

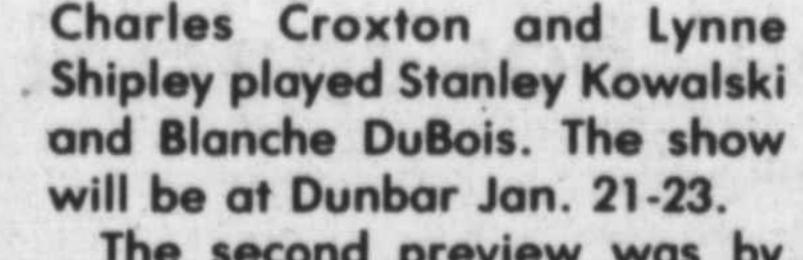
Beast of a Different Burden **Encore Dinner Theater seems** to be a thriving enterprise with each show sold out. There are not many theaters that reach

such a lofty plateau so soon.

If this continues they will have to expand from the present Wednesday night only schedule. The management of the Five Mile House seems to be happy with the arrangement and Maryland's only black owned dinner theater gives that club unique prestige.

I must say a word about the food. It has improved markedly since my first visit there. The roast beef was as tender as a lover's kiss and the fried chicken bordered on tasting homemade. My compliments to whoever cooked that chicken.

The theater program began with two previews. The first was a scene from an upcoming Urban



The second preview was by Percy Thomas for his upcoming February show at Encore entitled 'Portraits of My People." He per-Weldon Johnson and a bit about | ming some of the tunes. Jan Matzlinger, the black inventor of the shoe lacing machine.

script down. The premise of the lines. play is that an aggressive man hungry woman turns the tables | Schmaltz, relevance and sincerion and pursues a shy, gentle I ty, and you have the complete

The premise is a slender one and the author belabors the point so that the play drags. Comedies should never drag, especially in a setting where people have consumed alcohol and food.

The script features a vampire star as Anita in Fells Point Bela Lugosi in the movie Baltimore audiences will love it. Willie. Dipsey is a dance director Dinner Theater's "Westside "Dracula."

> The play can only be effective for the most part.

script did not help him at all.

the thirstiest bloodsucker.

The show runs until Dec. 17.

starts at 4 p.m.

Gordon Parks does a fine job with a minor role as the friend of career. the manhunting woman in the play. He adds a number of manmakes him a delight to watch. He literally steals the show from his fellow actors.

Carlton M. Coleman was undermined by his constant pressure to maintain the Bela Daddy Bates, he is led through Lugosi accent. He shows flashes some of the classic steps of all of comedic talent sporadically Still the waxing and waning of his accent and the weakness of the

Kelly Ward's performance was too subdued. Her character on the money. supposed to be so desperate land a husband that she risks being married to a vampire. What | voice, while adequate, lacks the is even worse, unless she projection expected in a theatre

Singing in a particularly strong woman would settle for that kind and vibrant, surprisingly effective voice, is Emma, sister of Ms. Ward is as driven to snare | Willie, who wants to be a lawyer her prey as a vampire would be. like their father, William.

The play is a role reversal and Played by Mennie Nelson, the her hunger should equal that of role seems created for her, with cast. special lyrics that tell the story of The audience seemed to find a young, very fat girl, who is the play amusing although the missing that feeling of parental will bring tears to your eyes as love from her father.

There is a distinct message which concerns itself with the This Sunday at Fells Point Dinhappy, black family, with the ner Theater Ms. Anya Audette | need for understanding of each Randall will play the role of Anita other, and the positive drive to in "West Side Story." The show | succeed as a black in a white

Charles Croxton and Lynne Tap Dance Kid'— A must see show

It is this facet of the play which

The play is loosely based on

the novel, "Nobody's Family is

Going to Change," Louise Fitz-

hugh, which was later turned in-

was in 1978, and the musical

which came out of this, hit the

play unfolded, a concept which

surfaced on the TV series

"Webster," wherein the conflict

between Uncle Phillip, played by

Ben Vereen, and Webster's foster

parents, occupied a continuing

There Uncle Phillip is a dancer,

Here, Willie's Uncle Dipsey,

uncle as a dancer, and his father

objects. This is one of the central

Fleming played the role during

the Broadway run of the play. He

was a member of the "Chorus

the special telecast of

With such impeccable creden-

whenever he is on stage, elec-

generated. Add to this a soulful

singing voice, and you have the

The mother of the Tapdance

Lorraine, who is a native of

Washington, DC, with a B.S.

degree from Virginia State. Once

again, the role fits the performer

like a kidglove. She brings to the

role a believability that rings

You find yourself saying things

like: "She reminds me of some-

one I know . . ." which can be

called an ultimate accolade. Her

counterpart, or husband, who is

the heavy of the play, is the

character, William, who

throughout the performance.

"Sophisticated Ladies."

themes in the plot.

Couldn't help but notice as the

Broadway stage in 1983.

seemed just a wee bit overdone

By Bob Matthews

A Broadway musical is expected to be a vehicle for the A key test to the viability of the music is its singability — whether formed "The Creation" by James | people leave the theatre hum-

As for the dance portions, they won three Emmy awards. This are expected to be exuberant celebration of happy feet, fast "Beast of Another Burden." I paced and skillfully coordinated. don't know whom the author is, with the stars of the piece soarbut whoever it is should pare the ling above the backup chorus

Add to this a storyline with makings of a smash hit which could conceivably play on Broadway for at least a year.

and wants Webster to join him in "Tap Dance Kid," currently at that nomadic life. The foster the Mechanic Theatre through January 4, fills the bill. In our parents object — wanting the youngster to live the convenestimation, this is an absolute mustsee show for all lovers of musical plays — it who insistently claims to be from everything, and judging from the spectacularly played by Eugene the Black Belt South yet talks like opening night performance, Fleming, is the role model for

The cast is a superb group of and producer, trying for that brilliant professionals, from the break which will lead him to Services Cultural Arts production if it is played broadly. It is not a youngest, Willie the kid who Broadway, along with his dance subtle comedy by any stretch of wants to be a tap dancer, to Dad-company. Willie wants to join his the imagination. Still the play is dy Bates, replete with grayhaired performed at a low energy level | wig and mustache, a role model of a tapdancer, who died of alcoholism after a showbusiness

> Hassoun Tartum plays the role Line" company, and was seen in of the kid — the character is 10 in the play, and 13-year-old Tatum effectively portrays the brighteyed, starstruck youngster, who has really learned his tap tials, it is little wonder that dancing skills.

In one scene, when he dances tricity flows and excitement is with the spirit of his grandfather tapdance routines, as they are cued by Daddy Bates. Kid, Carole, is played by Janice

It was fun to hear Bates call for "time step, with a break, then roll into a Shuffle Off To Buffalo," and the kid hits every cue right Might say Tatum's singing

becomes one too, she will age performance — but, this is a and her husband will not. Ob- minor flaw — dancing is his viously only a very desperate thing.

> possesses possibly the most dramatic singing voice in the His solo, "William's Song," in the next to closing scene, is a true tour de force, and Cooper

'Christmas under the Tree' has special meaning to Ben Vereen

Some aspects of Christmas have changed radically since he was a youngster, says Ben Vereen, while others stay wonderfully the same.

"When I was growing up as a child at Christmas, we wanted Davy Crockett hats and Superman buttons," the awardwinning actor said recently. "Today it's Rambo and Go-Bots."

Vereen was reflecting on his Christmases past in anticipation of his second straight Christmas morning in Florida as co-host of "Walt Disney World's Very Merry Christmas Parade." He'll again join "Good Morning America's" Joan Lunden for the live 90-minute ABC-TV broadcast on Christmas Day.

"When I was little, I was happy just to see a Christmas tree," Vereen continued. "Most kids to day are looking for a Maserati

very special part of his Christmas for about as long as he can remember. As a 6-year-old growing up in Brooklyn, he says, he started camping out under the tree every Christmas Eve:

"I would always hang out under the Christmas tree. My father made this great punch every year, and I'd have my sandwich and glass of punch out there



Ben Vereen

with me for Santa Claus. I wanted to make sure that if the man came, I'd see him. I never did. always fell asleep."

Christmas has never lost that special place in his life. "It's a children's time," he says. "We're reminded of the birth of Christ and we're reminded of the vision

The Emmy-winner ("Roots") dicated children's show it," Sullivan says. ("Zoobilee Zoo") will travel with

his family again this year Florida for Christmas. "The wonderful thing about the

aware of the importance of the curtain calls of the cast, but this Christmas Eve, and New Year's family unit," he said. "It's so easy time, a reprise of some of the Day. to feel the Christmas spirit there. production dance numbers was They even find snow to throw at

"When Disney asked me to come back again this year to host the parade, I was thrilled. And when I asked the children if they wanted to go back to Disney World for Christmas, they cheered."

His children share another enthusiasm of Christmas with him. Vereen says. At various times they, too, have spent Christmas under the tree waiting for Santa. How does he know?

'I was sleeping right there beside them," he laughed.

Maxine

Continued from page 5 'I'll think about it.' On some ocand host of a new, nationally syn- casions, I'm almost forced to do

"because I figured 20 years was | a lifetime. I thought I'd quit while I was ahead."

She stayed home to raise her daughter, became a member of the local school board and founded "The House That Jazz Built," a non-profit recreation and cultural center in her Bronx

opened in Washington, D.C., the management called, asking her to appear there. "Are you kidding?" she said. "I went out with high-button shoes." But Sullivan agreed to a two-week gig.

Shedding herself of her old

cond 20 years, with festivals, albums and cruises," Sullivan says. "I think I'm going to retire for another 10 years. I really knocked myself out last year. Gigs were overlapping. Now,

Sullivan may find a second retirement more elusive than the first. The phone keeps ringing

- Tap Dance Kid

Continued from page 6

formers and the audience that Performances are Tuesday had to be experienced to be through Saturday evenings at & p.m., with matinees Wednesdays Don't know whether it i and Saturdays at 2 p.m. There folks at Disney is that they are standard procedure during the will be no performance or

> For ticket information included, which really capped a 625-1400.

Skatemobile

The outdoor roller skating program, The Skatemobile will be a.m. until 3 p.m. traveling throughout Baltimore

City to various recreation centers providing free instructions and For further information call roller skates to children of all 396-4891.

ages to be used at the site. The skatemobile will operate from 9

perfect evening of musica

On December 13, it will be at the Fred B. Leidig Recreation Center at 4521 Frederick Avenue.



Opera diva Shirley Verrett and The Mormon Tabernacle Choir perform favorites in "Christmas With the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and Shirley Verrett," airing Friday, December 12, on PBS.

Sullivan

sick of 'Loch Lomond.' Now, I try to let them down lightly. I say -

Sullivan says she retired

In 1967, when Blues Alley

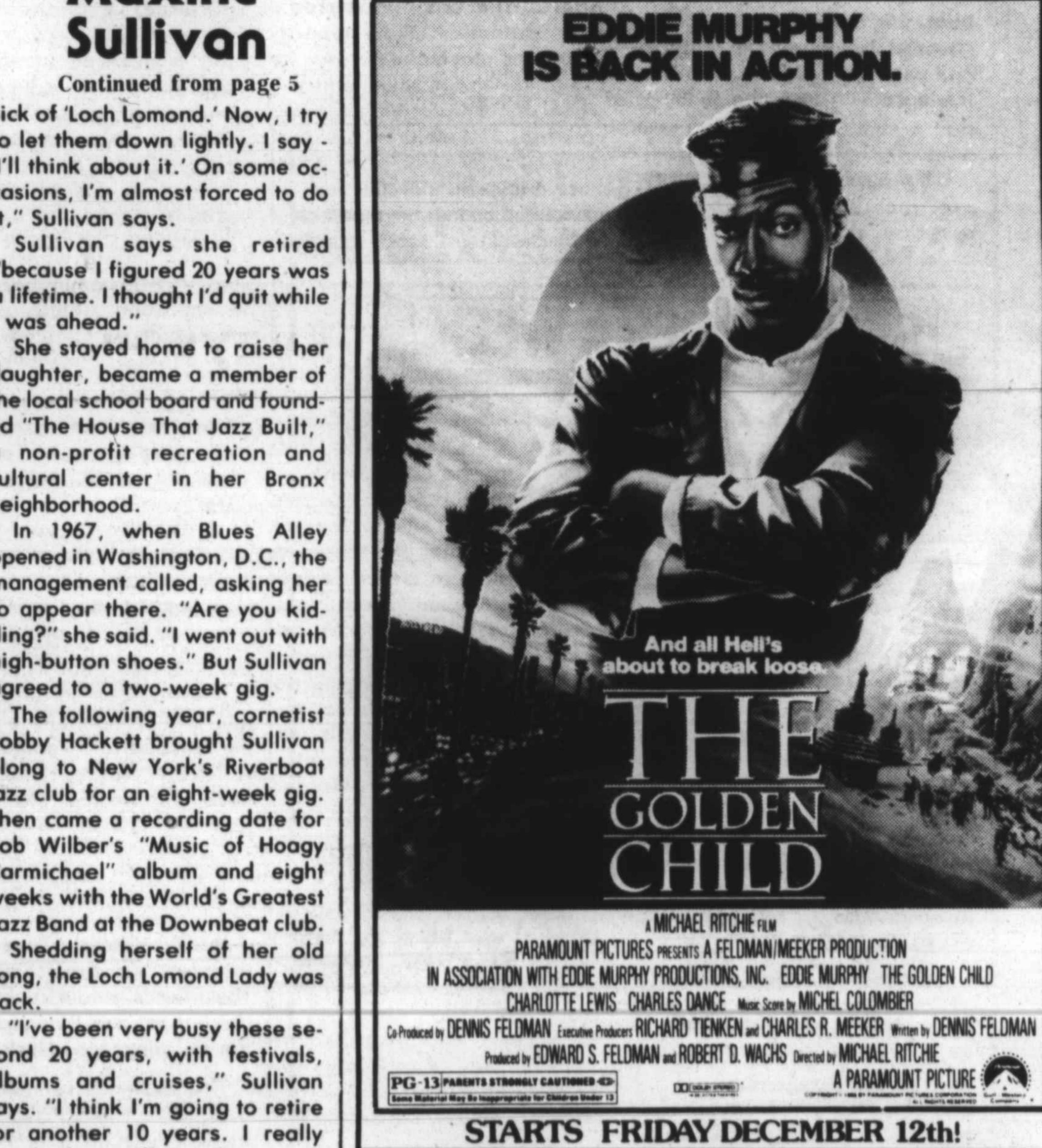
The following year, cornetist

Bobby Hackett brought Sullivan along to New York's Riverboat jazz club for an eight-week gig. Then came a recording date for Bob Wilber's "Music of Hoagy Carmichael" album and eight weeks with the World's Greatest Jazz Band at the Downbeat club.

song, the Loch Lomond Lady was

sort of stretch it out."

with festival and club dates.



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he pours out his heart in song.

Might add that there was a

pontaneous standing ovation at

the close of this play that created

an energy flow between the per-

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