SHOWTIME

★Theatre
★Music
★Art

'One Mo' Time'

"One Mo' Time" an entertainment of 1920's vaudeville, written and directed by Vernel Bagneris is now playing to enthusiastic audiences at the Arena Stage in Washington, D.C.

Some of the outstanding numbers include "The Darktown Strutter's Ball" with words and music by Sheldon Brooks (1917); "The Right Key But The Wrong Keyhole" by Eddie Green and Clarence Williams; "My Man Rocks" by Bessie Smith.

"One Mo' Time" is about that famous Lyric Theatre in New Orleans in the French Quarter at the corner of Iberville and Burgundy Streets. Destroyed by fire in 1927, it was one of the great black theatres like the Royal in Baltimore, the Regal in Chicago and the Howard in D.C. on the T.O.B.A. which stood for Theatre Owners Booking Agency, or as the performers called it "Tough on Black A's"

The touring conditions were rough and performers were underpaid. Costumes were minimal and the companies traveled second-class on trains.

Performers worked in most cities with house bands . . . in Baltimore with the Buddy Johnson band and in New Orleans with an excellent pit band and great sidemen. Price of admission was twenty-five cents.

Peggy Alston plays Ma Reed, the troupe's veteran performer whose flippant comedy belies the struggle she has faced. Alston comes to Arena Stage after portraying Thelma in the successful New York production of "One Mo' Time". The role of Thelma, who tries to maintain her innocence while flashing her eyes at Papa Du, is played by Lady B.J., who grew up singing in the churches, and later, the nightclubs of New Orleans. Lady B.J. will soon be seen in the new film, "Dreamland".

In a return to Arena Stage, Barbara Montgomery is Bertha, the indomitable leader of the troupe, who is known to hit the bottle occasionally. Ms. Montgomery appeared as Billie Pulliart in the Negro Ensemble Company's production of "Nevis Mountain Dew" two years ago at Arena.

Ron Wyche plays the dapper Papa Du, the only man in the troupe and consequently its most eligible bachelor. Wyche has studied both music and dance with the Dance Theater of Harlem and has appeared in several productions with the Billie Holiday Theatre in New York.

The scheming theater owner is portrayed by Tom Hull, an off-Broadway veteran. Hull, a native of North Carolina, has performed with the Provincetown Playhouse, Equity Library Theatre and Theatre de Lys.

Musicians for the production include Arthur Dawkins on clarinet, Harold Mann on drums, Morten Larsen on piano, James W. Howard on trumpet and Thomas E. Short Jr. on tuba

Karl Eigsti returns for the 27th time as set designer for an Arena Stage production. Eigsti designed the sets for "After the Fall" and "You Can't Take It With You", which went to the Hong Kong Arts Festival. Mr. Eigsti has just completed the set design for the new Arthur Miller play, "The American Clock", which premiered in Baltimore.

Pepsi Bethel, the show's production consultant and president and artistic director of The American Authentic Jazz Dance Theatre, staged the show's authentic 1920s dances including the Charleston and the Black Bottom.

Lighting design is by Allen Lee Hughes, whose last work for Arena was "You Can't Take It With You". Costumes are by New Orleans' famous costumiere JoAnn Clevenger, who has outfitted several thousand for Mardi Gras and consulted for several period films.

Peggy Alston and Lady B.J. sing "Wait 'til You See My Baby Do the Charleston."

Barbara Montgomery, Peggy Alston, Lady B.J. and Ron Wyche join in "A Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight."

Push comes to shove between Bertha (Barbara Montgomery) and the theatre owner (Tom Hull) when her troupe Lady B.J., Peggy Alston and Ron Wyche hit the New Orleans Lyrice Theatre.

'Whoopie'... has its moments

By Ida Peters

"Makin' Whoopee," a musical comedy hit that was first presented on Broadway by Florenz Ziegfeld Dec. 4, 1928 starring Eddie Cantor and Ruth Etting in those innocent days before the great Stock Market crash of 1929, opened to a cool audience at the Mechanic Theatre this week.

"Makin' Whoopie" is being presented by the National Musical Theatre Company and produced on Broadway by Ashton Springer, Frank Pierson and Michael Price and comes to Baltimore from Connecticut's Goodspeed Opera House, best known for staging period musical comedy hits.

Ashton Springer, one of the few black producers on Broadway was in town for the opening.

"Bubbling Brown Sugar, (Eubie!) coming directly from the Broadway opening of James Earl Jones in "Lesson from Aloes," "Makin' Whoopie" musically is a wonderful nostalgic show with most Walter Donaldson's music and Gus Kahn's lyrics enduring through the years. "Making Whoopie," "Love Me Or Leave Me," "Yes Sir, That's My Baby" are all tunes made famous by Eddie Cantor and while Ted Pritchard is a talented actor and dancer you still miss Eddie Cantor, rolling his eyes, jumping up and down, clapping his hands.

Set in what is called the wild, wild West, "Whoopie" tells the story of a hypochondriac, pill-taking tenderfoot, Ted Pritchard, who has journeyed west to nurse his health and soothe his jangled nerves.

Mamie Van Doren is the voluptuous nurse. They run into a young girl, Laura Pritchard in love with a Dartmouth educated Indian. Laura is being forced to marry Sheriff Bob, Frank Silvano—but, is rescued when the man-chasing, rich Harriett Underwood comes along, played by Imogene Coca.

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All you folks brought up on modern movies and TV will have to adjust a little to get into this comedy with its wonderful sight gags and corny jokes.

Opening night audience convulsed with laughter during one gag when the prop meat cleaver broke as the actor was about to split a pail. All the actors on stage collapsed with helpless laughter and the audience roared. It wasn't until the next day, we realized that the actors were milking the audience and the scene was rehearsed.

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Imogene Coco, brightened up the stage in her all too few appearances. On opening night, she was actually celebrating her 72nd birthday. If the Mechanic had known, they would have showered her with champagne and a cake on stage.

She was hilarious in a strip tease skit, reminiscent of TV work on the old "Show of Shows" with Sid Caesar.

Watching Bryan Foster as the drunk is worth the price of admission. He manages to shake, rattle and roll in a display of skillful acting and he reminds you of some of the crazies in "One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest."

A tip of the hat to the chorus and Dan Siretta the choreographer who has molded some talent dancers into routines worthy of "Chorus Line."

"Whoopie" is not the greatest show in the world, but it has some moments and some laughs when you least expect them.

Thanksgiving costume contest Saturday

Lexington Market is sponsoring a costume contest at its Thanksgiving Party on Saturday, Nov. 22, and all are invited to enter. Costumes must bear some relation to the Thanksgiving holiday; pilgrims, Indians and turkeys are expected to be present. Two categories will be offered: under 18 years and 18 years and older. Included in the prizes offered are gift checks for purchases at Lexington Market and a bicycle.

In order to enter, please come to Lexington Street outside Lexington Market on Saturday, Nov. 22, 1980 at 11:00 a.m.

Free balloons and lollipops will be distributed to everyone and entertainment will be offered throughout the day.

For more information on the Lexington Market Thanksgiving Party Costume Contest, please call 396-4891.

What's Happening

By Ida Peters

Some people have more reason to be thankful this Thanksgiving than others. Consider the Stevie Wonder fans. Baltimoreans and Washingtonians will get a chance to hear his new album at the Capital Centre, Wednesday, Nov. 26.

And, there are a lot of Republicans who are happy too! Dr. Aris T. Allen heads up a Special Maryland Inaugural Committee to attend President-elect Ronald Reagan's inauguration on Capitol Hill, Jan. 20, 1981. The event will have live entertainment, open bar, buffet and limousine service. The sponsors were so confident, they were issuing invitations back in August. Now they can say, "I told you so!"

Committee members are Benjamin Mason, Tyrone Addison, Rev. St. George Crosse, Ms. Paula Cullings, Ms. Norma Holmes, Ms. Louise Johnson and Ms. Christine Davis.

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The Arena Players continue—Fred Carmichael's "The Night Is My Enemy" at the Arena Playhouse, directed by Bob Russell. In the lobby is an exhibit of oils and mixed media by Bill Banks.

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The Arena Players have announced two changes in their 28th Season schedule. "The Real Inspector Hound", originally scheduled for January, will be replaced by "A Wind Between the Houses", an amusing, whimsical comedy about an eccentric widow who keeps her late husband's ashes on the mantelpiece and acts as if he were still alive. This play, which shows how a woman's inability to cope with reality affects her friends and children, will open on Jan. 9, 1981 and will continue weekends through Feb. 1.

A "Double Bill" of short-plays by two celebrated black playwrights will replace "All My Sons" in March and April. "Happy Ending", a long-run off-Broadway hit and recipient of the coveted Vernon Rice and Obie Awards by Douglas Turner Ward, is one of the plays. "Happy Ending" reports hilariously on two black domestics whose white employees are on the verge of divorce — thereby threatening a cutoff in the household graft which has brought considerable luxury to their lives. The other play is "Wine In The Wilderness", a compelling and highly imaginative drama by Alice Childress. Set in Harlem after a riot in 1964, this powerful play speaks eloquently of the black experience in America. Both plays will open on March 27, 1981 and will continue weekends through April 26, 1981.

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"Agnes of God", John Pielmeier's new play directed by Stan Wojewodski continues at Center Stage. Play concerns the explosive conflict between two women; a protective Mother Superior and a tough cigarette smoking court-appointed psychiatrist obsessed with the fate of a young nun accused of murdering her baby.

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Alec McCowen's solo drama of "St. Mark's Gospel" will be presented at the Morris A. Mechanic Theatre for six performances, Monday, Dec. 8 through Sunday, Dec. 14 in an exclusive United States engagement.

Conceived and performed by Alec McCowen and presented by arrangement with Arthur Cantor and Greer Garson, St. Mark's Gospel is an extraordinary piece of acting.

McCowen spent 16 months memorizing the entire original, unrevised King James version of "The Gospel According to St. Mark". His two-hour solo performance has been acclaimed by critics and audiences alike for its sheer audacity, remarkable virtuosity, and startling mastery of the language and text. He is responsible for the presentation of the gospel on stage, as well as for the interpretation of the story.

Alec McCowen has analyzed the Gospel from a theatrical and from an actor's point of view. He discovers in Mark an "extraordinary theatrical stage." The events of the miracles of loaves and fishes, the walking on water, the stories of kings and dancing girls, and of the final betrayal are all established in theatrical terms.

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James Earl Jones, who opened Monday, Nov. 17 on Broadway, NYC in Athol Fugard's "A Lesson From Aloes", has two films due for release soon. They are "The Bad Tide", with Jose Ferrer, and Lila Kedrova and "The Bushido Blade", a samurai saga that is said to beat "Shogun", with Richard Boone, Sonny Chiba and Frank Converse.

Director James Hopkins has announced the completion of casting for Sherlock Holmes and the "Crucifer of Blood". This thriller, fresh from its Broadway and London triumphs, is the second mainstage production of the season at Harford Community College's Phoenix Festival Theater. The Sherlockian drama is slated for a mid-December run.

Night Scene Seen

By Bob Matthews

Dropped by The Spot the other day, where the birthday celebration of AFRO veep Ken Wilson was in full swing.

Was almost immediately accosted by Coach Earl Banks, who laughingly informed me that although I had spelled his name correctly in the column mention of his activities, he was not the owner of The Casino.

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Instead, he told me, he was in the vicinity—his club was the York Bar. Grinned sheepishly, and vowed to make the correction—and so:

Hi folks. Have you heard about Coach Earl Banks—you haven't Well, let me tell you—he is now the head factotum of the York Bar. You should give him a play. O.K.?

— —

Now that The Ritz has been refurbished and is back in business—they have First Class in the Penthouse this weekend, with Fuzzy Kane in the Living Room—another top spot is undergoing renovations.

Gatsby's uptown is currently closed pending a grand opening slated for later this month. Of course the downstairs disco room is still jumping, but without revealing any secrets, they are really preparing a big blast for the upstairs lounge.

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There has been a change—temporarily—in policy at The Bandstand over in Fells Pt. Featured attraction at the club is Baltimorean Arnold Sterling.

This weekend, he will be backed up by Marc Cohen, piano, and Steve Novosel, bass—no word on the drummer yet.

What's different is that there will be no Sunday night performance. According to Mike Busky, the music will go on only on Friday and Saturday nights.

This policy will remain in effect until the weekend of December 6, when pianist Barry Harris will play the club. At that point, the Sunday shows will return.

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The Saturday jazz sit-in at The Sportsmen's Lounge will feature Brenda Allord this week. She of course is still doing her weekend night gigs at The Closet.

Bob Haynes seems to be leaning towards female singers, for the weekend attractions at the club through December. Features vocalist Jennifer Jones.

She is being backed up by the Dennis Fisher trio with Dennis on organ, Lee Jeffers, sax, and Jerome McCardell, drums. Was told by several Sceners that Jennifer has a special way of doing birth birthday greetings that really should be heard.

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The Left Bank Jazz Society this Sunday will present Pieces of a Dream, the teen-aged jazz sensations out of Philadelphia.

Can't help but rave about this group, for they never cease to amaze me with their mature jazz presentations—abetted by the founding father of the group who chimes in on vibes.

The LBJS is winding down its season, with the Jazz Ambassadors, the U.S. Army band, scheduled for a free Nov. 30 concert.

Dec. 7 will find Baltimorean Gary Bartz fronting a quintet. Personnel for this set has not been firmed up, for Gary wants to bring in a group with which he feels compatible.

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Have to add a few words about the scheduled "Academy Awards of Jazz" which had to be scrubbed just a day before the presentation was to happen.

Although for various reasons, it didn't go on—and we won't labor the point—the idea continues, and other factions are gearing up to make the presentation idea a real one.

Vocalist-entrepreneur Ruby Glover is heading up a group to accomplish what the "Academy Awards" was trying to accomplish, and she is assembling an enthusiastic staff to get the project in the works.

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Tonight, (Friday) there will be big doings at the Warehouse Arena, 407 N. Paca St., where the Comedy Squad will perform, along with Joslini and lots of disco music.

You really should check out the Comedy Squad if you haven't. As for Josini—have to agree with our good friend Walter Carr Sr. I too am still trying to catch Josini's lips moving when he does his ventriloquism bit.

THE DELLS, "I Touched A Dream" along with the Softones who have been touring with the Manhattans will be at the Lyric, Nov. 30.

'Borderline'...ugly, violent

By Ida Peters

If you are a Charlie Bronson fan, you'll enjoy watching Charlie Bronson play Charlie Bronson in his latest outing, the play Jim Mitchell is directing for Cannon in charge of Charlie Bronson starring as a Mexican who is smuggling the country's flow of Mexicans across into the United States.

It's an ugly, dehumanizing, horrifying story and if, as the press book says, this "Borderline" was filmed with the total cooperation of the United States Border Patrol, a department within the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, the Congress ought to begin an immediate investigation and start an overhaul of this department.

In fact, members of the Maryland Department of U.S. Immigration watched the showing of "Borderline" with local Baltimore film critics. I was appalled at the laughter during some of the more violent scenes. Afterward I asked one agent about the unnecessary rough handling of the Mexican aliens. I'm not sure I understood him but he did say that there are cases now on file in California against the U.S. Immigration Service. And you, sometimes in trucking down the bandits who prey on the aliens, they do get an overwhelming urge to be unnecessarily violent.

There is one scene with Carlos Bronson where he attacks a moolium in a dirty restroom. Absolutely filthy . . . and he sticks the man's head in the dirty toilet bowl.

Absolutely revolting!

— —

"Borderline" has one redeeming feature for the theatregoer. It offers an understanding of why the Mexican aliens are big business.

The demand for cheap labor in the United States has made the smuggling of workers very lucrative. The illegal aliens pay the smugglers as much as $250 to $300 each to take them across the border from Mexico. Central and South Americans will pay as much as $1000 each. People sell everything they have or cluttle themselves. They become, in fact, indentured servants, much as the early white English pioneers who settled Maryland in the early 1700s.

In trying to get to the United States, the Mexicans are attacked, robbed, raped and killed by bandits along the border and many times you read about many who die from heat prostration, exhaustion and dehydration after the smugglers leave them without water in the endless Arizona desert.

After completing his role in "Borderline," Bronson reported to star with Lee Marvin and Angie Dickinson in his sixty-third film, "Death Hunt."

Charlie Bronson is starred as U.S. Border Patrolman in charge of a station on the U.S.-Mexico border.

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Thanksgiving dinner for 300 senior citizens

The Baltimore Urban League will hold its 8th Annual Thanksgiving Dinner for Senior Citizens on Wednesday, Nov. 26 at St. Mark's United Methodist Church located at Liberty Heights Avenue and Garrison Boulevard.

Starting at 12:30 p.m., the dinner which is a volunteer effort on the part of staff and friends of the League, is given in an effort to let residents in area senior homes know that they have not been forgotten during this important holiday season. Three hundred 300 such residents have been invited and are expected to attend the dinner which will afford them the opportunity to spend a couple of hours of fellowship with each other as well as enjoy a home cooked Turkey dinner.

Some of the residents who will attend this year's affair have attended previous dinners. As in the past, the menu will consist of turkey, ham, sweet potatoes, greens, a fruit basket, sweet potato pie and ice cream.

The Rev. Bernard Keels, pastor of St. Marks, has once again made the church's facilities available to the League. Miss Maggie C. Lane, Director of the League's Education and Youth Incentives Department, is serving as Chairperson for this year's dinner.

Thanksgiving is a special time of year for all of us. This is the League's way of ensuring that some of the area's nursing home residents have the opportunity to sit together in fellowship.

'Jazz Alive'

One of the most exciting developments in jazz is the growing and increasingly dynamic activity of women. National Public Radio's "Jazz Alive!" focuses on this multi-faceted movement with two programs highlighting the Third Annual Women's Jazz Festival in Kansas City, Mo. "Jazz Women '80, Part I, will be heard on NPR member stations nationwide beginning Nov. 16 and Part II beginning Nov. 23.

According to Jazz Alive! producer Tim Owens, "The 1980 WJF was much more than a smorgasbord of concerts. Kansas City's Crown Center Hotel was transformed into a kind of Chautauqua to celebrate, discuss, educate and inspire women in jazz. To convey that spirit we covered the festival somewhat differently. "Jazz Women '80" not only includes some of the very fine music presented but interviews from participants and a sampling of some of the really provocative exchange that went on in workshops and seminars.

The Lanspaden Club of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, 10th Epsilon Chapter at Towson State College are selling Poinsettias at $4 to benefit the AFRO's Mrs. Santa fund. Above, Eric Jones, Kevin Elliott, Jeff Perry, and Anthony Ball.

DEWAR'S PROFILE
A thirst for living . . . a taste for fine Scotch

DAVID HARDY
BORN: Plainfield, New Jersey, 1942.
HOME: West New York, New Jersey.
PROFESSION: Investigative/political reporter, New York Daily News.
RESPONSIBILITY: "To share reality with others, even though I'm mindful that reality is not always an inspiring spectacle."
STORY: "Be it a homicide, a zoning fight, a political scandal, or simply a tale of a compassionate Jersey City hot dog vendor, my job is sometimes thrilling, often onerous, occasionally perilous, but always interesting."
QUOTE: "Every human being should possess a sense of morality about society and accept personal responsibility for his or her role."
SCOTCH: Dewar's "White Label."
"On the rocks with a splash when relaxing with my chess computer."
David Hardy

Record Notes

Long-awaited and very much worth waiting for, Better Days is here.

The Blackbirds' first album in several years, "Better Days is a pop-soul masterpiece brought to you by one of the most influential and successful groups of the genre and their new producer, George Duke.

"George is a believer in us," asserts Blackbird drummer Keith Killgo. "He wanted us to be portrayed the way we wanted to be. His guidance and participation and opinions were invaluable."

Duke feels that "Better Days" is "one of the best productions I've ever done. The band has shown incredible musical growth, and this album has more punch, more depth, than anything they've done before."

(Of the Blackbirds' half-dozen previous Fantasy LPs, the last three—"City Life", "Unfinished Business", "Action"—were certified gold).

"Better Days" first single will be the highly appealing mid-tempo "What We Have Is Right", co-written by guitarist Orville Saunders. Other likely airplay choices will be the funky title track, "Longing for Your Love" (all the ingredients), and the ballad "Do It Girl."

The producer is simpatico, the production is impeccable, the performances smoke, this record's a smash.

"There's nothing like a Sonny Rollins concert . . .

Paris rankes with his native New York as one of Sonny Rollins' best-loved cities, and his performance last month at Paris's Theatre de la Ville can only be described as a triumph.

He hadn't appeared in the area since 1976, and the show was sold out two months in advance. Quite a few ticketless fans turned up nonetheless, determined to gain entry to the theater. Their fervent efforts to do so caused a near-riot and alarmed fire authorities to the point that the concert was nearly cancelled.

But the show did go on, and on, and on: Sonny played for almost four hours! (No problems, apparently, with the stagehands' union.)

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