance dance. The beat jam on the LP is Hope You Feel Better Love," which is also uptempo and gives Ernie Isley an opportunity to spew forth some of his incandescent, Hendrix inspired guitar riffs.

Flip the LP over and you are into those togetherness type songs. No more dancing miles apart and cavorting about the floor spasmodically gyrating to the Isley's burning beat. It's time to turn the burner down low and groove to the sensuous side of the Isleys as they croon "For the Love of You," "Sensuality" and "Make Me Say It Again Girl," three ballads that will keep the flame burning for the rest of the night.

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