'American Clock' audience...not so 'gala'

Arthur Miller's Depression play, "The American Clock" opened Tuesday night at the Mechanic Theatre before what was supposed to be a glamorous gala black-tie affair. The champagne was there and about half of the women in the audience dressed to the black-tie theme but only about 30 or 40 men responded to the hype. The rest of the audience dressed in typical Baltimorese style . . . typical depression looking tired clothes.

I have often wondered if press night at the Mechanic brings out the worst looking clothes. Even Mayer William Donald Schaefer was in a business suit and the famous playwright wore a corduroy sport coat, rumpled shirt as if he was in agony launching this pre-Broadway baby.

"The American Clock" has great potential, and every now and then glimpses of greatness but tries to do too much with 31 characters and 17 actors.

The Tuesday night press audience was cool to the play and for a comedy, laughs were few and far between except one black-tie gent behind me who seemed to be a professional laughter. And like George C. Scott's "Ely Fan" and Alexander Cohen's "A Day In Hollywood - A Night In the Ukraine," there will be no much work on this show we won't recognize it, if or when it makes its way to Broadway.

"The American Clock" follows an affluent Jewish family on the eve of the stock market crash of 1929 and is told from the point of view of the son Lee (William Atherton) and centers around his parents Joan Copeland and John Randolph.

It's about a family escaping in the 1930s when the banks close and the family loses all its cash in the miserable days of World War I veterans strikes . . . apple sellers on the corners. Maybe the Mechanic audience was so quiet because they remember the miseries of Herbert Hoover; the hope of Franklin Roosevelt and remembered Lee's fate of taking his $12 out of the bank before a bank closing and then losing the bike to a thief.

The piano playing mother, the housewife reduced to pawning her diamonds and lamenting the fact that she can no longer go to plays and must put up with stupid card-playing neighbors is a forceful character and as played by Ruth Copeland needs a lot of work.

While playing cards one afternoon in a darkened house to avoid a persistent bank collector (we've banked our money with them for years and now they're dunning us). . . one friend says, I missed the question on a radion quiz show, "Who was the author of Grays' Eulogy In A Country Churchyard" . . . Ruth hangs her head in shame and the Mechanic theatre audience snickered.

The real answer, Thomas Gray, "Eulogy Written in a County Churchyard." The most famous lines are what Arthur Miller is trying to say about these survivors:

"Can storied urn or animated bust
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can Honor's voice provoke the silent dust
Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of Death?"

The son in the family yearns to be a sports writer and leaves home to travel the country in the early 1930s to New Orleans where the play hits on how bad things are all over the United States.

Denny Burks is very effective as the black owner of a restaurant when the white uneducated sheriff comes in and orders 10 chicken dinners to host a party so he can get on the Federal payroll since county sheriffs are not neither paid. He leaves a radio as collateral. This scene stands out, not only because black and white people in the South during the depression were all hard hit but . . . if you wanted a touch of unreality, the sheriff would have ordered the dinners, left the radio and then had the black arrested for stealing . . . which is what usually happened.

Burks has appeared on Broadway in the original cast of "Hair," and has six parts in "The American Clock." He plays Clarence, Isaac, Rudy, Pianist In A Speakeasy, Piano Mover and Garden Crew.

Roseanna Carter who has the role of Irene, a labor organizer, is the sister of Esther Rolle and has appeared on Broadway and Off-Broadway in many roles. She recently appeared in Don Evans' new play "One Monkey Don't Stop No Show." When she appears on stage in "The American Clock," the play comes alive in the WPA office as the Jewish father and son pretend so the son can get a WPA writer's job.

The scenery by Karl Eigsti is a little too spare and needs something . . . but I can't put my finger on it. The music from "Funny Face and "Porgy and Bess" is some of the glue that sets the mood and holds the play together.

'Laugh-In' star Goldie Hawn is hot in 'Private Benjamin'

Nothing is too good for Judy Benjamin. Just ask her parents.

For 38 years, this pampered princess — played by Goldie Hawn — has been spoiled, indulged, coddled and overprotected by her affluent, doting mother and father. They see to it that their daughter has everything a girl could ask for — from Gucci purses to the latest in cuisinarts.

And now, Judy's dream world seems to be complete — she has married a wealthy, successful lawyer, her new house has been redecorated and her favorite ottoman has been reupholstered.

Her wedded bliss doesn't last long, though. Judy's husband dies on their wedding night and once again, she is left to be taken care of by her parents. In a night, Judy goes from having everything to having nothing.

Goldie Hawn

Distraught and depressed, Judy meets a less-than-honest Army recruiter who, taking advantage of her condition, convinces her that the "new" army is the place for her.

"It's the Army of the '80s," he tells her. "And every soldier gets his or her own room."

As Judy stares at a picture of the Army camp, she says, "These look like condos."

The wily recruiter just smiles and says, "And I promise we'll get you in the best shape of your life, too."

Judy can't wait to enlist. "Yeah, it'll be like three years at La Costa."

And so, Judy Benjamin goes from marching down the aisle to marching into boot camp in Warner Bros. sophisticated social comedy, "Private Benjamin."

Directed by veteran filmmaker Howard Zieff, "Private Benjamin" was written by Nancy Meyers, Charles Shyer and Harvey Miller, who also make their debuts as producers. The film also marks Goldie Hawn's entry into the production ranks of the motion picture industry — as that of the film's executive producer.

Co-starring with Hawn are Eileen Brennan, Armand Assante, Robert Webber, Sam Wanamaker, Barbara Barrie, Albert Brooks, Mary Kay Place, Harry Dean Stanton, Gretchen Wyler and Craig T. Nelson.

Once in the Army, Judy has a rude awakening. The yachts and condos she had been promised have been replaced by dingy barracks. It's the army of the '80s alright — the 1980s!

Private Benjamin, as she is now known, is convinced that a mistake has been made.

"I think I've been sent to the wrong branch or something," she tells her commanding officer, an ambitious woman Captain — played sternly by Eileen Brennan. "I'm in the Army but it's a different Army."

Captain Lewis can't believe what she sees. She gives Judy her first direct order.

"You're going to take your toothbrush and scrub every inch of the latrine."

From here it's all downhill. Judy must endure the rigors of basic training along with the other members of her "bum squad" — Mary Kay Place, Toni Kalem, Damita Jo Freeman, Alston Ahern and P.J. Soles.

Despite everything, including herself, Judy becomes a model soldier and is eventually transferred to Paris for a plush European duty. It is here that a love affair with a wealthy, French doctor — played by Armand Assante — leads Judy to further insights about herself and her life.

Breaking Up — Director Sidney Poitier and Richard Pryor share a hysterically-funny moment (one of during the filming of Columbia Pictures' "Stir Crazy," an off-the-wall comedy which stars Pryor and Gen Wilder. George Stanford Brown and Jo Beth Williams also star. Opens area theatres for Christmas.

Shirley Tyler Moore Gallery 409

Gallery 409 will present a concert by Washington Soprano Shirley Taylor Moore, Sunday, Oct. 19 at 5 p.m.

Miss Moore, well known in the Washington area, has chosen for her Baltimore debut songs by composers Handel, Liszt, Debussy and Margaret Bonds. Her accompanist will be William H. Moore Ed.D. who is presently the chairman of the music department at the District of Columbia, and holds degrees from Fisk University, Indiana University, Columbia University and the New York Juilliard School of Music.

Shirley Taylor Moore began her musical

(See next column)

career by training as a student of ballet and playing the piano. Her vocal qualities however, came to the attention of her church's musical director and by her early teens was a soloist for the church.

Studying for several years under the direction of John Molley at the Brooklyn Museum, she ventured into the theatre by auditioning for, and winning principal roles with the Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Society.

Miss Moore has held several positions as soloist in churches in New York City and Washington, D.C. Her numerous concert appearances include performances in Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Washington, D.C. For further information, please call 637-2908.

"Baltimore Cable Expo '80"

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Free Films

Admission to all film programs is free.

Six boxing films featuring championship heavyweight and lightweight bouts will be screened at 2:30 p.m. on Wed., Oct. 22, at the Pulaski Park Branch, 139 North Linwood Ave.

An answer to Hoodoo's Effect, tool on the game board, finds a castle haunted by a mad bomber in "The Terror," starring Boris Karloff and Jack Nicholson. To be screened at 2:30 p.m. on Wed., Oct. 22, at the Light Street branch, 1251 Light St.

An abridgement of the numerators from volume of Charles Sprague Smith's "Good Companions," starring Pearl Bailey, Lionel Barrymore, Basil Rathbone and W. C. Fields, will be screened at 7 p.m. on Wed., Oct. 22, at the Hamilton Branch, 5912 Harford Road.

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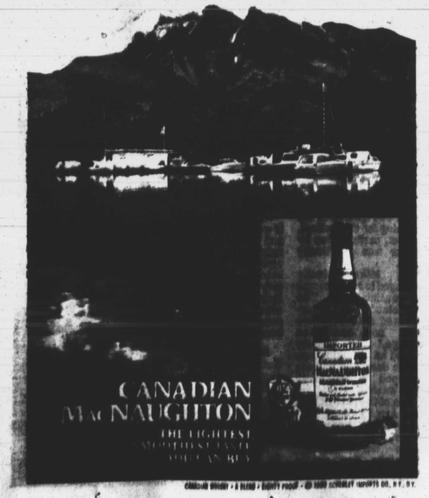

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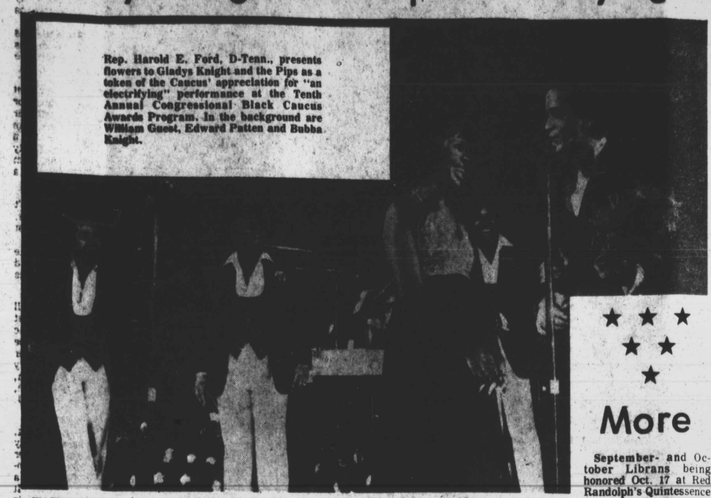
Gladys Knight and Pips 'electrifying'



Rep. Harold E. Ford, D-Tenn., presents flowers to Gladys Knight and the Pips as a token of the Caucus' appreciation for "an electrifying" performance at the Tenth Annual Congressional Black Caucus Awards Program. In the background are William Guest, Edward Patten and Bubba Knight.

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WASHINGTON — In the midst of all the testimony on the black family at the Congressional Black Caucus Annual Awards Program-Dinner, Gladys Knight and the Pips gave the 5,000 VIP's who attended the Caucus' tenth anniversary celebration, a show of familial success in sparkle and splendor.

Backed by a 21-piece orchestra, cousins William Guest and Edward Patten, and brother Bubba Knight, donning black, white, and sparkling sequins, gracaed their fancy dance routines, while Gladys belted out tunes that set to tapping even the most prestigious feet.

Hewing up with their recent hit, "Taste of Bitter Love," the group wielded their soul power with a medley of hits from "Every Beat of My Heart," to "Since You Been Gone," "Friendship Train," "If I Were Your Woman," "Daddy Could Swear," and her highly-acclaimed rendition of Barbara Streisand's "The Way We Were."

During an extended version of "Landlord," Gladys asked the audience to signal if the song identified them. When she saw comedian Bill Cosby in the front row, tugging his wife's arm, Gladys asked why.

"I'm trying to get her to tell you, but she won't get up," joked Cosby to the roaring laughter of the crowd. So Cosby testified himself, crooning seriously, "I'm the landlord and the keeper of our love," to a delighted audience and group.

Asking for others to testify, Gladys whisked out into the crowd and found a young lady who also wanted to try her vocal cords on the chorus.

In a controlled rendition of "I'll Survive," Gladys evoked an obvious rallying cry from both men and women, who sprang from their seats for a standing ovation.

After the show, Rep. Harold E. Ford of Tennessee presented a bouquet of flowers to the group in appreciation for their performance.

Later, at a CBS Records reception in their honor, Knight and the Pips mingled, signed autographs, and danced to the disco beat with notables such as Maudine Cooper, vice-president, Washington Operations, National Urban League, who said of the performance: "I just thought they were fantastic. I'm a Gladys Knight fan anyway."

"It was one of the best shows we've had," said Rep. Cardiss Collins of Illinois, and chairwoman of the Caucus, as she made her way to an impressive buffet of hors d'oeuvres. "She gave her all—she had the exuberance and the energy for doing it — which made for an electrifying performance."

Jesse Walker's N.Y.

NEW YORK — Tickets go on sale next week at Madison Square Garden and at Ticketron for the First Women's World Judo Championships, to be held at the Garden Nov. 29 and 30. The U.S. team is headed by a 20-year-old Harlem girl, Margie Castro who is the over 158-pound champion. She's 6-2 and one half and 190 pounds. NYC copped this first championship through funding from Inner City Broadcasting Corporation and its chairman — Percy Sutton.

Pamela Poitier, Sidney's daughter, will star in "Time Out Of Time", a play by Clifford Mason and directed by Billie Allen. The three-act drama of real life will run Oct. 16-Nov.2 at the Black Theatre Alliance, 410 West 42nd Street, between 9th and 10th Avenues. It's the first real serious dramatic acting role for Pamela, a Howard University grad.

The husband-wife team of Charlie and Addie Penny has been exhibiting their oil paintings again at the 135th Street Office of the New York Bank For Savings at Lenox Avenue. After retiring from work with the federal government, the Pennys both signed up for an art class at the A. Philip Randolph Senior Citizen Center, at 108 West 146th Sireet.

Sammy Davis and Aretha Franklin are among the American talent to appear at a Hollywood salute to Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, on Nov. 17 as part of the Royal Variety Performance at the London Palladium.

Georg Stanford Brown will direct his first feature, "Body and Soul", for The Cannon Group, replacing Jaman Fanaka who had previously been set as the director.

Jack Gelber's "The Connection", will be revived Oct. 23-Nov. 9 at the New Federal Theatre, with Antonio Fargas and Carl Lee, with the latter staging.

A Federal court in Detroit found WJBK-TV guilty of racial discrimination in the 1977 firing of Daniel (Red) Jamison, a white sportscaster who was replaced by Charlie Neal, black sportscaster. Jamison hanged himself two years after the affair but the $4,500,000 suit he had brought in 1977 was continued by his ex-wife after his death.

Among the highlights of the Dedication Weedend for the Schomburg Center For Research In Black Culture was the symposium on Black Studies—New Directions in the 1980s. The Saturday afternoon, (Sept. 27,) session featured The Arts with Billy Taylor, musician-composer as the moderator for a panel including artist Romare Bearden, author-sculptor Barbara Chase Riboud and Carman Moore, composer-music critic.

The Yale Repertory Theatre production of Athol Fugard's "A Lesson from Aloes" will open in New York in November with Ashton Springer (Bubbling Brown Sugar", "Ain't Misbehavin'), co-producer James Earl Jones, Harris Yulin and Maria Tucci make up the cast.

Actor-singer-director Leonard Parker will be heard in a Fall Classical Concern on Oct. 18 in Newport News, Va., and On Oct. 21 at the Fort Fustis, Va., Non-Commission Officer's Club.

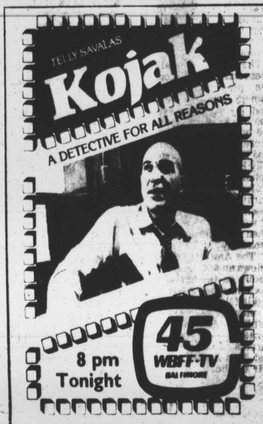
Maurice Binns, who during the day is a bank branch manager, has opened the Red Carpet Lounge at 3855 Bronxwood Avenue, between 221st and 222nd Streets in the Bronx in the heart of the borough's Caribbean community.

More

September- and October Librans being honored Oct. 17 at Randolph's Quintessence Libra Zodiac Party include Dr. Matilda Cunningham, Al Lowe, Ruth Allen King, Dr. Steve Freeman, Attorney Carlos Peay, Dr. James Cowan and Mary Louise Williams. Quintessence is on Restaurant Row, at 353 West 46th Street, between 8th and 9th Avenues.

"Upper Broadsay-Now" is an all day festival to be held on Oct 25 on Broadway between 96th and 97th Streets with rides, hansom cabs, entertainment, art and crafts and food. It's a benefit for Symphony Space and Ronald McDonald House.

INFLATION NOTE: Tickets for the best seats for the Nov. 25 Roberto Duran-Sugar Ray Leonard rematch will go for $1,000 apiece, and the cheapest will cost $40.



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Arena Players' board expands

The Board of Directors of Arena Players, Inc. proudly announces the addition of seven new members who will serve two year terms. Mrs. Marge Butler, President of Seton Hill Neighborhood Association; Nicholas Green, Chief of Administrative Services of the Housing Authority of Baltimore City; Arthur Lambert, President of Lambert Insurance Agency, Inc.; Henry G. Parks Jr., Chairman of the Board of Parks Sausage Co.; Mrs. Donna Rice, community organizer, school psychologist and patron of the arts; Mrs. Margarite Syphax, Arlington, Virginia-based businesswoman and patron of the arts; and Edward C. Wilson, venture banker and retired Secretary-Treasurer of W.F. Wilson & Sons, Ellicott City, are the newly appointed members.

Mrs. Catherine Adams, Felix Anderson, George Barrick, Mrs. Ethel J. Day, Charles P. Howard, Mrs. Christine Moore, Acknell M. Muldrow, II, Mrs. Camilla Sherrard, Ms. June Thorne and Samuel H. Wilson Jr. are the other members of The Board of Directors.

In the September meeting, The Board of Directors elected officers who are Mrs. Camilla M. Sherrard, chairman; Henry G. Parks Jr., vice chairman of the board; Mrs. Ethel J. Day, secretary; and Acknell M. Muldrow III, treasurer.

The Board also appointed in Executive Committee which is comprised of the officers, Samuel H. Wilson who founded the organization in 1953, The Arena Players' Board of Directors has been meeting regularly to conduct business arrangements with firms, merchants and sponsoring organizations. Today Arena Players, Inc. is a community theatre that engages in fundraising, audience development, community outreach and several other activities to foster artistic creativity in the community.

Fundraising is a vital objective of the Arena Players' Board Directors. For 28 years a variety of people from numerous vocations have operated this organization. Recently due to the increasing activity of the group, there is a need for supplies and a salaried permanent staff. It will be the responsibility of the Board of Directors to find businesses and corporations that will underwrite the expenses for staff and materials.

During the past six years the Arena Players have successfully operated a Summer Youtheatre Workshop in the Performing Arts, funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Maryland State Arts Council and the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Art and Culture, 14 to 20 years.

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