Best Bets

Apple Festival Bake-Off

The Baltimore Farmer's Market is featuring its fourth Fall Apple Festival on Sunday, October 21 from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the northwest corner of Pratt and President Streets. There will be a lot of attractions and the highlight will be the Apple Bake-Off competition. For further details call 837-4636.

DSO Celebrity Series

The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Maestro David Zinman, will perform along with the BSO Chorus and four guest soloists on October 25 and 26 at the Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall. Both concerts will begin at 8:15 p.m. For more information call 837-5691.

Graduate And Professional School Fair

Seven Baltimore area colleges and universities are jointly sponsoring a graduate school and professional school fair on the UMBC Campus on Monday, October 22 from noon to 5 p.m. Admission is free and each person attending will receive a booklet describing the participating colleges and universities. For more information call 455-2216.

Friday Plus

The weekly entertainment leisure guide for the greater Baltimore and Washington areas. Published by the AFRO-AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS group.

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AACC Film Series

"All The President's Men," starring Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman, will be shown at Anne Arundel Community College on Friday, October 19 at 7:30 p.m. in the Center for the Performing Arts. Admission is $2 and AACC students, $1. For more details call 269-7341.

"Danton's Death" At Center Stage

"Danton's Death continues at Center Stage until Sunday, October 28. Performance times are Tuesday through Saturday at 8 p.m., Sundays at 7:30 p.m., with Sunday and selected Saturday and Wednesday matinees at 2 p.m. For complete ticket information call 332-0033.

Bolton Hill Dinner Theatre

"Opal's Million Dollar Duck," starring Veena Day and Joan Coursey, continues at the Bolton Hill Dinner Theatre until Sunday, October 28. For more information call 523-1000.

Maryland Institute Film Series

The Maryland Institute College of Art will present "The Warriors" on Friday, October 19 at 7 and 9 p.m. for their Friday night film program. Admission is $3.50 for the general public and $2.50 for students with ID. The school is located at Mount Royal Ave. and Cathedral St.

"The Tempest" At Arena Stage

William Shakespeare's, "The Tempest" is currently running at the Arena Stage until November 11. The Arena Stage is located at 6th St. and Maine Ave., S.W. For more infomation on tickets and times call 202-488-3300.

"Zorba" Continues At The Lyric

"Zorba," starring Anthony Quinn, continues at The Lyric Opera House on Mount Royal Ave. and Cathedral St. until November 4. For performance times and ticket prices call 625-1400.

WHAT'S AHEAD

Pumpkin Theatre

Pumpkin Theatre, a performing arts series for children ages four to eleven, will present "Sleeping Beauty" starting Friday, October 26 at 4615 Roland Ave. For more information call 467-6484.

Greenberg's Great Train

Greenberg's Show, a huge selection of model railroad trains, railroadiana, miniature and doll goods will occur on November 3 and 4 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., both days at the Sheraton Exhibition Hall in New Carrollton. For more details call 795-7447.

Arena Players Present

A medley of one act plays by Tennessee Williams will be presented by the Arena Players beginning Friday, November 2. The playhouse is located at 801 McCulloh St. For details on times and ticket prices call 728-6500.

Choral Arts Society

The Baltimore Choral Arts Society will open its season on Saturday, November 3 at 8 p.m. in the Kraushaar Auditorium of Goucher College with a program featuring "Music of Handel". For more information call 523-7070.

"The Princess And The Goblins"

The Children's Theatre Association will present "The Princess and the Goblins" on Saturday, October 27 and November 3 at 2 p.m. in the auditorium of the Mount Royal School located at 121 McMechen St. Tickets are $3 per person. For further information call 225-0052.

Listz Society Festival

The Peabody Conservatory is hosting the 20th Anniversary American Liszt Society Festival starting Thursday, November 1 until Sunday, November 4. Over 40 well-known pianists, composers, educators, and critics will participate including the Morgan State University and Baltimore High School for the Arts Choruses. Nathan Carter is the director. For more information call 659-8124.

Halloween Insomniac Tour

On Saturday night to Sunday morning, October 28 starting at 1:30 a.m. and ending at sunrise, Baltimore Rent-A-Tour is sponsoring its annual Halloween Insomniac Tour. Reservations are required and can be obtained by calling 653-2998.

Walter's Art Gallery Anniversary Party

The Walter's Art Gallery will celebrate 50 years as a public museum on Sunday, November 4 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. with free admission and a birthday party sponsored by WJZ-TV. For further information call 547-ARTS.

New Play Opens At Kennedy Center

"The Nest of the Wood Grouse," a new play by Soviet writer Victor Razov, starring Anne Jackson and Eli Wilach, will open a six-week run at the Eisenhower Theatre of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, October 27. For information call 202-254-3670.

"Oliver!"

F. Scott Black's TowsonTowne Musical Dinner Theatre, located at 7800 York Rd. will present "Oliver!" starting Thursday, November 1. For reservations or other information call 321-6595.

Halloween Costume Workshop

On Saturday, October 27 at 1:30 p.m., The Walters Art Gallery is sponsoring a Halloween Costume Workshop where parents and children can create their own costumes. There will also be a showing of the film "The Legends of Sleepy Hollow." Admission is $5. For more information call 547-9000.

Mayor's Ball

The Mayor's Ball, for the benefit of the Arts will be held on Saturday, November 3 from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. at the Baltimore Convention Center. For more details call 396-4575.

Halloween Costume Party At AACC

The Student Association of Anne Arundel Community College is hosting a free Children's Halloween Costume party on Wednesday, October 31 from 3:30 to 5 p.m. on the lower floor of the Student Center. For more information call 269-7336.

"Pirates of Penzance"

Dockside Musicals presents "Pirates of Penzance" by Gilbert and Sullivan on Friday, November 16 and Saturday, November 17 aboard the Port Welcome at Harborplace. This will be a Broadway style musical with a buffet dinner. For more information call 366-5898.

Poetry At Maryland Institute

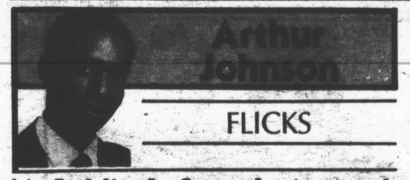
Kenneth Koch will be reading his poems at the Maryland Institute, College of Art on Thursday, October 25 at 8:00 p.m. General admission is $2. For more information call 669-9200.

Enoch Pratt Library

A three-day festival, celebrating the art of storytelling, will offer workshops, exhibits, films, and a variety of storytelling sessions on October 26 to October 28 at the Central Enoch Pratt Free Library. Admission is FREE. For more information call 396-5494.

BSO AWARDS COMPETITION

The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra Awards Committee is now accepting applications for its third annual Baltimore Symphony Awards Competition. Applications must be postmarked no later than October 26. For an application or to ask questions call 727-7300.



'A Soldier's Story': A good film with great acting

Of course, we are expected to be overwhelmed that Hollywood has finally decided it's time to make a dramatic black film like "A Soldier's Story."

(What was the last black film drama made by a major studio?) After several studios declined to make the film version of Black playwright Charles Fuller's Pulitzer prize-winning play, Columbia Picture finally decided to take a chance and produced a low budget film version of the successful Broadway play.

And we are supposed to rejoice that a few of the thousands of unemployed and underemployed black actors are being given an opportunity to practice their craft in a film in which all the main characters are black?

But "A Soldier's Story" is a hollow, half victory over the continued and entrenched racism of the American entertainment industry. In fact, the film version of Fuller's play documents not only America's treatment of black people both inside and outside the military in the 40's but also documents the film industry's indifference to black audiences and black themes.

Howard E. Rollins, Jr. (last seen on the big screen in his Oscar nominated performance in "Ragtime") stars as Captain Richard Davenport, a Howard University educated lawyer assigned to investigate the murder of the tough as nails and much hated Sergeant Waters (Adolph Caesar repeating his award winning stage performance) near an army base in Louisiana during World War II.

Complicating the Captain's investigation are his high rank, racism and rumors that the Klan murdered the black sergeant in cold blood. As one white character explains it, if it had not been for the NAACP and the "Negro Press," the case would not even have been warranted much scrutiny.

Despite the resistance of white officers to both his authority and his probing, Davenport demands the cooperation of the racist whites on the military base as he attempts to unravel the myst ery of the sergeant's death.

Through extensive interrogation of the men in Waters' all-black company, and several whites, Davenport pieces together a portrait of the unpopular sergeant as well as the events of his, final hours.

Admittedly, it is great to see so many black performers in a quality film in leading roles. Denzel Washington (of TV's "St. Elsewhere") gives a standout performance as Private Peterson, a member of Sgt. Waters' company who decides that he can take the sergeant's abuse no longer and fights back. Adolph Caesar, who won both an Obie and a New York Drama Desk Awards for Best Supporting Actor in the stage production, is appropriately menacing as the unpredictable black sergeant who is harder on his black soldiers than the whites are. Though he is slight of build and stature, Caesar intimidates his men with his brain since he has no brawn, and manages to make a somewhat cardboard character come eerily to life.

Larry Riley as C.J., a country boy from Mississippi whose down home ways the sergeant despises so vehemently, Art Evans, as the sergeant's cheese-eating flunky and Rollins as Davenport give creditable performances.

What "A Soldier's Story" lacks is the power and passion of the touch of the people who actually live in the Jim Crow America of 1944. Director Norman Jewison is to be commended for fighting to get this film produced but it's too bad he did not step aside and let a black director take over. Gordon Parks, Ossie Davis, Sidney Poitier or Melvin Van Peebles, who have some understanding of what it was like to be black servicemen in the 40's, should have directed and shaped this motion picture.

If American films had been presenting an accurate picture of American history during the past 50 years, it would not be necessary to explain certain things like why Rollins is bunking by himself in an empty barracks. But how many teenagers, or even adults, white or black, will understand that black soldiers, no matter what their rank, were routinely segregated from the white soldiers at this time or why?

Besides a lack of a crucial understanding of what it means and has meant to be a black man in America, Jewison also lacks any consistent directorial style with which to enhance the drama. In a story that is told basically through flashbacks and a series of interrogations ("Where were you the night of the murder?" and "What kind of man was Sgt. Waters?"), some kind of cinematic innovation is needed to prevent that stage drama feeling. In addition, there is no real feel for the 40's established in the cinematography. To top it all of, suspense never builds and the film does not gather dramatic power as it progresses. Jewison simply turns the cameras on and sets the actors in their places, sabotaging most of the drama's suspense.

Another annoyance is the ending which makes it appear as though black soldiers lived happily ever after, celebrating after the order comes stating that black soldiers will fight in Germany. In the stage version of Fuller's play there was an epilogue placing this event in its proper historical perspective. The film implies that all was well for these men after this announcement.

Perhaps the white influence on this film was most glaringly apparent at the film's end. With a film score by jazz giant Herbie Hancock and with Patti LaBelle as both co-star and singer at their disposal, what do the producers use as the song played over the credits? A compelling new composition by the man who wrote the classics "Maiden Voyage" and "Watermelon Man"? Or a new spine tingling vocal by Miss LaBelle. No! They use The Andrews Sisters singing "Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree."

Don't misunderstand. I am very glad that Fuller's drama has been brought to the screen so that his work can reach more than a select group of theatergoers. I am glad that Rollins, Washington and Caesar and the other black actors have this opportunity to work and to be seen. It's just that "A Soldier's Story" could have been a great film, but instead it is only a good one.

Talking TV

By Mike Easterling

The biggest difference between the League Championships and the World Series was not the fervor nor the tradition. Nor the fact that two teams that never win anything were playing. No. The biggest difference was (at least for my money) NO REGGIE JACKSON. Is this guy a one - man PR firm or what? While I say "Right on" to the brothers on the network in any capacity, Reggie, c'mon gimme a break. Reginald Martinez Jackson, along with Earl Weaver and Don Drysdale, did color commentary on the National League Playoff. On any occasion that presented itself and on some that didn't, he took time to talk about himself. Granted, those homers against the Dodgers were an unbelievable feat. But how often do you have to hear about them? Especially from Reggie. No matter what the situation he can always come up with an even more amazing statistic or story usually about "guess who?" And here is the really scary part. When he finishes playing he's going to be in the broadcast booth full time. But, hey, he does have more charisma than Jim Palmer, for what it's worth, and he usually has his facts correct whether he's bragging or not.

Over on ABC Orentahl James (OJ) Simpson is doing commentary for Monday Night Football. The 1969 Heisman Trophy winner and perrenial All - Pro with Buffalo is kinda charming but kinda dumb. Maybe that's what makes him charming. Juice, while watching the graphic display that shows a scoring drive saw the black lines showing some long plays from scrimmage, interrupted Don Meredith with the comment "Black is beautiful." Meredith never stopped he just said "It certainly is" and kept on talking. Juices' comment. Kinda charming and kinda dumb.

Don't get me wrong. There are a lot of black commentators who do a fine job on network sports. Maryland's Ray Leonard, the former welterweight champ does, a more than credible job on the CBS fight events. Ray has obviously worked hard to get his grammar and pronunciation together and it shows. Football boasts a host of strong color commentary men who do well. ABC's Lynn Swann, who covers USFL in the summer, former Dallas Cowboy Reggie Rucker and Gene Washington, former San Francisco 49er all are well informed and add a lot to their particular game coverage.

The star on the rise in my opinion however is Ahmad Rashaad.

Rashaad, formerly known as Bobby Moore, was an All - American back at Oregon and a prolific receiver with St. Louis and the Minnesota Vikings for nearly a decade. His clear articulation and boyish good looks have him anchoring the NBC sports desk already. One thing to note. With the exception of Sugar Ray and Rucker, all of the black commentators I mentioned are from the West or went to school in the West. Rashaad grew up in Seattle, all the others in California. The Philadelphia born Jackson went to school at Arizona State and has played for both Oakland and California. No big deal, just an observation. Locally, Harvard - educated James Brown calls the Bullets games and Nationally Bill Russell (University of San Francisco) is still doing the CBS Game of the Week in basketball. Irv Cross still reigns as the king of the Black sports anchors. The former Philadelphia Eagles cornerback smiles his way into your living room every week and seldom fumbles.

Reggie Jackson

Speaking of fumbles. I told you that Todd Bridges had left **Different Strokes.** Wrong!!!! Todd, now nearly six feet tall, is still strokin'. He and Arnold are still different, too.