'River Niger' playwright, Joseph Walker, presents show at Towson State

Joseph H. Walker who wrote "The River Niger" which won 16 Broadway awards and grossed millions on Broadway plus was made into a movie with Cicely Tyson and James Earl Jones, is now at Towson State University.

He is teaching "Introduction to Acting" and Friday and Saturday Feb. 19-20 is presenting his own group "10th World" in a jazz fusion, theatre and dance presentation in Towson's main Fine Arts Theatre.

Walker is also writing a new play for Towson production "Before the Middle of Things". He is auditioning a mixed cast and will start rehearsals March.

This new play is jazz-fusion, a rock musical based on the story of Oedipus. Walker says it is an African story which he calls a musical tragi-satire. His wife Dorothy will be musical director.

Joseph Walker presenting musical at Towson, Friday, Saturday.

Joseph Walker is a native of Washington, D.C. where his father, Joseph Alexander Walker, was a painter for the Navy and his mother, Floreinne Walker was a clerk for the government.

He graduated from Howard University in 1956 and completed 27 graduate hours in philosophy completing all requirements for a Masters before he became disenchanted.

"I don't know why I took up philosophy," he mussed. "My old man had Will Durant's "The Story of Philosophy" and I must have been on a ego trip. I was so bad in school and it helped me understand what others did not. It did give me an edge as a writer... the analytical things that develop."

Walker served in the Air Force and was discharged as a Second Lieutenant in 1960. He then received his Masters of Fine Arts at Catholic U in Speech and Drama and then taught in the public schools of D.C. and later in the public schools of New York.

In 1966, he studied voice and vocal reproduction with Brooks Alexander and joined Voices Inc. where he was lead singer and narrator, and dramatic director.

From 1969 to 1975, Walker taught in the Speech and Theatre Department of C.C.N.Y. where he met Moses Gunn who introduced him to Douglas Turner Ward, director of the Negro Ensemble Company. gthey produced his play "The Harangues" to open their 1969-70 season. His play "Ododo" opened the 1970-71 season.

In 1971-72, Walker and his wife, Dorothy A. Dinroe co-produced "Yin Yang" at the Afro-American Studio. Shortly after this Douglas Turner Ward opened "The River Niger" for the 1972-73 Negro gensemble season. The play moved to the Brooks Atkinson Theatre on Broadway in 1973.

Olufunmilayo and Company will give a dance performance Sunday, Feb. 21 at 3 p.m. in the main hall of the Baltimore Museum of Art. They will be doing African Dances from West Africa and the cultures of black America.

Lakeside was here!

Lakeside, the Solar Records stars are on a national tour to touch bases with record stores, radio stations and Entertainment Editors throughout the U.S.

They're traveling in a luxury bus to look like a desert caravan (the Silver Eagle) which sleeps 12, has three bedrooms, a lounge, two TV's, tape deck and ice cooler.

Norman Beavers, keyboards, vocals was the spokesman for the group who told the AFRO that the nine-men band was fully costumed for their visits to the media.

The group left Los Angeles the first of the month and will be out until the end of February. It took 16 hours for the trip to Baltimore. From here they visit Philly and New York.

They are preparing for a trip to Africa including Nigeria. They will also visit Holland and Belgium.

Don't be misled by the cover of progressive funk band Lakeside's "You'r Wish Is My Command" LP, released by the Elektra-Asylum-distributed Solar label in December '81. Despite the depiction of the band's nine members in Arabian costumes, the album does not feature Middle Eastern music. Beneath the colorful trappings (they were portrayed as cowboys on their 1979 "Rough Riders" album and as pirates on their 1981 "Fantastic Voyage" LP) lies a solid funk sound, laced with tight four-part harmonies and distinctive instrumental work.

The Los Angeles-based band's fondness for motifs underscores their affection for flashy showmanship. Signed to Solar during the late '70s disco era, when much dance music was being churned out by all-but-faceless groups, the band always strove for an individual identity. "In a time when everybody was going for the quick dollar, we were trying to keep live music alive," says vocalist Mark Wood of the band's stage shows. "Some of our songs were picked up by the disco crowd, but in a way, we were actually an anti-disco act - we were too visual to be one."

"Your Wish Is My Command" now 13 on the record charts, translates this visual impact onto vinyl. The songs run the gamut from the dance grooves of the title track to the soul balladry of "I'll Be Standing By." All tunes on the LP are written by Lakeside's members, with the exception of the group's slow-burning remake of the Lennon-McCartney classic, "I Want To Hold Your Hand," released in mid-December as the album's first single in second place on th charts.

The founding members of Lakeside (vocalists Mark Wook, Thomas Oliver Shelby and Tiemeyer McCain, guitarist Stephen Shockley and keyboardist Norman Beavers) adopted their current name after gigging in their native Dayton, Ohio area as teenagers. "Those early years down in the trenches gave us a real education," Wood recalls. "We did just about everything - playing one-nighters, opening for name acts that came into the Dayton area, gigging here, gigging there." In the early '70s, the Ohio Lakeside Express (as the group was named then) had become an experienced local group and was ready to move on. So, packing their instruments into a rented U-Haul truck with 70 in savings between them, they headed West to try their luck in Los Angeles (after the move to L.A., their ranks were increased with the addition of vocalist Otis Stokes, bassist Marvin Craig, drummer Fred Alexander and percussionist Fred Lewis).

Through the aid of guitarist Shockley's contacts in L.A., the band found work as the house band for a local hotel, performing for room and board. Soon, they began to land outside bookings, shortening their name to Lakeside as they performed at clubs such as Maverick's Flat. Their reputation as a strong live act attracted the interest of ABC Records producer Frank Wilson, who signed them to the label.

The Band's initial recording project didn't turn out as well as they hoped. ABC released the "Lakeside" LP in 1977, but the internal shifts taking place within the label then hindered promotion of the album. The band, too, was not as focused musically as it would be in later years. After extensively touring Europe and Canada, the band concluded that they needed a touch more originality to separate them from their peers. "There was something missing," Woods syas. "Our past recorded projects had been fine, but they weren't Lakeside."

Toward that goal, Lakeside began writing songs reflecting the high-energy spirit of their concerts. "We always wanted to recreate the sounds and excitement of an amusement park," says Wood. "So, we started writing songs that were full of that kind of excitement." The next step for the band was signing with manager Dick Griffey's new Solar label in 1978. Their debut LP on Solar, 1978's "Shot Of Love," demonstrated how much Lakeside had grown in recent years - the now-gold album yielded the band's first hit single, "All The Way Live."

Kermit Frazier visits AFRO

Visitor to the Afro office this week was Kermit Frazier, playwright here in Baltimore to supervise his play "Sacred Places", a TV production by CH 2 and the Arena Players as part of Black History Month.

Frazier is no stranger to Baltimoreans as an actor and writer. He worked with Center Stage's Young People's Theatre in 1979-80 when they presented his work "Dream King".

Center Stage presented his "Sacred Places" in a workshop in January, 1981. Currently he is an English professor at New York University.

Frazier grew up in D.C. where he attended Ballou High School. He received his B.A. and M.A. from Syracuse University and his MFA from New York University.

He is the son of Bernard. and Martha Frazier of D.C. His father is a retired machinist and his mother a school administrator.

The play "Sacred Places" was presented at the Williamstown Theatre Festival in August, 1981.

Frazier says he met Sam Wilson of Arena Players thru Center Stage. "Sacred Places" is set in 1968 and is about two college students and how their relationship is affected by political events.

Lakeside gave press party at Hilton, downtown and visited WWIN, WEBB and record stores in the area.

—more happening

(Continued from Page 9)

Row". He has the role of one of the derelicts, a hulking, retarded man who like Steinbeck's Lenny in "Of Mice And Men" is presented as one of life's genuine innocents. Hazel accepts everything told him at absolute face value, dresses as Abraham Lincoln when he's advised he's destined to become president of the United States.

— —

The Jacksons singing group has filed suit in Los Angeles Superior Court against all those they claim were connected with the taping of a concert date in England in 1979.

Claiming invasion of the right of publicity and unauthorized use of name and likeness, the suit contends the Jacksons agreed to allow only one BBC showing of a Feb. 10, 1979 performance, "The Jacksons Live at the Rainbow".

— —

Since the end of World War II, Germany has become more receptive to black entertainers probably because so many black soldiers were in the forces that liberated Germany and many stayed in the occupation forces.

American singer Joan Faulkner, with great looks and a powerful voice has been making a career break through on the night club circuit. Dean Dixon, who formerly conducted the Hessischer Rundfunk TV symphony is the first black to be signed as a regular conductor with a major German symphony. Writer Ken Kelly is writing deamas for the English-language section of Hessischer Rundfunk and actor-artists Joe Bunche is a regular on German radio-dramas.

— —

Rudolph Scott, a longtime friend and chauffeur of the famous Ward Singers, was buried January 1982 in Philadelphia. Scott who started as a part-time driver in the late 1940s at age 16 while a student in high school also chauffeured other entertainers such as James Cleveland, Mahalia Jackson, Stevie Wonder, Aretha Franklin and Teddy Pendergrass. He also served Robert Kennedy and two presidents, Jimmy Carter and Lyndon B. Johnson.

— —

ON D.C. ICE- Ice Capades featuring Tai Babilonia and Randy Garner thru Sunday, Feb. 21 Capital Center, Landover, Md

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Black History Calendar

19 Supreme Court decrees due process of law on this day in 1923.

20

Senator Hiram R. Revels, first black to sit in the U.S. Congress was born this day in 1827, in Fayetteville, N.C.

— —

Civil-rights crusader Frederick Douglass, died on this day in 1895.

21 Barbara Jordan, retired state senator, born this day in 1936. A graduate of Boston University.

22

Vashti Turley Murphy, born this day in 1894, co-founder of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority and wife of the late AFRO publisher Dr. Carl Murphy.

23

W.E.B. DuBois, author and historian of Washington, D.C. was born this day in 1868.

— —

Tuskegee Conference was organized on this day in 1892.

24 The Newport Rhode Island members of the Shiloh Baptist Church held the first service in their new church building on this day. Purchased for $2,000 the building was erected in 1796.

— —

Daniel A. Payne, reformer and educator was born this day in 1811 and died 1893.

25 Ralph Metcalfe, track star, set a record on this day in 1933 when he competed the 60 meter run in 6.7 seconds. He was a member of the 1932 and 1936 Olympic teams. He was a State Senator for Illinois, died in 1978.

— —

Muhammad Ali formerly known as Cassius Clay wins heavyweight crown on this day in 1964.

Meet Junior...

'Mama Used to Say'

Mother's sound advice has helped many people achieve their life's goal. Junior Giscombe parlayed what his "Mama Used To Say," into a sensational hit record that has already reached the summit of England's funk and roll charts, and will surely echo that feat here in the States.

With Junior's signing with Mercury Records, the United Kingdom's new Crown Prince of BritFunk spearheads a new British-American tie in the universal and ever expanding tradition of black oriented soul music.

Long before the multi-textured "Mama Used To Say" was conceived and recorded by Junior, he had an early desire to be a singer. His odyssey towards stardom began when he, at the age of 14, and his eleven member vocal group The Idelics practiced their Jackson Five inspired harmonies.

An assortment of circumstances caused the demise of The Idelics, and a fleeting attempt with another band named Atlantis, as Junior sought a more stable economic endeavor. Recording with Atlantis on the Firesign label did bring him into New York, however.

Once in New York, fate decided to smile on the ever resilient Junior, as an A & R man from Mercury-Phonogram Records familiar with Junior's previous work, offered to sign him to Mercury's London outlet. It became ironic that British raised Junior got his biggest break in the English market while living in America.

Mercury lost no time teaming Junior with England's stellar funk musicians, and Bob Carter, who produced Linx, a top shelf British funk group, was hired to produce the Junior single as well. The funky and danceable "Mama Used To Say," penned by Junior, is the first offspring of the Giscombe-Carter union...but not the last.

"Mama Used To Say" reflects the many changes and influences Junior has experienced in his determined pursuit of his art. It is the vehicle that has put him in orbit, and his brand of funk will keep him there.

TV Watching

Vanessa Johnson is on vacation. Her column will appear next week.

'Colored Girls' on PBS

The award-winning Broadway hit by Ntozake Shange, "For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide-When The Rainbow is Enuf" comes to public TV Tuesday, Feb. 23 at 9:30 p.m. on stations of the Maryland Center for Public Broadcasting—TV 22, 28, 31, 36, 62 and 67. This "American Playhouse" presentation repeats Sat. Feb. 27 at 10:00 p.m.

The 90-minute presentation to be aired during Black History Month has a principal cast of seven, including Ms. Shange and Tarzana Beverley, who won the 1976 Tony Award as Best Featured Actress in a Play for her performance in the Broadway version of the play.

"For Colored Girls...", is a "choreopoem" with music and movement distilled from the personal vision of Ntozake Shange. This drama intimately involves the audience in the lives of American black women, their pain, terror, warmth and ultimately their lov. Ms Shange's womn come from desparate socio-economic backgrounga in Detroit, Houston, Charleston, Harlem, San Francisco and St. Louis. They represent the broad spectrum of the black woman's experience in America, and in the course of the telecast, these women uncover some universal truths about living and loving.

Free films

"Cosmos" (No. 7): The Backbone of Night," in which Dr. Carl Sagan describes the scientific outburst of ancient Ionian physicists, will be screened at 6:30 p.m. on Monday (Feb. 22) at the Light Street Branch, 1251 Light St.

— —

"The Joe Louis Story" will be screened at 3:30 p.m. on Tuesday (Feb. 23) at the Pennsylvania Avenue Branch, North and Pennsylvania Aves.

— —

Two segments of "Black Music in America," presenting outstanding twentieth-century black performers, will screened at 3:30 p.m. on Wednesday (Feb. 24) at the Pennsylvania Avenue Branch, North and Pennsylvania Aves.

— —

"Emperor Jones," starring Paul Robeson in Eugene O'Neill's drama of a Pullman porter turned king, will be screened at 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday (Feb. 24) at the Lafayette Square Center, 1530 W. Lafayette Ave.

— —

"Beware," early musical with a black cast featuring Louis Jordan, will be screened at 4 p.m. on Wednesday (Feb. 24) at the Forest Park Branch, 3023 Garrison Blvd.

— —

"Black Music in America: The Seventies" and the soul segment of "Body and Soul" will be screened at 3:30 p.m. on Thursday (Feb. 25) at the Waverlea Branch, 3303 W. North Ave.

— —

"Wuthering Heights," Emily Bronte's stormy romance starring Lord Laurence Olivier and Merle Oberon, will be screened at 7 p.m. on Thursday (Feb. 25) at the Forest Park Branch, 3303 Roland Ave.

— —

"The Hidden Fortress" a tale of warriors and smugglers in medieval Japan, directed by Akira Kurosawa, will be screened at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday (Feb. 25) at the Central Library, 400 Cathedral Street.

On 'Another World'

Paley

Christian

Robert Christian and Petronia Paley are now the cast of NBC-TV's continuing daytime drama "Another World" (Mondays-Fridays, 2-3 p.m. NYT). Christian, who plays Bob Horgan, Larry Ewing's police partner, was first seen on Jan. 7. Paley made her first appearance on Nov. 6 as Quinn Harding, a successful executive at Black Hawk. She and Horgan — a married man — have recently become romantically involved.

Christian won an Obie Award for his performance in the Off-Broadway production of "Blood Knot," and the Audelco and St. Clare Bayfield awards for his work in "Coriolanus" at the Public Theatre and Shakespeare in the Park, in New York.

He appears in the theatrical features "Prince of the City," "Bustin' Loose," "...And Just for All" and "The Seduction of Joe Tynan." On Broadway, he had roles in "Piaf," "All God's Chillun Got Wings," "An Evening with Richard Nixon And...", "Does the Tiger Wear a Necktie?" and "We Bombed in New Haven." He starred in the television production "Muggable Mary," opposite Karen Valentine. His other TV credits include roles in "All My Children," "King" and "Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry."

Daytime drama fans will remember Paley for her roles as Dr. Jessie Rawlings in "The Doctors" and Harriet Johnson in "One Life to Live." She appeared on Broadway in the Negro Ensemble Company's "The First Breeze of Summer" and re-created her role of Hope when the production appeared on television as part of the "Theatre in America" series.

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D.C. Curtain Calls

By Charles Farrow

The reception at the Corcoran Gallery last week was a celebration of the art of Black Americans. A lavishly appointed dessert buffet had to take a back seat to the collection of fine art by previously unknown Black artists.

Much of the art seen in the exhibition Black Folk Art in America 1930-1980 was characterized by the Minister-Counselor of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China Wang Zicheng as "country side" art—the kind of art that "in his country reflected the feelings of the people, the less sophisticated artist.

To say the work by James Hampton who created the fantastic "Throne of the Third Heaven," Elijah Pierce, William Traylor, Sister Gertrude Morgan, George Williams, George White, David Butler, Leslie Payne and Ulysses David, was unsophisticated or reflected "primitivism" or even deserved the kind of impatient comment by a teenager, "I left that kind of work behind me in elementary school," suggests that there is a hard and fast rule as to the definition of what is art.

The show was provocative and in the many mediums used by the artists, there was reflected a positive, soul swelling observation and a need to realize some inner feeling held fast and dear.

What kind of label has been tacked on this exhibition, is not quite certain. Testimonial art perhaps, the act of testifying as to one's reasons for being, for living can be seen in the individual pieces.

Revelationary art was the impetus felt by the various craftspeople. There was an feeling that reached from outside of their body and their work was that answer.

The exhibit seen in the Corcoran forces the question, how does its effect differ from the original placement from where it was wrenched. Has the move enhanced or reduced its power?

Socially the resplendent gathering was a certain charmer. Moving about the stately hall were many of Washington's prime movers and included Ernie Green, Ms. Edna Long, Vernard Gray, Ms. Susan McDaniel, Jennifer Farrow and Ms. Audrey Hinton.

The effect of the show left many viewers speechless and perhaps one should leave it that way. Several hundred pieces of art will be on exhibit until March 28. The Corcorran Gallery is located at 17th and New York Ave., N.W.

Dance Menagerie at Cloisters

The Cloisters Children's Musuem presents a full afternoon program in its continued celebration of Black History Month, Sunday, Feb. 21, at 1:30 b. 21. At 1:30 p.m. The New Baltimore Minstrel Community Theatre will perform "Black Reflections: A Collection of Songs, Dramatic Readings and Short tories." Then, at 2:30 p.m. The Dance Menagerie will perform dances from the West African countries of Senegal, Nigeria, Guinea and Ghana. The dancers are accompanied by a corp of drummers playing traditional rhythms.

The Dance Menagerie is the Cultural Arts Program of the Echo House Foundation, Inc. They are but one of the many community projects provided to serve the community by this non-profit organization.

Dance Menagerie was founded in 1978 by Aina Delphine Sneed, who is currently the Artistic and Program Director. The company offers both children and adults the opportunity to learn creative African/American art forms—in community settings.

Admission to the Cloisters is free to children; a donation is requested of adults.

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-Westsiders

(Continued from Page 9)

candy drives to raise money.

Mr. Pitts, Commander, has 30 years experience with the Boy Scouts of America and has received the Silver Beaver Award—highest recognition award by the Scouts. He is superintendent of the Sunday school of his church, and president of the neighborhood association.

Sponsored by the Children's Theater Association (CTA), the Children's Fair will also include three performing areas for dance, drama, and class demonstrations. Puppets, magicians, and clowns will perform. Hours are 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

February is Black History Month

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