Show revives Harlem heyday

By Charles Farrow

WASHINGTON — "Bubbling Brown Sugar" had to happen. Sooner or later it was apparent that someone would realize that the days and nights of life in Harlem would make great show material.

With the contemporary lust for nostalgia at its height in America, Rosetta LeNoir has created an image and Loften Mitchell a book and the spirits of Sugar Hill, 409 Edgecombe Avenue, The Apollo Theater, The Savoy Ballroom, The Cotton Club, and 125th Street romp again.

Robert M. Cooper directs the show with choreography by Billy Wilson and they have a rich legacy of music left by some great black artists to work with in a show that opened this week at the National Theater.

"Bubbling Brown Sugar" is several things at once. According to one of its most durable stars Thelma Carpenter, "Bubbling Brown Sugar" "is a family show." It also restages some important music of the black experience. Eubie Blake, Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, J.C. Johnson, Earl "Fatha" Hines and Ethel Waters, Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald and others.

Tender moments belong to Alton Lathrop and Carolyn Byrd in "Bubbling Brown Sugar".

Miss Carpenter, in town last Monday for a non-stop series of promotional meetings, was positively lyrical when talking about the show. Her co-stars are Avon Long, the original "Sportin' Life" in Porgy and Bess and Joseph Attles who began his career as a performer in "The Blackbirds of 1928" which starred the legendary dancer Bill Robinson.

Thelma Carpenter is a devout Brooklynite, and it was there she began her career. She began as a singer on kiddie shows and for years wore her hair in Shirley Temple curls. She feels that there was a positive contribution to theater made by the many black performers who worked during the "renaissance" years in Harlem from 1920 to 1940.

Those were the years when Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, and Arna Bontemps were writing and the excitement in New York was to be found in Harlem. The new musical coming in from a successful run in Philadelphia takes a dancing and singing, lighthearted look at this Harlem mysitque.

Ron O'Neal is seen in his most famous role as "Super Fly" now showing downtown.

Woody Allen in new comedy hit "Love and Death"

Who says Napoleon was misdirected?

Behind every egocentric screen ruler, there is a disciplined director, and Woody Allen's new comedy, "Love and Death," is no exception.

Directing the Emperor of France, Napoleon Bonaparte, played by James Tolken, is Woody Allen, who wrote the screenplay. Woody, who also stars in the motion picture, plays Boris Grushenko, who through a series of mishaps is transformed into a national hero during the Napoleon invasion of Russia. Inevitably, Boris and Napoleon meet. Thus we have Allen directing Napoleon and playing opposite him in the motion picture. (See photo)

AFRO summer employee David Lottier registers amazement as Carl White tries to break world hand-stand record.
(AFRO staff photo by Benjamin M. Phillips IV)

Carl White
(See What's Happening)

What's Happening

Welcome National Association of Television and Radio Artists

By Ida Peters

When NATRA, the National Association of Television and Radio Artists Convention meets here next week at the Hilton, downtown, more than 800 celebrities across the country are expected August 12-16.

Major Robinson called from New York to say the Lovely Barbara Harris, Director of Artists Relations will be in town representing Atlantic Records.

Atlantic Records will host the dinner ... day, August 14th. The exciting event will be presenting of the Golden Mike Awards. Atlantic Record Artistis nominated for Golden Mike Awards are The Spinners, Major Harris, Roberta Flack, Blue Magic, Jimmy Castter, Margie Joseph and Nikki Giovanni.

I already told you that Minnie Riperton Epic recording artist will headline the CBS Records Records night on Friday, August 15. Win Willford, Manager of Press Information and Artists Relations for CBS Records will be bringing also John Legend and Anthony White.

Annie says she's planning to do "one heck of a show because the people in the audience will be those who started her career and helped her to success."

Talked with Vashti McKenzie P. R. at Shady Grove. She says to bring your green flashlights ... and be mean in green to see Al-Green opening night, August 13 in Gaithersburg,Md.

The baddest, the meanest and the greenest will be judged in an on-stage fashion contest. The judges will be D.J.'s from WOOK radio and bad Bobby Brown will be M.C.

The first prize will be tickets to see the Ike and Tina show on September 24 and 2nd prize will be $50 in hard cold cash plus Al-Green Records.

Al Green sent word he wants to see some freaky green people ... cause he's got red roses for you.

Carl White is trying for a world record of 40 hand push-ups a minute. He tells us that Bob Richards ex-Olympic champion cannot do that many.

He's being promoted by Productions Unlimited and hopes to get a spot on National TV to break the world record doing hand push-ups.

White is self-taught and has been exercising for 13 years. He attends the U. of Baltimore and sells insurance.

He is trying through his program to make an impression on young people to take an interest in their health. He says building up your body doesn't cost anything but only requires daily workouts and a careful diet. (see pictures on this page.)

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Spinners ... 'Pick of Litter' coming to Painters Mill

The Spinners in 1975 have maintained one of the most rigorous 'live' performances in all of show business.

So most surprised to pick up the phone this week and hear the sexy bass voice of Pervis Jackson calling from Detroit.

The Spinners, lead tenor Philippe Wynne, Henry Fambrough, baritone; Bobby Smith and Billy Heiderson, tenors and Pervis Jackson will be Painters Mill starting August 11-17 along with Major Harris.

Pervis Jackson says he was holding his month-old son, P.J. Junior all of one month while doing the telephone interview.

He and wife Claudie have been married seven years and although she has three older children (14-16-17) this is their first.

Claudie says the baby's timing was perfect. It waited until daddy came home and weighed in at 7 pounds.

The Spinners were in this area at shady Grove Philippe was sidelined with tonsillitis. He rejoined the group on July 5 for dates in New Orleans, Oklahoma, Kansas City.

The fabulous Spinners with Major Harris and The Main Ingredient at Painters Mill, Monday.

The Spinners early this week rested a bit with their families in Detroit but will be in Michigan and the Wisconsin State Fair this weekend before hitting Baltimore, Monday.

Pervis says they are proud of their recent engagement at Valley Forge Music Fair where they were teamed with The Main Ingredient. He says they broke the old house record held by Tom Jones.

Their newest album released in July 1975 "Pick Of The Litter" is headed gold with the single "Games People Play" getting a lot of airplay.

He says their other hits are "Then Come You" with Dionne Warwicke; the album "New and Improved" with hit singles "Living A Little, Laughing A Little" and "Sadie".

Asked Pervis did they ever get tired because of their back-breaking schedule which has had them traveling all over the U.S. as well as Europe.

Pervis says "Its like a dream. We've worked hard all our lives. It's really a good feeling considering our Motown days. We spent seven or eight years on vacation with Motown."

The Spinners left Motown in 1971 and moved to Atlantic Records.

Pervis says "there were no hard feelings. It was a great relief for us. We were just there at Motown. We were lucky to get one gig a month on somebody else's show. When it was contract time ... felt we could do no worse."

Watch for The Spinners new album coming out this fall. It's not named yet but it might be called 'The Spinners Live At Latin Casino."

Pervis Jackson is one of the nicest guys ... he tuned off with "Thank You for letting me have a moment of your time." Anytime!

Earl 'Fatha' Hines ... a legend

Talked with Earl 'Fatha' Hines this week. He opened at the King Of France Tavern of the Maryland Inn in Annapolis. He'll be there until August 17.

He has with him Marvelous Marva Josie who has been with him all over the world for the past eight years.

He recently returned from 14 days in France with George Wein's French Jazz Festival on the Riviera in Nice.

You jazz buffs know he discovered Sarah Vaughn. In talking with Earl Hines, remembered my college days listening to the 'Fatha' broadcasting from the Grand Terrace Ballroom in Chicago. That was the thing.!

With Hines on this engagement are Harley White on bass; Ruby Rutherford on sax and on drums ... the number one drummer in the United States, Ed Graham. He discovered Graham on a trip to Honolulu.

Must catch 'The Fatha', .. he says each show is different and his most asked about tune is "Boogie Woogie On The St. Louis Blues" recorded in 1938.

Hines works 50 weeks out of the year and after he finishes his stint in Annapolis he's off to the Los Angeles Playboy, Lake Tahoe and Reno.

Then he'll go back to Europe and South Africa, ending up the second week in December.

Just talking about his touring makes me tired. But, Hines says it's simple. He doesn't have any habits like smoking or drinking. It's simple for him to push himself back from the table and get plenty of rest.

He has been married for more than 28 years and been working for more than 40 years. He has two daughters, Jeanie Hines in Hollywood who is interested in acting. She played the baby sitter, Roberta, in the TV series "Julia".

His other daughter, Tosca Hines, is airline stewardess with United Airlines. The family lives in Oakland, California.

Earl 'Fatha' Hines is best known for solo piano jazz albums . . . 'Tribute To Ellington", "Tribute To W.C. Handy", "Tribute to. Louis Armstrong" to name a few.

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... and all that jazz

By Bob Matthews

By 5:40 p.m. all was in place and the impromptu concert began. The group had never played together before ... there were consultations on what to play, but after a sort of wobbly start ... the group really took off.

Mickey once again demonstrated that he is right up there with the best of them and Monte Poulson was absolutely superb.

After about twenty minutes, a ground swell of murmurs swept across the hall ... the Heath Brothers had arrived. Instead of their car being towed to New York as had been reported, they somehow got to Baltimore.

As soon as Jimmy Heath unlimbered his saxes, he joined in with Mickey and the group and propelled the local musicians to an inspired presentation.

Then the Heath Group took over the stage and began cooking. With Ralph Brown on drums, Ronnie Matthews on piano, the faithful who had waited out the concert were doubly rewarded.

Particularly outstanding was a pizzicato cello solo by Percy; a soulful flute solo by Jimmy "Old Folks" culminating in a rousing rendition of Ferde Groefe's "On the Trail."

Mickey joined in with the group on the latter number and soured to even greater heights. In a word ... truly spectacular.

* * *

On to the recently renovened room of the Casino Club on Pennsylvania Ave. to hear Freddie Cole and His Trio.

While he has been in the music business for quite some time, Freddie was not too well known in the black community until the issuance of his current album, "As Long As I'm Singing." (Editor's note — We've caught him at L'Enfant Plaza and in Columbia).

Aided by an outstanding sound system, "plaudits to the Casino management for this," Freddie slickly and professionally captured his listeners with his piano playing and crooning, tuneful singing.

Although his voice has often been compared with his brother's, Nat King Cole, Freddie's enunciation is so precise that every syllable is plainly audible.

He ran the gambit of moods from the soothing "Stella By Starlight" to the humorously rollicking "On Second Thought."

His is strictly a supper club act albiet a great one. Was amused to note that three-quarters of the audiotce was women. Guess that's where his basic appeal lies.

But when he takes off on a strictly instrumental number ... it is evident that here is a pianist of note ... in fact he is a Juliard scholar.

Upcoming at Left Bank Jazz Famous Ballroom Concert, August 10 will be Jack McDuff, organist, heading up a septet. Gene Walker and the Big Band will be holding their free outdoor concert at Memorial Plaza at 7 p.m. on the same date.

The Casino will have Winfield Parker and his group on the weekend.

For The Record

By Frederick I. Douglass

I'll spare you all the puns that could be made off the name of a jazz group like Weather Report. Let's just say that their latest LP, "Tale Spinnin'," is a bad motor scooter.

The members of Weather Report include, Wayne Shorter, tenor and soprano saxes; Joe Zawinul, keyboards; Al Johnson, base; Alyrio Lima, percussion; Ndugu, drums; seasoned musicians who have played with a variety of greats including Miles, Herbie Hancock, Cannonball Adderley and scores of others.

All of the compositions on the LP were written by either Wayne Shorter or Joe Zawinul. The combined talents, experiences and energies of these creative men are utilized to generate electronically oriented sounds that are superior to the bulk of contemporary music being played on anytheaizers, clavinets, electric saxes and the other manifestations of technology's impact on the playing and recording of jazz.

Compositions by Joe Zawinul on the LP sound like they could be from the sound tracks of hip sci-fi movies. "Man in the Green Shirt" features a wailing, screaming soprano sax solo by Wayne Shorter which leads into some outer space keyboard explorations by Zawinul, while Johnson provides a strong base throughout.

"Between the Thighs" demonstrates that Austrian born Zawinul must have learned a lot about funky music while playing for the Cannonball a few years back. Shorter is right in there jamming on the soprano again, evoking moods that remind this writer of Wayne's days with Miles Davis.

"Badia," another composition by Zawinul, has elements of the Indian raga and conjures up images of the Far East while "Five Short Stories" is perhaps the closest thing to a traditional ballad on the album. Zawinul has really come a long way as a composer, while he has always been a keyboard man of the highest order.

In addition to being one of the best reedmen alive, Wayne Shorter is also a composer of songs par excellence. "Freezing Fire" features a heavy bass line counter-pointed by staccato chords from Zawinul's keyboards. Add to this polyrhythmic percussion laid down by Ndugu and Alyrio Lima and you have a cooker that will hold your attention and have you playing this cut over and over.

Shorter and Zawinul take their best solos on this cut. "Lusitanos," the other composition on the LP by Wayne Shorter, has a haunting melody which is played by the bass and which also serves as an excellent vehicle for more improvisatory explorations by Shorter and Zawinul.

Weather Report reminds me of the inner workings of a clock. Everything is attuned to precision and each part has a meaningful and necessary function to play.

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