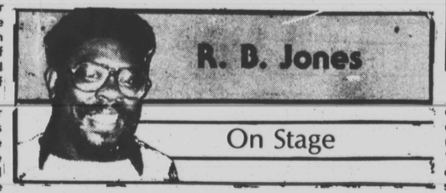
Coppin Dancers—energy personified



The arts programs at a number of black colleges are in trouble financially and often lacking in participation says a number of professors at the schools that I have met in the last couple of years.

Many students see business or other career oriented programs as more rewarding than the fine arts. Too often state or college administrators only see head counts and dollar signs, not the richness and practicality of supporting the arts on campus.

In the midst of such adversity, fighting the odds are the dedicated faculty members who take insufficient resources and talented but unpolished students and make miraculous performers out of them.

One such teacher is Edna Simmons, the director of the Coppin Dancers. Year after year she is able to put together a dance performance that is inventive, exciting and absolutely enjoyable. This year's production "Dancing" was another proud entry in the history of the Coppin Dancers.

The show ran last weekend (April 10-12) and utilized live vocalists and contemporary recorded music to undergird a dance performance that involved the audience's eyes, ears and hearts.

Mixing abstract, gospel and pop music sounds with dancers who made up with stamina and enthusiasm any flaws of grace and technique, Ms. Simmons used her dancers' individual strengths and masked their weaknesses with clever staging and choreography.

The quality of the show was remarkable because many of the dancers that had figured prominently in past shows were no longer in the group and so Ms. Simmons had to work a number of new people into her system.

This current edition of the Coppin Dancers containing Michael Benn, Antionette Booker, Denise Bowers, Sherry Gregory, April Jenkins, Jonathan Marcus, Andrea Pearson, Robyn Shelton and Shawn Ward acquit themselves very well.

Not only do the dancers dance, but they also join in the choreographing of the numbers. Andrea Pearson, Michael Benn and Antionette Booker choreographed dances but the primary burden fell on Ms. Simmons.

The three most striking numbers in the show were "Dance of the Gods," "Life Force" and "In The Spirit." The first was a piece with an Egyptian tinge to it.

The man and woman dressed in white form varying configurations, separate briefly and then rejoin each other giving the appearance of venturing off to create a corner of the universe and then rejoining to renew themselves with their solitary love.

Life Force was a brilliant piece of staging. The dancers clad in sheer costumes and masks perhaps representing perhaps the nakedness that all creatures know at birth and the lack of consciousness of the new born. The creatures emerged from under the stage and crawl across the stage.

This action illustrates the theory that all life emerged from the sea. The creatures hiss like primeval reptiles and slowly move upright. They move and form various animal-like poses perhaps demonstrating the diversity that emerged from evolution.

Eventually the creatures unmask themselves. They have the self-consciousness of humans but have the impulses of the creatures that crawled up on land become totally human and civilized.

The final segment of the program In the Spirit featured vocalists James Dyson, Charles Harris, Enoch Johnson, Seth Johnson, Sr. and Ada Strong.

The series of related dances had a religious flavor. One dance done to Roberta Flack's song "Rev. Lee" demonstrated a minister tormented by the temptations of the flesh which all men are heir to. Other segments that represented a church service-revival utilized such songs as "Never Alone" and "Until I Found the Lord" to create dances with enormous energy and visual appeal.

The costumes were varied and appealing and the lighting was highly complimentary of the moods created by the dances. The entire company can be proud of "Dancing," especially the guiding force, Ms. Edna Simmons.

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— Jazz

(Continued from page 5)

through Sunday night.

At the One Step Down, **Buck Hill** is on tap Friday and Saturday. No word on his backup group, and of course **Reuben Brown** and **Steve Novosel** are at the One Step Monday night.

At the King of France Tavern in Annapolis, **Kenny Davern** is the artist in residence through Sunday night. Kenny is a jazz clarinetist — just in case you didn't know.

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Don't forget next week is the final concert of the Left Bank Jazz Society, featuring **Hank Crawford.** But then, we'll have more on this next week.

Jackee stays busy with two TV roles

By Gregory Garver

HOLLYWOOD — Who says you can't go home? You can — just ask Jackee Harry. The actress (whose first name is pronounced 'Jack-ay') starred as Lily Mason on "Another World." Then, when she was approached to star as Sandra Clark on "227," Miss Harry agreed, and she was written out of the NBC soap.

"Lily won a radio contest and a vacation in Switzerland," the actress says. "While she was there, she met this man who signed her to do some concerts in Kuala Lumpur."

But now that "227" is on hiatus (the show returns next month), Lily Mason's gig in Kuala Lumpur is finished, and she will be winging her way back to "Another World."

Miss Harry likes both characters, but she says there are differences between them.

"Sandra's got more freedom than Lily," the actress explains, "because a soap opera is really not a comedic platform. You can't stretch out and look for laughs. It's all geared toward the story line. Actually, the only thing Sandra and Lily have in common is me."

Miss Harry, who hails from Winston-Salem, N.C., moved to Harlem with her family when she was nine. The move was, she recalls, an example of culture shock. She always wanted to act, but there were some bleak periods before her present two-job fortune.

Jackee Harry

"Back in 1976," she remembers, "I was really doing badly, "I didn't work for about six months. I had no money. I'd wait for my unemployment check every Wednesday and then go out for Chinese food. A friend and I were living in a place that was very cold," she adds, "because the landlord wouldn't provide proper heat. Then the landlord dropped dead from the cold."

Today, Miss Harry is not satisfied with her two jobs. "If I get up off my rusty-dusty," she says, "and give it some time, I think I could sing. I'm going to try."

And she has. This week, Miss Harry opens a two-week singing engagement at New York City's jazz club Sweetwaters.

Ouch! That incredible Hulk, Hulk Hogan (r) takes a stab at a few people who try muscling in on his territory on "The A-Team" airing Tuesday, April 22 on NBC.

Cable offers kids several quality shows

By Debra Morgenstern Katz

Critics bemoan network television's lack of commitment to children's programs — and rightfully so: "Sesame Street," "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" and "Romper Room" (none of which are on the three major networks) are the only shows available to preschoolers each day. And two of them overlap when they're aired. What's a parent to do?

Turn to cable. If network TV forsakes children, cable embraces them with programs that are rich in imagination, creativity and positive values. Your child will still adore Big Bird and Cookie Monster, but within a few days, he or she will be talking so much about Sam and Muffy and Winnie and Barnaby that you'll wonder how you ever lived without them.

Nickelodeon, the channel specifically geared to kids, airs "Pinwheel," a show that devotes five consecutive hours to preschoolers each day. It's hard to sustain interest throughout many hours of the same program, but the series' relaxed, low-key blend of puppets, real people, animation and graphics do just that. You may not want your toddler glued to the set for five hours but any time you need televised entertainment and education, it's nice to know it's there. My toddler's favorite character on "Pinwheel" is Coco, a mime who performs her brief acts between the longer segments.

Another Nickelodeon gem is "Today's Special," a 30-minute

Dumbo (1) and friend

Canadian-produced series that airs twice daily. It uses the toy section of a department store as its set, with a salesclerk, mannequin (who comes alive after the store closes), store guard and mouse (the latter two characters are puppets) as its characters. A different theme moves the plot along each day.

On the Disney Channel, which is geared more to family programming, "Welcome to Pooh Corner" and "Dumbo's Circus" are the best bets for preschoolers. Both shows air twice daily and are peopled by life-sized puppets. "Pooh" uses a warm, gentle approach to handling children's concerns — such as not wanting to go to bed — that is fun and attractive.

The characters on these four shows are well developed. Their negative — and positive — emotions are explored each day, and they're as real as the kids on the block.

Practice makes perfect as Wynton Marsalis heats up the cast of "Sesame Street", airing April 21 on PBS.

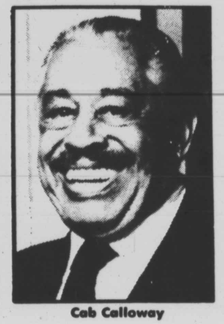
Cab Calloway Jazz Institute Opening

The Cab Calloway Jazz Institute, on the campus of Coppin State College, will open with a concert performance featuring Dr. Billy Taylor and the Billy Taylor Trio on Sunday, April 20th, 5 p.m., at the campus' Johnson Auditorium.

The Institute will house works and memorabilia of Cab Calloway and other major jazz personalities of Maryland and establish an archive of Maryland Jazz History. Additionally, through a Jazz Education program, the Institute will identify and nurture young talented musicians who are college bound and will provide scholarship assistance to selected students.

To inaugurate the opening, Cab Calloway, the legendary jazz figure for whom the Institute is named, will be in Baltimore from April 18th to 20th for a weekend of planned activities, culminating with the concert on Sunday.

Mr. Calloway, a Baltimorean and Douglass High School graduate, has brought joy to audiences with his timeless big band jazz sounds, and his scat singing trademark--hi-de-hi-de-hi-de-ho--which he developed by accident when he forgot the lines of his now classic song, "Minnie the Moocher and Me." He has been entertaining audiences for more than 50 years.


Cab Calloway

His nightclub performances are known worldwide with his most popular being The Cotton Club where he performed with such greats as Dizzy Gillespie, Lena Horne, and Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, just to name a few.

On Broadway Cab was equally successful, starring in such hits as "Porgy and Bess," "Hello Dolly," the "Pajama Game," "Bubbling Brown Sugar," and the national tour of "Eubie."

In addition to his stage performances, Cab Calloway's unique brand of entertainment has been successfully adapted to the screen in numerous films including Al Jolson's "The Singing Kid," "Stormy Weather," "The Cincinnati Kid" with Steve McQueen, "St. Louis Blues," with Nat "King" Cole and most recently, "The Blues Brothers."

At 78, Cab Calloway maintains an active schedule of performing and guest appearances doing what he says he loves, "bringing joy to people through entertainment."

SPECIAL EVENTS

The Van Dykes at CCC

The Van Dykes, a popular band in the late 50's and early 60's, will bring back the best of the era in a benefit dance at Catonsville Community College on Saturday, April 26 at 9 p.m. Proceeds will go toward the CCC Nautilus Equipment Fund. For ticket and other information, call 744-8311.

Crossword Game Tournament

The preliminary rounds of the Maryland Scrabble Crossword Game Tournament will be held on Sunday, April 20 and Sunday April 27 at the Virginia S. Baker-Patterson Park Recreation Center. The finalist will compete on Sunday, May 4. The tournament is opened to Maryland residents only. For further information, call 396-4891.

Secretaries' Day

A celebration for "all" secretaries will be held in War Memorial Plaza on Wednesday, April 23 at 12 noon. Secretaries will be treated to an hour long outdoor celebration of musical entertainment. Highlighting the event will be the distribution of free red silk roses and free balloons. For more information, call 396-4891.