'Kramer vs Kramer'...old fashioned tear jerker

Movie review

Are fathers more suited to be mothers than natural mothers?

By Ida Peters

"Kramer vs. Kramer" coming to area theatres for Christmas makes a very definite statement for "father's lib" and is the kind of movie your mother and grandmother used to go to, back in the 1930s-1950s just to have a good cry.

It's a sensitive portrayal of a modern 1980s family coping with caring for a young child and at the same time coping with their careers and emotional goals.

Dustin Hoffman is the sensitive young hard-working ad agency executive consumed by his career in this sure to be hit by Columbia Pictures.

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He came to Washington last month to talk with the press. He will be remembered for fine performances as the penal colony inmate in "Papillion;" the repressed math teacher in "Straw Dogs;" the doomed pied piper of outrageous comedy, Lenny Bruce in "Lenny" and the investigative reporter in "All The President's Men."

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Meryl Streep, who reached stardom in "The Deer Hunter," Woody Allen's "Manhattan" and with Alan Alda in "The Seduction of Joe Tynan," is touching and poignant as the young mother who tucks her son in bed, packs her things and leaves for a year to get herself together.

Justin Henry is really the star of the show. A normal 6-year-old working with Dustman Hoffman, he gives a heart-warming performance of a child who can't understand why his mother has abandoned him. Throughout his parents' battle for custody, he is able without words but by facial expression, to show his love for both parents.

The parents in "Kramer vs. Kramer" make about 900 thousand a year between them. They represent the young New York parents who scuffle to live near one of New York's most progressive schools, P.S. 6 on East 81st Street.

—

"Kramer vs. Kramer" opens with the mother leaving and Dustin Hoffman, waking his son, with the camera panning from bed to toilet to kitchen with no handwashing in between and some bad French Toast.

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All through this film, you're rooting for the mother and father to get their acts together. Young people with children, careers, grandparents and just plain people without children will enjoy watching a father sacrifice his career to be a mother. For a switch you'll see a man cope with the hazards of a young child.

At the beginning, young Justin Henry is able to guide his father through the grocery store by colors of the labels.

You'll laugh or cry, whichever way it hits you when young Henry gets sick and Hoffman misses important assignments at work.

And, some mothers will say "it's about time" for the man, for a change, to have to go to PTA, help his son learn his lines for the school play and then cheer him on when he forgets or won't go on.

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And as Hoffman loses out on sex, office parties and friends because the future of his son weighs heavily on his shoulders, you begin to think maybe a father can be as good as a natural mother.

The court room scenes are especially poignant. As the lawyers battle with words, Meryl Streep and Dustin Hoffman give one of the finest performances of their careers.

Howard Duff is the high-powered lawyer who lays it on the line for Dustin Hoffman counseling him that the mother always wins.

As Duff bears down on cross-examination to make Meryl Streep feel that she has been a total failure as a mother, Dustin, the husband looks her in a strong eye contact urging her to "hang in there."

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In talking about the movie with Dustin Hoffman asked if this movie wasn't a little sad for the Christmas season. Hoffman said that Columbia Pictures was concerned but it would be "like putting 20-million bucks on the shelf." He said his own 9-year-old "laughed and cried."

And as for working with young Justin Henry he said he was a bright youngster with a true instinct for acting. He dominates the screen with his ability to show what he's feeling.

In the scenes with his young son, Hoffman said he would have liked to have gone further in showing the father not only reading to his son, but bathing him, having an erection, asking questions and showing parts of family living that can't be shown on television.

Top R. & B. Singles

1 Do You Love What You Feel
Rufus and Chaka Khan
2 I Wanna Be Your Lover
Prince
3 Move Your Boogie Body
Bar - Kays

(Photo by Ida Peters)

Dustin Hoffman, star of "Kramer vs Kramer" talks with press in D.C. last month.

What's Happening

Henriette Edmonds and her mother, Irene Colbert Edmonds

By Ida Peters

The Ira Aldridge Players of Morgan State University presented "Mushy Mouth" by Henriette H. G. Edmonds on campus last week.

A native of Baltimore, she is Chairman of the Department of Drama at Howard University and she wrote th book, music and lyrics for "Mushy Mouth" first produced at Howard University in 1975 and by Inner City Cultural Players, Los Angeles, 1976.

—

Ms. Edmonds came to Baltimore last week for the opening of "Mushy Mouth" and dinner was hosted at the Chesapeake Restaurant by Samuel Hay, chairman Department of Communication and Theatre Arts at Morgan.

Enjoying conversation with Ms. Edmonds were Ms. Elaine S. Diaz, Associate professor Theatre Arts, Morgan; Ms. Elaine Sykes-Laird, administrative specialist; Talbert Shaw, dean of Arts and Sciences; Ms. Robin Boone, vice-president and Jeffrey Richardson, president, Ira Aldridge Players.

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Ms. Edmonds is the daughter of S. Randolph Edmonds, playwright and "Dean of Black Academic Theatre." He organized the Negro Inter-Collegiate Drama Association in 1939 and Southern Association of Drama and Speech Arts, 1936.

Her mother was the late Irene Colbert Edmonds, daughter of the late Dr. John T. Colbert and Jeanette Barboza Colbert of Grace Presbyterian Church. Ms. Edmonds presented historical papers from her mother's collection to Morgan. The Colberts are decended from Henry Highland Garnet, abolitionist and first minister to Liberia.

Her aunts are Mrs. Charlotte Colbert Mebane and Mrs. Annettee Colbert Johnson. During the dinner we remembered the play that Mrs. Irene Edmonds wrote and produced at Douglass High School in 1935 called "Their Time and Our Time" for the benefit of Jack and Jill of America.

If memory serves Ann Shervington and Carl Smith had the leads in that play and Vashti Smith McKenzie led the pack of children who had run-in parts.

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Irene Colbert Edmonds graduated from Douglass High School and Syracuse University with a BA in psychology and English. She married S. Randolph Edmonds in 1931 where he was professor at Morgan and pioneer founder of the Ira Aldridge Players.

—

When Henriette was born in 1934, the family moved to Dillard University in New Orleans where Edmonds became head of the Drama Department.

Irene Colbert Edmonds was a pioneer in Children's Theatre her first being at Dillard. When her husband received a Rosenwald Grant in 1937 for a year's study of community theatres in Europe she spent six months studying in Paris, France with daughter Henriette.

From 1945-47, Ms. Irene Edmonds served as OPA Public Relations Officer for the State of Louisiana writing several plays for the agency.

In 1947 when the Edmonds moved to Tallahassee, Fla. where Professor Edmonds was head of the Speech and Drama Department, Mrs. Edmonds founded the FAMU Creative Children's Theatre.

During her lifetime Irene Colbert Edmonds wrote more than 20 plays for children's theatre. She has served as consultant in children's theatre at conferences and workshops at leading colleges and universities including Johns Hopkins University, University of North Carolina, University of Miami and Tufts.

Her daughter Henrietta Edmonds has has not been idle. Besides being a playwright, she has written music for "Magic Shoes" and the complete score for "Brother, Brother, Brother Mine" by Kelsey E. Collie. It was a winner of the Dundalk International Maytime Festival, 1979.

Her other works include "Lessons," "Square Root of Soul" with Adolph Caesar, 1977; and Bumps and Lumps," 1979.

Samuel Hay in talking about the production of "Mushy Mouth" by the Ira Aldridge Plays says he is planning to build a touring company and take the play into the public schools to provide speech therapy as well as entertainment.

Top Jazz Albums

1 ONE ON ONE
Bob James & Earl Klugh
2 RISE
Herb Alpert
3 STREET LIFE
Crusaders
4 ANGEL OF THE NIGHT
Angela Bofil
5 A TASTE FOR PASSION
Jean Luc Ponty
6 8:30
Weather Report
7 WATER SIGN
The Jeff Lorber Fusion
8 MORNING DANCE
Sypro Gyra
9 THE WORLD WITHIN
Stix Hooper
10 STREET BEAT
Tom Scott

'Death of the King's Horseman'

Yoruba custom focus of Wole Soyinka's play

"Traditions like this are linked to the actual cultural life

a people," explains Wole Soyinka, author of "Death and the King's Horseman."

"Sometimes other cultures do not accept this. They fail to take in to account all the reasons for certain customs in other cultures."

Some might be repelled by the Yoruba custom that calls for the King's horseman to committ ritual suicide upon the King's death in order to chart the course to heaven and protect the King from harm on the journey. This ritual serves as the' focal point of the play.

According to Soyinka, however, people should attempt to understand that the tradition is "a surrogate principle" and goes beyond the physical reanty to entail spiritual and psychic attitudes of a culture.

"Any audience that is intellectually curious will find itself completely at home with this play," the play's author states. "I have not tried to present a clash of cultures, but rather indicate how values evolve from a society."

"Death of the King's Horseman" opens at the Kennedy Center in Washington this week. It is directed and choreographed by Soyinka.

Nigeria's leading playwright, Soyinka, who teaches at the University of Ife in Nigeria, has had plays produced in London, off-Broadway as well as in Nigeria.

The "Death of the King's Horseman" embraces techniques that are familiar to Yoruba theater. A type of folk opera, Yoruba drama has traditionally combined poetic language, rich in proverbs, with music and dance.

"The ritually death in this dramatic work is part of the actual history of the Oyo Empire," Soyinka writes. "Like all empires the world had known, it was remarkable both for its sophisticated social organization and for its unspeakable cruelties and excesses."

The "Death..." which played the Goodman Theatre in Chicago from Oct.5 to Nov.11, has thus far received critical acclaim. It is based on an actual event.

Tom Kendrick, director of operations for the Kennedy Center, says that the center's staging of Soyinka's play is "an example of what the Kennedy Center as a national culture center should be doing.

"We recognize the play's special interest to Washington's large black population but we expect it to have equal appeal with other audiences."

The center's consultant on minority programming, Archie Buffkins, adds that the Kennedy Center is "hoping to establish a clear-cut statement of cultural diversity." He maintains that the Kennedy Center will make an effort to insure "that certain people are exposed" to this play. The ritual surrounding the King's horseman is often consistent with the political realities of a culture, Soyinka explains. Sometimes,

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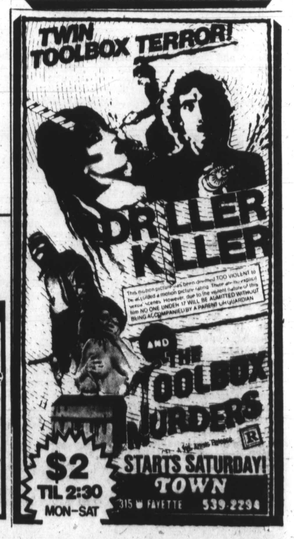

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Eddie Kendricks, Temps plan reunion

SINGING demands extra work from the respiratory organs, and with this in mind singer Eddie Kendricks has been exercising overtime to get his breathing capacities ready for his reunion with The Temptations. He, among other Temptations "originals," begins recording in January for Philly International on a very special album recording the famed Temptations, then and now. The album is having a steller production crew - Smokey Robinson, Norman Whitfield, Lamont Dozier and the Holland brothers, plus Gamble and Huff. The rendering should be a winner everywhere.

STEVIE Wonder's concerts, with tickets selling for twenty dollars, are racking up sold - out records all over, with some of the most beautiful full - page ads creatable. But with so many people clamoring to get in, the promoters became a bit overwhelmed, forgetting from whence cometh the help of any singing artist, including Stevie Wonder: The Communications Media. Congrats to the gentlemen for straightening out that one- ticket "undersight." Quite a mess for awhile, with deeyays and scribes screaming foul everywhere.

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BARBARA —, who co - starred with Muhammad Ali in "Freedom Road," heading back from Ethiopia where she lined up a film deal with African cinema great Ousmane Sembene. Before that Barbara visited her daughter Makini in Guinea, where the young lady is attending school.

KELLEE. Patterson, the singer, playing a bad little girl is the movie "The Arrest of Jesse Duke," being filmed by The Dukes of Hazard. And Cheryl Harriman, the yoga pundit, now has as clients the likes of these Ron Glass, Elizabeth Montgomery, Kim Hamilton, Harrison Page and Lesley Ann Warren, to name a few who attend her Westwood Studio sessions in "unwinding."

Ex - Detroit singer Teri Thornton back at it, her return to the singing footlights a hit here at the Money Tree in North Hollywood . . . Singer Maxine Weldon now being joined in her shows by her singer - composer brother Charles. . . Lillian Cumber, the well - known artists representative, to be feted by Marmello DeMilo here at the Parisian Room where Hank Crawford is now starring. . . The 1980 Mardi Gras festivities of the Zulus in New Orleans will have the big band of Woody Herman for music honors. And that's a switch. The Zulu clan already has lined up 30 floats for their Mardi Gras showing. Their organization is known in New Orleans as the Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club.

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On Dec. 28 "Eubie" opens a limited stay at the Huntington Harford theatre here, starring Leslie Dockery, Winston Hemsley, Lyn Godfrey, Janet Powell, Jeff Thompson and Alaina Reed, plus others, and with Eubie Black himself on hand for openers.

But a week earlier, on Dec 19, "Ain't Misbehavin'" opens here at the Aquarius Theatre with its Tony Award Broadway cast. Gordon Parks, Sr.'s third volume of his life trilogy is on the stands. Titled "To Smile in Autumn," the book begins in 1944, at about the time Parks' great photos began appearing in national U.S. magazines, and ending in 1978 when Parks says he realized he's done just about everthing in life he wanted to do, being talented, black, living black and white, the latter living admits almost making him lose his true identity. Parks' book virtually admits that some blacks can get "lost in that white world where still that invisible racial ceiling exists. Such living, according to Milton Meltzer of Library Journal, made Parks "a social oddity in the white world and almost a stranger in the black" world, Parks' success having "moved him from the center of human experience to its margin."

Many whites often say that black achieving fame and fortune in America's cross - over world prove that racial freedom exists in America. Most often it proves how unfree freedom can be. Turning one's back on fcts always lead to sad delusion. It must be a lonely life. How upsetting the though that the best creative output of creative Black Americans springs forth while they are trying to break out of black bags and becaome cross - over cynosures!

Bill Lane In Hollywood

Jesse Walker's N.Y.

NEW YORK — The New York Times editorialized recently about parents who fret that that their children's minds are turning to mush from watching too many TV cartoons and comedies. "The most worrisome aspect of children's television," said The Times, "is not that youngsters watch too much trash but that they watch too much television. . . But there are many educational and cultural programs on television today and children are well aware of them. Commercial broadcasters have added such critical successes as 'Big Blue Marble,' 'Afternoon Specials' and '30 Minutes.'"

—

Jeffrey Huddleston, 17 - year - old alto saxophonist from Greenville High School in Greenville, Miss. was the only black chosen to appear with the 1979 McDonald's High School All - American Jazz Band in it's Carnegie Hall concert appearance with Lionel Hampton. But the other four backs in the All - American Symphonic Band also had a chance to appear, play and pose with Hamp. They included Gina Walton and Karl Woody, of Washington, D.C.; Walter Dantzler, of Tallahassee, Fla., and Paul Skinner of Norfolk, Va. All five youngsters will appear again with the Band on New Year's Day in the Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, Calif.

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The Studio Museum In Harlem reports it's drawing rave attendance for its exhibit, "Vessels of the Human Spirit: Works in Clay by David MacDonald." The clay works by the associate professor in ceramics at Syracuse Univ. remain on exhibit through January 27.

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Owners Fred Staton and Carl Yearwood are hoping to draw the real jazz fans to their New Smalls Paradise when Tennorman Stanley Turrentine and his All - Star Jazz Group appear there with their Jazz at Christmas Special. Single shows will be presented on Dec. 18 - 19 at 9:30 p.m. Two shows will be presented Dec. 20, 21 and 22 at 9:30 p.m. and 12 midnight.

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Ads in New York papers asking for investors for "Bojangles," a new musical based on the life of Bill "Bojangles" Robinson and planned for an opening on Broadway for Spring, 1980. Rumors have it that Ben Vereen will play Bojangles. Book is by Norman Mitgang, music by Charles Strouse and lyrics by Sammy Cahn.

TV Watching

By Vanessa Johnson

Friday

1979 Unsung Hero Awards: Coverage of the annual Maryland Scholastic Association's banquet honoring the top high-school football players. 7:30-8:00 p.m. — Ch. 2.

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Frosty's Winter Wonderland: Frosty the Snowman gets married in this cartoon. 8:00-8:30 p.m. — Ch. 13.

—

Nestor, the Long-Eared Christmas Donkey: Tale about a floppy-eared donkey chosen by Mary and Joseph to guide them to Bethlehem. 8:30-9:00 p.m. — Ch. 13.

—

Soundstage: Tonight Ella Fitzgerald, Count Basie, trumpeter Roy Eldridge, saxophonist Zoot Sims and guitarist Joe Pass in a concert. 10:30-12:00 a.m. — Ch. 26.

Saturday

Fat Albert: Slim's steady diet of sweets starts causing problems with his health. 11:30-12:00 p.m. — Ch. 2.

—

Kidsworld: The disco group Taste of Honey is interviewed in Hollywood. 11:30-12:00 p.m. — Ch. 11.

—

Hot Hero Sandwich: Today Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Pam Dawber Robert Guillaume of "Benson and Michael Learned are the guests today. 12:00-1:00 p.m. — Ch. 4.

—

Soul Train: A tribute to Aretha Franklin. 1:00-2:00 p.m. — Ch. 11.

—

Frosty the Snowman: Frosty's rising temperatures threaten a meltdown, unless he can reach the North Pole. 8:00-8:30 p.m. —Ch. 2.

—

'Twas The Night Before Christmas: The story is set in Junctionville whose newspaper has printed a letter denouncing Santa Claus as a fraud. 8:30-9:00 p.m. — Ch. 2.

—

Man Called Sloane: Kartel's Lady Bug plans to ravage American wheat fields with killer locusts. Starring J-Tu Cumbuka. 10:00-11:00 p.m. — Ch. 11.

Sunday

NFL Today: A tribute to O. J. Simpson, who is slated to retire at the end of the season. 12:30-1:00 p.m. — Ch. 2.

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NFL '79: O. J. Simpson, the NFL's premier running back in the '70s, comments on the likely running stars of the '80s, including Earl Campbell, Walter Payton, Billy Sims and Charles White. 12:30-1:00 p.m. — Ch.4.

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Go Tell It . . . Ben Hooks: Segments include a profile of Buster Soaries, a 27-year-old minister and president of the New Jersey Leadership Conference; an interview with Rachel Robinson, widow of baseball star Jackie Robinson. 7:00-7:30 p.m. — Ch. 7.

Holiday bus tours

The Mayor's Office of Special Projects announces holiday season bus tours for children throughout the month of December. Each Saturday, children will be escorted throughout the city to areas displaying holiday exhibits. Stops included in the tours are the Cloisters Children Museum, Top of the World in the World Trade Center, the Baltimore Conventign Center, the Glen Avenue Fire House and a performance of "A Christmas Carol" by the Theatre Project.

Children interested in joining the tours may contact the following recreation centers: Liberty, Rosemont, James McHenry, Medfield Heights, Hollander Ridge and C. C. Jackson Recreation Centers.

For more information on the holiday bus tours, please contact the Mayor's Office of Special Projects at 396 - 4891.

CALENDAR

Events For Children

Fr., Dec. 7

Patterson Park Branch: Films — "Hardware Wars" and "Peewee Had a Little Ape," 3:15 p.m.

Dundalk Avenue Branch: Film — "The Case of the Elevator Duck," 3:30 p.m.

Sat., Dec. 8

Central Pratt Library: Preschool story hour, 11 a.m.; Children's Department; Film — "A Christmas Carol with Mr. Magoo," 2 p.m., Wheeler Auditorium.

Xmas Downtown

Christmas programs throughout downtown Baltimore during the holiday season is being sponsored by the Mayor's office of Special Projects.

Entertainment will be provided at all the festivities including bands, holiday carolers and craft demonstrations. Refreshments will be available free of charge at the City Tree Trimming Contest and Tree Lighting Ceremony.

The scheduled list of activities includes:

Dec. 12, Noon — City of Baltimore's Annual Tree Trimming acontest and Tree Lighting Ceremony War Memorial Plaza.

Dec. 14, Noon — Grand Opening of McCormic Tea Booth Lexington Mall

Dec. 19, 11:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. — Christmas In The Rotunda City Hall.

The public is invited to attend all of the events, free of charge.

For more information, please call the Mayor's Office of Special Projects at 396 - 4891.

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