SHOWTIME

Arena Players Production

'Wind Between the Houses' Outstanding

June Thorne, Christine Moore, Lourraine Brown and Nancy Barrick

By Sue Williams
AFRO Staff Writer

One of the most difficult theatrical feats to accomplish is to successfully produce and direct a good comedy. Judging from the somewhat ho-hum performances this writer has seen in the past of so-called comedies, one would assume that it is also difficult to act in a comedy and be, at the same time, believeable and convincing.

The Arena Players, however, in their current production of Maurice Hill's "A Wind Between the Houses" seem to have overcome the difficulties and come up with an outstanding piece of work which not only exposes their comedic talent but also manages to bring out the drama which is inherent in the most outstanding comedies as well.

Under the direction of Ed Terry, who is also the new artistic director of the Arena Players, "A Wind Between the Houses" is a journey into the lives of a family who has suffered a death. The mother of the family, Gracie Martin, is an eccentric old sweetheart who insists upon keeping the ashes of her deceased husband on the mantel piece in an urn.

To survive the grief of having lost her husband, Gracie treats the urn of ashes as though it were the person of her husband in the flesh. She talks to it, gives it cups of coffee, and generally continues to live her life with her husband as she did before his death.

Her behavior, of course, draws a myriad of reactions from those who know her best. Her best friend, Amelia Pritchard, treats the situation as though it were as common as drinking tea; Amelia understands the reasons why the urn has to be a part of Gracie's life and even goes so far as to speak to "Henry" herself. For Amelia, the friendship is one that has borne the test of time, and not worth being lost over the grief and eccentricities of Gracie.

The neighbors, of course, are a little taken aback by it all. Dubbed "the loony lady" by some of the neighborhood children, Gracie's behavior draws smirks and quips from those who know about it.

But the most important reactions to the situation lie in Gracie's own children, Sheila Martin, an aspiring socialite who is more concerned with her friends and status in the community than with her mother's well-being, and son John, a lawyer and would-be politician who has managed to get through life with an egotism that defies imagination.

Both Sheila and John, worried about their standing in the community, are upset over the notion that their "friends" might not think too highly of them if they know their mother is talking to an urn of ashes. Concurring with each other that something must be done, they craftily agree that the urn must be conveniently "broken" in a place where there can be no doubt about the finality of it all; as Sheila so eloquently puts it, there has always been a "wind between the houses" that is so noticeable and so strong that anything caught in it must certainly be destroyed forever.

With the occurrence of the "accident" it becomes apparent to all, including Gracie herself, that the "accident" was deliberately planned by her children. Gracie goes into a fit of depression and only comes out of it when Sheila, besieged by guilt feelings, arranges for the undertaker to bring another urn of ashes with the explanation that a mistake had been made in the first place, and the so-called "Henry" was not her husband at all. The dupe is enough to bring Gracie around, and the play closes with Gracie and her urn in one accord.

Director Terry apparently understands the mechanisms for the making of a good comedy. The anoointness of Sheila Winter, admirably played by Christine Moore, was offset by the realism and earthiness of her husband, played by John Hargrove. The two of them together were a perfect fit; Morton Winter's gentle chastisement of his wife's attitudes was just enough to make her seem less snooty and more comical.

John Martin, the son, played by Warren Dorsey, was again finely molded by Terry. His arrogance was beyond ridicule; his presence was perhaps the one constant reminder that the whole situation, while a comedy on stage, was a reality, or at least could be, in any of our lives.

And then there was Amelia, splendidly played by June Thorne, who came across as the sweet little old lady who was really a prototype of wisdom and love, blended into one.

Terry managed to mesh all of these complex characters into a delicate whole that would have been incomplete were any of them to be ignored. The actors seemed to have an understanding of the situation and therefore performed their roles not so much as parts but as statements of reality. Just as the comedic antics of Richard Pryor are so funny because of their truth, so were the characters in "Wind" funny because they seemed to understand the message beneath the laughter.

Terry seemed to have coached his actors to say their lines as though they were living the roles and not acting them. Because of that, there was no overacting, save perhaps the performacne of Terry Daniels, who played the Winters' 16-year old daughter. the lines, no effusion of movement. There was only the steady, unbeatable message that the strains of unreality we laughed so freely at in the play were in fact a very real part of all our lives.

Perhaps the most touching and tragic moment in the play came during the curtain call, when all the actors took their bows. There, in the midst of the victory of a job well done, was Terry's one last attempt to make a statement of the sadness inherent in the comedy itself; "Henry", the urn of ashes, took his bow in the arms of Gracie.

From comedy to reality to sadness, "Wind Between the Houses" is a must for anyone who can stand a comedy with a message.

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Whispers Shout, Lucas Wails

By Frederick I. Douglass

The Whispers, whose recording "The Beat Goes On" ranked among the five fastest selling Rhythm N' Blues tunes of 1980, and Carrie Lucas, the foxy, feline lady whose tandem recording with The Whispers "Just A Memory" has people dancing cheek-to-cheek nationwide, are bursting into 1981 with two of the hottest albums on the market.

Singing Group the Whispers and Carrie Lucas

The Whispers "Imagination" contains eight superlative jams that fill every groove on the record with exciting, pulasting music. The album's title track "Imagination" is an up tempo swinger ideally suited to the latest dances with its throbbing bass line and snappy beat. Of course, the focal point of "Imagination" is The Whispers tight harmony and soulful crooning. DeeJays in the more progressive doscos like Gatsby's are spinning this platter at maximum decibels back-to-back with "It's A Love Thing," an even better tune that even compels the most hard core wall flowers to get on the dance floor. "It's A Love Thing" is a brilliantly orchestrated tune with a catchy melody and infectious beat that could make it an even bigger hit for The Whispers than "The Beat Goes On." Refusing to relinquish their swinging groove, The Whispers just might have the whole nation doing "The Continental Shuffle" to yet another fingerpopping jam that concludes side one with a big bang. Side one also features "Say You (Would Love For Me Too), an outstanding ballad that features skat singing and an unique blending of voices that gives it beaucoup potential for being a crossover Top-40 hit.

Flipping the disc over to side two, we find The Whispers back into an up tempo groove on "I Can Make It Better," another potential hit for the group. The Whispers should also score big with "Up On Soul Train" written by Don Cornelius who undoubtedly will be blasting the tune every week on his TV dance show. Dancing to all the party hearty up tempo jams on 'Imagination" could wear out the most physically fit fa ncy stepper. So The Whispers cut you a little slack by crooning "Girl I Need You" and "Fantasy," two mellow ballads that will help you cool out and get back in touch with your partner.

The Whispers join Carrie Lucas to sing "Just Memory," an exceptionally torrid ballad that can be heard on Ms. Lucas' album "Portrait of Carrie." Teaming up Carrie Lucas and The Whispers on "Just A Memory" resulted in a classic recording that will sound good ten years from now. Carrie Lucas and The Whispers can also be heard in tandem on "Keep Smilin'," an upbeat smoker that is quickly gaining popularity in the nation's discos. While my favorite song on the album is the Leon Sylvers produced up tempo "Fashion," it is the tune "Career Girl" that has the potential of being Carrie's first major crossover hit. It seems that "Career Girl" has drawn the attention of many feminist groups and may be adopted by some of them as their "Fight song." The lyrics of "Career Girl" are right on time for women fighting to make it in a "man's world" and the beat is very danceable.

Watch out for The Whispers and Carrie Lucas in 1981!

Leslie Dockey is the lovely brownskinned vamp in the musical number "If You Never Been Vamped By A Brownskin, You've Never Been Vamped A'tall featured in the hit Broadway musical "Eubie" now playing at the Warner Theatre in Washington, D.C.

'Eubie' is good, but ...

By Gerri Bohanan

"Eubie" is a good play. Not broadway material, but a good play. The cast is great, but there are alot of great casts. What "Eubie" lacks is the word "exceptional". It's this word that separates hit plays from the others. There's nothing exceptional in the show. There aren't any exceptional songs, no exceptional dances, just a good solid show.

unfortunately, 'good' often doesn't make it to broadway. True there are good shows on broadway, but they started as exception shows. Shows about people of color involving people of color usually have to start as extraordinary.

This is the type of play I would like to see performed in local theatres and in our schools to educate people about black history and a living legend-Eubie Blake. But the money is on broadway.

There are members of the original cast in this touring group. They are Terry Burrell, Lewe Dockery, Jenifer Lewis, and Bernard Margh.

Ms Dockery gives the audiences a treat with her zany rendition of "If You've Never Been Vamped By A 'Brownskin, Then You've Never Been Vamped At All". She makes you either proud to be brownskin or wish you were!

Mr. Leonard Piggee who recently completed touring with the National Company of Vinette Carroll's "Your Arms Too Short Too Box With God,is worth mention. He has a great voice. When he sung "Low Down Blues" you can hear, feel and understand each word. His voice has a good gospel quality. He makes you want to pat your feet and wave your hand as many would in church.

The show stopper is Roderick Spencer Sibert. He's a short, chubby ball of sunshine who can sing and dance his behind off. Each time he appeared on stage, the yengery level soars. He is a performer. Prior to this engagement he worked with Diana Ross in the film version of "The Wiz" as the Head Scarecrow. He has also worked with Lena Horne. He was in both the broadway and touring productions of "Purlie", Raisin", "The Me Nobody Knows", and "Slow Dance On The Killing Ground".

The scenery and the costumes lacked imagination. The sound was off for an opening show.

The play is based on songs by the great Eubie Blake, the 97 year old musician.

"Eubie" is currently at the Warner Theatre in Washington D.C. and is worth the trip over there to see it. Go before it goes on broadway because then it will not be worth it.

Around the Town

By Vanessa Johnson

The Baltimore Museum of Art, will present the widely acclaimed Clarion Puppet Theatre who will perform its shadow puppet production of Kipling's "Jungle Book" adventure, "Kaa's Hunting," Sun., Jan. 18 at 3:00 p.m. in the Main Court of the Museum. For further information call 396-6314.

The Baltimore Ballet School has open registration for Spring Semester. Classes begin Jan. 19 and are open to children and adults. Classes are offered at two locations, 1398 W. Mt. Royal Ave. and 38 Sudbrook Lane in Pikesville. For more information call 225-0650.

For the last 20 years, jazz singers have been a dying breed in this country. The women — Ella, Sarah and a few others have survived while the men didn't. On Sun., Jan. 18, from 5 to 9 p.m. S and S Unlimited Musical Productions, in association with the Left Bank Jazz Society will present the melodius tunes of jazz singer Johnny Hartman, who will sing such great hits as "The Say," "Lush Life" and "You Are So Beautiful" at the Famous Ballroom, 1717 N. Charles St. Tickets are $6, Senior Citizen's over 65 may purchase tickets at a special discount price of $4. Members of the Left Bank Jazz Society may purchase tickets at $7. For more information call 947-2813.

Johnny Hartman

Custom cars from all over the United States and Canada, Super Custom and modified street machines, coupes - roadsters, vans, pick - ups, motorcycles, street rods, sedans, and race cars will be featured at the Mid - Atlantic Custom Car Expo, on Timonium Fairgrounds Exhibition Hall, Jan. 16 through 18.

An afternoon of Jazz, with compositions by Duke Ellington, John Coltrane, Grover Washington and many other jazz greats will be presented at Gallery 409, on Sun., Jan. 18, at 3:00 p.m., 409 N. Charles St. A Cultural arts, Urban Services Agency.

Wintry afternoons in January can be warmed up with a rich, high octane blend of oboes, trombones, and electronic music. On Sun., Jan. 18, at 3:00 p.m. in the Concert Hall at 1 E. Mt. Vernon Place, the Peabody presents Vladimir Ussachevsky, the pioneer of electronic music in America. Admission is $4.

Robots C-3PO and R2-D2 are hosts in "The Making of Star Wars," a behind-the-scenes account of how the movie was made, which will be screened at 7 p.m. on Wed., Jan. 21, at the Hamilton branch, 5910 Harford Road.

"Yojimbo," a sort of "High Noon" in a Jampanese setting centering on a samurai available for hire, will be screened at 8 p.m. on Thurs. Jan. 22, at the central library, 400 Cathedral St.

"Dick Tracy Meets Gruesome" will be screened along with three episodes from the 1939 "Buck Rogers" movie serial at 2 p.m. on Sat., Jan. 24, at the central library, 400 Cathedral St.

"Carnival in Flanders," in which the ladies of a Flemish town contrive to outwit the Spanish invaders, will be screened at 2 p.m. on Sun., Jan 25 at the central library, 400 Cathedral St.

Navy Band's winter series

The United States Navy Band will take this year's Winter Concert Series to the metropolitan suburban communities for a series of four successive Friday evening performances in January.

Future concerts will be as follows: Severna Park High School in Severna Park, Md., on Jan. 16 at 8:15 p.m.; Wheaton High School in Wheaton, Md., on Jan. 23 at 8 p.m. and Easton High School in Easton, Md., on Jan. 30 at 8 p.m.

All winter concert performances are free and open to the public. No tickets are required. For further information call 433-2394.

Events for Children

Laurel and Hardy decide to make some money as bootleggers during Prohibition in "Pardon Us," to be screened along with three episodes from the "Buck Rogers" movie serial (1939), at 2 p.m. on Sat., Jan. 17, at the Central Library, 400 Cathedral St.

Week of Jan. 18-25
Admission to all film programs is free.

A fascinating exploration into the nation's treasure house of more than fifty million books and other items, "The Library" (of Congress) will be screened at 2 p.m. on Sun. Jan. 18, at the central library, 400 Cathedral St.

"The Baddest Daddy in the Whole World", which takes a look at the life of championship fighter Muhammad Ali as he prepares for a bout, will be screened at 4 p.m. on Wed, Jan. 21, at the Walbrook branch, 3203 West North Ave.

Glynn Turman (foreground) portrays James Thornwell, an enlisted man to whom the United States Army administered L&D, in "Thornwell", to be broadcasted on "The Wednesday Night Movies" on Jan. 28. Pictured with Turman is James Thornwell, the man whom he portrays.

Jesse Walker

Since the election of Ronald Reagan, such liberal groups as the National Organization for Women, the American Civil Liberties Union and the NAACP have reported increases in membership. The NAACP, which has been waging a strong drive to build on its membership of 400,000 received a setback elsewhere last week when the Supreme Court of Mississippi found the organization liable for damages stemming from a boycott of white-owned businesses in Port Gibson 14 years ago. The court did rule, however, that the $1.2 million award at a trial in Chancery Court was excessive.

Clint Eastwood as Philo Beddoe and William Smith as Jack Wilson slug it out in a classic bare knuckle brawl from "Any Which Way You Can", a Warner Bros. Production.

At the Movies

'The Monkey Stole the Show'

By Gerri Bohanan

You have to see Clyde, the orangutan in Clint Eastwood's latest movie "Any Which Way You Can." He's the only thing in the movie worth seeing.

"Any Which Way You Can" is the sequel to "Any Which Way But Loose" and stars many of the same actors. Clyde is the most important of them. He displays more skill and acting ability than his human counterparts.

The movie is based on a continuous brawl between Philo Beddoe played by Clint Eastwood and Jack Smith played by William Smith. Some gamblers have gotten together and sponsored the street fight. High stakes are involved and Beddoe and Smith realize this. They understand this is strictly business. Beddoe represents the West Coast and Smith the east.

The problem is why pay to see a street brawl when you see them for free on the corner, at home and on T.V. Now Clyde is a fresh thought. People are not accustom to seeing orangutans.

Movies and T.V. are tools used to program and control minds. Understand this and take care in what you expose yourself to. Clyde is an animal-third cousin to man some say, who has developed a warm trusting relationship with a human. Are viewers being reprogrammed to be kinder and more understanding to members of the animal kingdom of which we are a part?

This is a creative idea and I thank Mr. Eastwood for this positive image. Brawls on the other hand is now a part of our daily existence. I once enjoyed Eastwood's shoot-em ups. Now they are common place within our communities.

If we must emulate what we see and what we are exposed to then understanding animals is a good place to start.

Now the Hippodrome Theatre where the flick is currently showing is for animals. Again there is a place that caters to pigs. It's loud, noisy, and dirty. The bathrooms are scrappy and the popcorn was stale. This is a part of the programming mentioned earlier in this article. You do not have to treat a theatre like a playground nor does the management have to allow this condition to continue. Notice what and where you view.

Weekend TV Watching

By Vanessa Johnson
Friday

John Davidson: Guest include tennis player Arthur Ashe and his wife. 4:30-6:00 p.m.·Ch. 13.

Benson: The governor's disarming sister Libby, flabbergasts the staff with her successful bid to have Katie sent away to boarding school. Starring Robert Guillaume. 8:00-8:30 p.m. · Ch. 13.

Sanford: When Fred clutches his chest and exclaims "This is the big one," for once he isn't kidding. Starring Redd Foxx. 8:30-9:00 p.m. · Ch. 11.

Saturday

Fat Albert: The gang falls for Edward's tall tales, then discovers he can't back them up. Hosted by Bill Cosby. 11:30-12:00 p.m. · Ch. 2.

Soul Train: Guests are Al Green, the Dells and La Belle. 12:30-1:30 p.m. · Ch. 11.

From Jumpstreet: Host Oscar Brown, Jr. is joined by Carmen McRae and Al Jarreau who trace the development of jazz singing. 3:00-3:30 p.m. · Ch. 22 and 67.

Wide World of Sports: The Harlem Globetrotters invade Holywood. 5:00-6:30 p.m. · Ch. 13.

Don Kirshner's Rock Concert: Performances by Crusaders, Robert Guillaume, and comic Franklyn Ajaye. 1:30-3:00 a.m. · Ch. 4.

Sunday

Movie: "Skin Game," the accents on nature in this pre-Civil War yarn about a pair of itinerant con artists who pose as a plantation owner and a slave for sale. Starring Lou Gosset, Jr. 10:30-12:30 p.m. · Ch. 11.

Sportsworld: Wilt Chamberlain and Marquez Haynes join Meadowlark Lemon and the Bucketeers for some basketball hijinks. 3:00-4:30 p.m. · Ch. 11.

Movie: "The Choirboys," are some frazzled Los Angeles cops whose nocturnal binge are depicted in this movie edited for TV. Starring Lou Gossett. 9:00-11:30 p.m. · Ch. 13.

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Bill Lane in Hollywood

GORDON parks, Sr. who has distinguished himself in his lifetime as a photographer, author and film director, wound up his stay in the ski spa of Vail, Colorado and headed back to New York City where other photographers snap pictures often of him dancing with the Marajani pantsmaker Gloria Vanderbilt.

Parks' sojourn in Vail was spent playing tennis with his grandson alain 19, a tennis instructor, and Parks' daughter Leslie, 13, an ace ski lassie whom Parks says " is headed for the Olympics." Their stay in Vail was filmed by a television crew from Germany.

Parks seldom picks up his camera these days, except, like Lamont McLemore of the 5th Dimension, to do some special snapshooting. He did a fashion layout recently for a national magazine. He says most of his time in recent months has been spent completing a gian white-hero "Shannon," which he says will be made into a movie which he will produce and direct. The veteran film man says "black writers these days must know how to write what somebody will buy. But, for the life of me, I could not help pulling a black character in the story, a man who almost steals the show."

About Gloria Vanderbilt, he chuckled: "I've gone through three marriages with her. She's been my ace sidekick for years."

So don't look for Gordon Parks to have any trouble finding anybody to finance any movie production he cares to launch.

HERE in Hollywood the star of the film "Penitentiary," one suddenly internationally popular Leon Isaac Kennedy, is fully into filming work for his next motion picture, "Body & Soul," a remake of the historic prizefight movie which starred John Garfield and Lilli Palmer, in 1947. The new version was written by Leon, and the movie is being produced jointly by Kennedy Productions and Golan-Globus.

And the film will help Leon to realize one of his loftiest dreams: playing a lover (real-life) if his real-life wife, the beautiful Jayne Kennedy. Also starring in the flick will be Muhammad Ali and Peter Lawford.

Once again Leon will be cast as a boxing whiz, as he was in "Penitentiary" under producer-director Jamaa Fanaka. But this time the man directing i. l. Kennedy through his acting paces is the ace new black director, George Bowers, who recently directed the Trish Van Devere-Mirror thriller, "The Hearse."

FRED Williamson is also getting set to roll the cameras again, this time in a sports action flick starring himself and reportedly Jim Kelly and Jim Brown. More on this later. But if all reports are correct, it should be a grand winner at the boxoffice.

WHEN the inter-racial marriage of singers - composers Brian and Brenda Russell ended in divorce in 1978 a lot of their fans were saddened that their dualistic music output was also ended.

The couple had a four-year - old daughter, Lindsay. The other day little Lindsay was flower girl in Rifle, Colorado when her dad Brian got married again this time to "Charlie's Angels" star Cheryl Ladd, whose own daughter, Jordan, 5, was also a flower girl at the wedding.

LOIS Todd headed off to Honolulu for a three-week winter vacation, where the balmy breezes blow. Lois said the climate had become too hot for December in Los Angeles. When a pal asked her why didn't she instead vacation in the midwest or East, she retorted, "I want to cool off, not freeze!"

YOUNG Santa Monica iron-pumper Wiley Brooks ended his holiday exhibition at Universal Studios where, weighing only 130 pounds, he had been billed as "The World's Puniest Weightlifter."

LINDA Clifford's recordings are now being distributed by Capitol Records. Robert Benson' Guillaume joining other stars hosting the "Weekend With The Stars" telethon for cerebral palsy airing over 125 stations across the U.S. and Canada.

Freda Payne, after closing her stay at the Parisian Room here, returned to her Detroit hometown for a post-holiday bon session at Studio '54. The same town where Stevie Wonder had a sell-out performance booked at the Cobo Arena eight nights later. The Wonder appearance was set to directly precede his arrival in Washington, D.C. to lead his campaign for an official national holiday honoring Dr. Martin Luther King for his lifetime crusade for love and peace, the crusade which won him the Nobel Prize. As it stands now, only Jesus Christ has such a holiday for such a crusade. And MLK was only a mortal man.

Earth, Wind & Fire synthesizer, Larry Dunn, practices in his recording studio on the Casiotone M-10, a musical keyboard instrument capable of reproducing the sounds of a piano, organ, violin and flute.

"Earth, Wind & Fire" Synthesizer selects Casitone

Stevie Wonder

Both the fans and the surroundings are different on virtually every concert appearance of "Earth, Wind and Fire," but for Larry Dunn, keyboard leader and synthesizer with the Los Angeles-based group, one thing is constant.

"At home or on the road, I can count on the good vibes and consistency with my Casiotone M-10," said Dunn, one of the nine members of the famed group.

This 2½ octave, eight-note polyphonic keyboard combines the classical sounds of the piano, organ, violin and flute, all on one eletronic instrument. Any of the four preset tones of this 32-key instrument are selectable by the Denver native at a touch.

Dunn has been with the internationally acclaimed organization for nine years, during which time the group has recorded 10 albums, plus four singles. Their latest album offering is "Faces."

A talent of wide appeal, "Earth, Wind and Fire" is led by Maurice White, a singer, percussionist and drummer. Also appearing with the group are two of Maurice's brothers, Verdine (bass) and Fred (drums).

Additional members include Andrew Woolfolk, reeds; Johnny Graham and Al McKay, guitar; and Philip Bailey and Ralph Johnson, vocal percussion. An augmented horn section includes Louis Satterfield, Mike Davis, Don Myrick and Mike Harris.

Before coming on stage for each concert, the group meditates and prays.

The performance itself is intermingled with acts of magic from group members.

"Earth, Wind and Fire" is under recording contract to ARC (American Recording Company). Records and tapes are distributed by Columbia Records.

Freddie Williamson

UP in Oakland, California several members of the Raiders football team are helping in the drive to raise funds to buy the regal Jenny Lind Hall to be a permanent home for the Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame. The purchase price is $345,000. Kaiser Aluminum already donated $50,000. What about Safeway? Its main headquarters are in Oakland, Huh?

The fellows active in baseball, however, have it better, a la Dave Parker and Reggie Jackson, the latter displaying a natural comic flair in his Panasonic TV commercials. Dave Winfield will shortly join the crowd. And football aces have never had it so good jumping up and down on luggage in TV commercials.

NBC-TV has been almost secretly selecting blacks to view the four-hour taped series it filmed months ago called "Sophisticated Gents," a fine Melvin Van Peebles tele-drama. The network didn't do that when it decided to show that "Uptown Saturday Night" pilot with a grinning, eye-rolling Cleavon Little. And despite nationwide protests television came on out with "Beulah Land." But "Sophisticated Gents" is a rather positive story about blacks, and some of the dialogue rankles some whites, in television, and they are scared of just racist, or both. Black togetherness frightens many whites, the way it did Jimmy Carter's foreign adviser. NBC-TV says it will "maybe" let the two-night feature air in the summer of 1981, during vacation time when fewer people watch TV. And worth also looking into is the reason the same network is not releasing Maya Angelou's "Sisters."

SAN Francisco's famed two wide receivers, the Tons of Fun, are o out with their new Fantasy album, "Backatcha." And the Pointer Sisters threesome are getting much TV exposure of late, their latest a new "Love Boat" segment.

James Wagner to sing in opera at Loew's

James Wagner, winner of the 1974 National Metropolitan Opera Auditions, will sing the role of Belmonte in the production "The Abduction from the Seraglio" at the former Loew's Theatre in Richmond Jan. 20.

James Wagner

"The Abduction . . . is one of Mozart's earliest comic operas, yet it contains some of the most demanding arias written for the human voice.

Wagner, a tenor, won the regional Met audition in 1974 in Los Angeles where he lives. Later this year he went on to the nationals which he won.

In 1978, he was awarded first prize in the international Mozart competition in Salzburg. He later sang in the Salzburg Summer Festival. Wagner is currently singing with opera houses in Hamburg and Kassel in West Germany. He also makes guest appearances in opera houses throughout Europe.

"The Abduction . . . is being sponsored by the Opera Alliance of Richmond. Ticket information may be obtained by calling 353-4387.

The Richmond Sinfonia under conductor Thomas Bailey will provide the accompaniment for the production which takes place at the Virginia Center for the performing Arts, formerly the Loew's Theatre at Sixth and Grace Streets.

Jesse Walker's N.Y.

NEW YORK — Donald E. Register, a graduate of the Howard University School of Music was the director of the 35-member ITT choral group from ITT World Headquarters in NYC that appeared at the White House Christmas Pageant of Peace in Washington's President's Park in New York, the interracial choir sang Christmas carols at ITT headquarters, at 320 Park Avenue, St. Patrick's Cathedral, Bellevue Hospital, the Ran American Building and the Lincoln Square Community Center.

One of the main reasons radio station WBLS-FM, the flagship station of black-owned Inner City Broadcasting, remains the top station in the metropolitan area, in addition to its choice of music, is its imaginative advertising. The ads currently seen on bus shelters are the sexiest in town.

Members of Con Edison's Conservation services performed an energy audit of the Black Theatre Alliance's five-story building on West 42nd Street. Slides taken of the audit will be used in Con Ed's presentation to non-profit theatre-dance groups on Feb. 2 when a conference, "Energy Use, Cost and Conservation," will be co-sponsored by BTA and Con Ed. Black Theatre Alliance serves 49 member companies in New York City and has another 22 members outside the metropolitan area. Brooke Stephens is its new executive director.

Since you can't make the inauguration and all its festivities, you can catch the pre-inauguration show on Jan. 19 with Frank Sinatra as entertainment director. ABC-TV will present it live from 10 p.m. to midnight. Among the artists will be Met Opera singer Grace Bumbry, country singer Charlie Pride and dancer-actor Ben Vereen with Johnny Carson emcee.

The Jackie Robinson Foundation is presenting its first Jackie Robinson Memorial Gospel Celebration on Jan. 31, at the Cathedral of St. John The Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th Street. The Rev. Jesse Jackson, Nikki Giovanni and Adeyemi Lytheott will serve as co-hosts. Among the artist will be The Jackie Robinson Foundation Memorial Mass Choir created especially for this event with participation from choirs from the metropolitan areal conducted by Eugene Cooper.

Robert L. Gore, Jr. has been appointed deputy director and television manager of station WNYC-TV. A Brooklyn resident, but formerly acting radio manager at WGBH-TV in Boston, he will have the new task of defining new areas of service for public television. Meanwhile, the Rev. Thomas Streitferdt, Jr. who conducts a Harlem-based religious group, True Witness Ministries, Inc., has asked the FCC for a hearing to see if the city shouldn't lose its license to run the station. It's set for Jan. 29 in Washington, D.C.

Theodore Ledbetter, a Washington businessman and former operator of a Virgin Islands TV station, has reached an agreement to operate a new TV station in Washington. With financing from Clint Murchison, a Texas millionaire, and the Field Enterprises Co. and several television stations, Mr. Ledbetter hopes to have Channel 50 operating in seven months.

Press agent-newsman Major Robinson was caught on ABC-TV's "To Tell The Truth." New Year's Eve morning. He posed as a White House barber.

Although he was a guest, Sir James Randolph thrilled everyone at the annual dinner-dance of The Fellas Scholarship and Social Club at the Marina del Rey with his solid singing, backed by the Ron Anderson Band. Popular club gave out six scholarships to high school grads.

Preliminaries for the Colgate Women's Games, the largest series of track and field meets in the world, begin Friday, Jan. 19 at the Pratt Institute Field House in Brooklyn. The finals of the Colgate Women's Games VII will be held at Madison Square Garden on March 2.

The Yankees' Reggie Jackson and the National Urban League's Vernon Jordon are serving as honorary vice-chairmen for the President-elect Reagan's New York inaugural ball, to be held at the Waldorf-Astoria. They're serving along with such Democrats as Mayor Koch, Gov. Carey, Lt. Gov. Cuomo and Sen. Pat Maynihan.

Members of the Cardozo High School Band, most from Washington's inner city and from single and low income households, had the thrill of their young lives on their recent six-day journey to California where they performed in the Tournament of Roses band festival, experienced campus life at UCLA, toured Universal Studios, performed at Disneyland and marched in the 92nd Tournament of Roses parade on New Year's Day. And for many, it was their first plane ride.

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