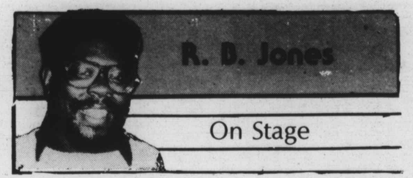

On Stage

Spotlighters

The Spotlighters is one of the most reliable theater companies in Baltimore. Whatever the play, one can always count on decent performances by the actors at the very least.

Time after time they will take on a play that I think will not work in their small theater and with the use of imagination and good acting they manage to bring it off.

"Gemini" their show which just closed is a funny, entertaining evening. Their next production is the classic comedy "You Can't Take It With You," which I believe was written by George S. Kaufman, who was to Broadway in the 1930s what Neil Simon is to Broadway now, the most successful playwright in America.

In December the Spotlighters will perform their traditional Christmas show "Scrooge" the musical based on Dickens' "A Christmas Carol."

The January show is going to be "Busy Body" with special Sunday Night shows "The King and I" and "Other Men" billed as a tribute to Gertrude Lawrence the original female lead of the "King and I" on Broadway.

February will bring "Hurly Burly" a play that was highly successful on Broadway with Harvey Keitel and William Hurt and JoBeth Williams. It is supposed to be a caustic treatment of Hollywood.

The Spotlighters were founded in 1962 as a non-profit organization that has produced over 270 plays. They are quite energetic and they produce a new play each month. The theater is located in the basement of the Madison Hotel on St. Paul St. and has been there since 1962.

Audrey Herman, the president for the last 20 years and one of the founders, insists that anyone can audition for any of the plays and that anyone can become involved with the company. "One of the reasons that we founded the Spotlighters is because some of the other groups in existence in those days were cliquish, so we started a group that was open to everybody and that's still our policy."

The group is very proud of the fact that actor Howard Rollins of "Ragtime" and "Soldier's Story" fame appeared in his first play at the Spotlighters in their production of Steinbeck's "Of Mice and Men."

The Spotlighters are very proud of their association with Rollins and they have on their bulletin board a large article from a local daily paper on Rollins where he mentions the group. Also enshrined on that board is a review by yours truly.

The Spotlighters are located in the 800 block of St. Paul St. and their productions run Friday, Saturday and Sunday usually. For information call 752-1225.

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A THEATRE GUILD SUBSCRIPTION ATTRACTION

Alfre Woodard tackles new acting challenge

" 'Unnatural Causes' is a controversial important film — especially as it pertains to Maude DeVictor — because it's a vivid reminder that each of us has the unique ability to make a difference in our lives and the lives of those around us," says Emmy winner Alfre Woodard.

In "Unnatural Causes," Woodard plays DeVictor, a real-life Veterans Administration counselor who fought to establish the possible dangers of Agent Orange. The powerful drama will be telecast on NBC Monday Night at the Movies November 10 at 9 p.m.

"Maude DeVictor, who was just trying to do her job, was branded a 'trouble maker' by the V.A. because of her caring, aggressive work," says Woodard. "She is a true patriot and a fine citizen, and a woman who took no static when she wanted to help men and women who defended our country.

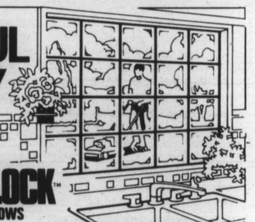
"The story of Maude and the V.A. is about struggle and truth. I want people to be informed about what happened. And when they know, it will be impossible for them not to be moved."

Woodard says it was "very ex-

Continued on page 7

Alfre Woodward and John Ritter star in "Unnatural Causes," a movie about a real-life Vietnam veteran and a Veterans Administration counselor who wage an emotional uphill battle to establish the possible dangers of Agent Orange.

BEAUTIFUL SECURITY



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Silver Screenings

ROUND MIDNIGHT can well be described as a unique, sensitive, musical masterpiece of theatre. In short, it is a work of art mixed with fact and fiction, and seasoned with love and human frailty.

Jazz great Dexter Gordon makes his film debut as the star of this unusual production. Gordon plays Dale Turner, a tired, disillusioned, aging jazz musician of the 50's. Be-bop music is his life, his soul, his reason for living, and the one thing he must "accomplish" before the final bell tolls.

I have not yet had the pleasure of seeing Gordon play in person, but now, after ROUND MIDNIGHT, you can bet that I wouldn't miss him for the world. Those lucky folks who have been present during a performance or set, have all said the same thing — Dale Turner IS Dexter Gordon.

Throughout the movie, I had marveled at the ease with which this neophyte took to the craft. His naturalness, his stage presence, his unsteady knock-kneed gait, even the careful and studied cadence of his speech impressed me to no end, (Until I was told that Dexter Gordon walks, talks and carries himself the same way).

That knowledge still only stole a smidgen of his magic. And, I'm still in awe of a man his size (he's tall) with his walk (it's strange) who can negotiate curbs, stairs and hills without falling over.

In the movie, Dale meets Francis Borier, a fan desperate to be in the company of one so great, who agrees to buy him a drink, unaware that a single glass of wine could make his hero very ill.

Francis, played by French actor Francois Cluzet, is totally inspired by the music and style of Turner and decides to look after and protect him. Francis is a graphic artist whose first love is the same as Dale's, jazz. Together, this unlikely pair form a solid relationship of trust, respect, admiration and love.

I feel it is important to note that the look of worship in Francis' eyes for Turner was not based on acting skill alone. Cluzet, (Francis), before filming had started, had purchased every album of Dexter Gordon's he could lay his hands on and listened to them constantly. He was a true fan to the bone by the time the first frame was shot.

The music is both an exciting and integral part of the film without being overpowering. The story of two men, different in every way possible, (short/tall, American/French, musician/artist, black/white), but united with the common bond of friendship and the love of jazz is never forgotten, or neglected.

Herbie Hancock wrote all of the original music used in ROUND MIDNIGHT. Other jazz greats such as Bobby Hutcherson, Wayne Shorter, Ron Carter, Tony Williams, Freddie Hubbard and Cedar Walton join him musically for scenes woven throughout the film. The sound track of ROUND MIDNIGHT is also available.

ROUND MIDNIGHT, dedicated to Bud Powell and Lester Yound, carries a 'R' rating and also stars Sandra Reaves-Phillips and Lonette McKee. It is an extraordinary tribute, a touching movie and totally worthwhile entertainment. ROUND MIDNIGHT, now playing exclusively at Towson Art Cinema.

Ruby Dee appears on 'One Life to Live'

Ruby Dee, who has starred on the Broadway stage, in films and on television, will play the guest role of a judge at an explosive murder trial on "One Life to Live" —the same daytime drama in which her real-life actor son, Guy Davis, plays a doctor.

Ms. Dee will appear on the show Friday, Nov. 7, Monday, Nov. 10, and Tuesday, Nov. 11. She will portray Judge Deborah Freeman, who presides at the trial of Dan Wolek (Joshua Cox). He is accused of murdering a young woman caught up in a drug operation.

Ms. Dee's son, who plays the role of Dr. Josh Hall, will not appear in any of her scenes because his character is not involved in the murder case.

He has appeared in television and on the stage with both his distinguished parents, Ms. Dee and Ossie Davis, who is now starring on Broadway in the Tony Award-winning play, "I'm Not Rappaport."

Ruby Dee

"It's nice to have an actor in the family you can call on," said Ms. Dee with a smile in her voice. "Guy and I have worked together, but not in a consistent way."

While she has acted in many courtroom scenes, Ms. Dee has never portrayed the judge in charge, as she will in "One Life To Live." "I think it will be kind of fun," she commented.

On the stage, Ms. Dee played Ruth in "A Raisin In The Sun" and Lutibelle in her husband's play, "Purlie Victorious," and recreated those roles in the movie versions of both plays. She won an Obie for her performance in "Boesman and Len," by Athol Fugard and received the Drama Desk Award for her performance in "Wedding Band," a New York Shakespeare Festival production.

Her roles as Katherine in "The Taming of the Shrew" and Cordelia in "King Lear" were for the American Shakespeare Festival. She also received an ACE Award for her performance in Eugene O'Neill's "Long Day's Journey Into Night" on the A&E Cable Network.

She has appeared in such films as "The Jackie Robinson Story," "St. Louis Blues" with Nat King Cole and "Buck and the Preacher" with Sidney Poitier and Harry Belafonte. On television, she and her husband recently presented the PBS special, "Martin Luther King: The Dream and the Drum." Ms. Dee's other television credits include "Roots: The Next Generations," "The Atlanta Child Murders," "All God's Children," "Maya Angelou's "I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings," "Peyton Place," "Police Woman," "The Defenders" and "The Fugitive."

Ms. Dee is also an author. "My One Good Nerve," a compilation of some of her short stories, humor and poetry, will be published next month. Two books of African folk tales, which she adapted for children, are to be published next.

— Woodward

Continued from page 6

citing" playing someone as passionate as DeVictor. "She was a shoot-from-the-hip type of woman and a real public servant. She may lack a certain decorum, which I term pretentiousness, but she can truly cut through any kind of red tape, and that's exactly what she was doing when she upset the V.A."

Woodard won a 1984 Emmy for a guest-starring performance on NBC-TV's "Hill Street Blues," and was nominated this year for her performance on "St. Elsewhere." In addition, she was a 1984 Oscar nominee for "Cross Creek." But this is the first time in her distinguished career she has played a real-life person.

"It was a real feast for me to meet Maude and absorb all the information and impressions," Woodard says. "When I first saw her, she was immediately familiar. She opened up her arms, screamed, enfolded and crushed me and called me 'Maude Jr.' It was so amazing, she just held me and shook me and laughed. She looked exactly as I thought she would. I realized I had my work cut out for me. I knew I would have to try hard to capture the spirit of this woman."

As for the film itself, Woodard believes the time is right. "People are more aware of a spirit of community," she says. "Recently, there have been efforts to end world famine and a real focus on global contamination, and, as a nation, we have been shaken out of complacency. I feel we have been in a stupor for 10 years, an awful, self-possessed material stupor that manifested itself in the importance of the individual. Everybody just thought about himself. Now there's a new awareness of the person next to us because we realize when one person's freedom is threatened, it could very well be our own freedom next."

COMMITTEE UNITED TO SAVE SANDTOWN, INC.

FRONT ROW— L-R: George Boston, Marion Fletcher, Doris Ball, Deloris Brock, Shirley Wall, Cath Studervant, al Thornton. BACK ROW — L-R: Alfred Coleman, Mae Henson, Harry Jones, Monroe Hawkins, Regina Carroll, Doug Press, Sharon Henson, Nat Tyrone Mackel, Colbert Davis. NOT SHOW Carroll Monroe, Darlene Holland, Ray Jackson, Lessly Norris, W. Nottingham, H. Griffin and Ethel Murray.

The Committee United to Save Sandtown extends its heartfelt thanks and gratitude to all of you who attended our religious observances at Sharon Baptist Church and at our annual banquet at the Fifth Regiment Armory on Friday, October 17, 1986.

Your overwhelming response will allow the committee to continue to provide scholarships to eleven deserving students as well as provide assistance to the needy of Sandtown. The next scholarship will be awarded July, 1987.

Thank you again for your patronage and we are looking forward to seeing you in October 1987, 3rd Friday.

The Committee United to Save Sandtown, Inc.