Coming Soon

Ruby Dee

The Warner Theatre in Washington presents the African Empress of Song, Miriam Makeba with Hugh Masekela on April 17. The Theatre is at 13th and E Sts., N.W. Tickets at the Warner Box Office, Ticketron, TicketCenter. For more information call the Theatre at (202) 626-1050 or the Teletron at (202) 1-800-233-4050.

* * *

"Don't Get God Started" comes to the Warner Theatre after its Baltimore run. The dates have been extended to March 16-27. Call the above number for more information.

* * *

The Arena Stage in Washington will feature the play "Checkmates" by Ron Milner. It stars Ruby Dee and Al Freeman, Jr. The play will run March 18 through April 3. For more information call the Arena Stage 1 at. (202) 488-3300.

* * *

The Budweiser Showdown, Tournament of James takes place at the Palladium in Baltimore next Friday, March 18. Groups scheduled to appear include, Lillo Thomas, Taja Seville, Body, comedian Chris Thomas and ventriloquist Willie Brown and Woody. Doors open at 8:00 p.m. For more information call The Palladium, 2900 Liberty Heights Ave. at (301) 367-6862. An N. A. Patterson promotion.

* * *

Coming to the Meyerhoff in Baltimore on April 16 will be Wilson Pickett, the Chi-Lites and Tyrone Davis. For more information call (301) 728-9443.

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IN DOLBY STEREO

This Weekend

Bob Marley and the Wailers

"Take A Giant Step" opens this weekend at the Arena Playhouse in Baltimore. Curtain on Thursdays and Fridays is at 8:30 p.m. and at 7:30 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. The Playhouse is located at 801 McCulloh St. For more information call (301) 728-9303 or 728-6500.

* * *

Angela Bofill appears at Blues Alley in Georgetown now through Sunday, March 13, Blues Alley is at Wisconsin and M Sts. For reservations and more information, call (202) 337-4141.

* * *

The Kilimanjaro presents Bob Marley's legendary band, The Wailers Thursday and Friday, March 10 and 11. Doors open at 8:00 p.m. Showtime is 9:00 p.m. The Kilimanjaro Restaurant and Club is located at 1724 California St., N.W. in Washington. For more information call (202) 328-3838.

* * *

"Don't Get God Started" runs now through Sunday, March 13 at the Lyric Opera House in Baltimore. To charge tickets by phone or for more information call (301) 481-6000. For Group discounts call (301) 625-4230.

* * *

This is the last weekend for "Les Blancs" at the Arena Stage in Washington. The play, directed by Harold Scott and written by Lorraine Hansberry runs through Sunday, March 13. The Arena Stage is located at 6th and Maine Ave., S.W. To charge by phone call (202) 488-3300.

Globetrotters come to Baltimore

The hilarious antics and eye-popping tricks which traditionally accompany the extraordinary basketball that the Harlem Globetrotters display for their fans each night, has evolved over six laugh-filled decades.

Legendary showmen like Inman Jackson, Showboat Hall, Goose Tatum, Meadowlark Lemon, Curly Neal, Geese Ausbie, Sweet Lou Dunbar and the reigning "Clown Prince of Basketball," Twiggy Sanders, have combined their ideas with those of nearly 500 other talented 'Trotter teammates over the years to create the unique comedy and basketball phenomenon which is the Harlem Globetrotters.

The world's most popular and most beloved family entertainment comes to the Baltimore

(Continued on page 7)

The weekly entertainment guide for the Baltimore-Washington area. Published by the AFRO-AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS group.

628 N. Eutaw St.
Baltimore, Maryland 21201
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The grace of the Dance Theatre of Harlem

By Robyn-Denise Yourse

They've got it. They've really got it.

1988 began as a banner year for Arthur Mitchell's Dance Theater of Harlem. The triumph of an acclaimed world-wide tour in 1987. The airing of the company's "Creole Giselle" on national television (in the middle of the NFL play-offs) and reportedly, a visit to the Soviet Union later this year. All this and near sell-out performances as the troupe begins their annual engagement at the Kennedy Center in Washington March 15.

Ticket sales have been brisk, a member of the Center's Opera House staff said last week and in some instances, disclaimers advertising "nearly sold-out" were emblazoned across the program of some performances.

Whatever it is, they've really got it.

The pilgrimage to Washington has always been a good omen for the company. Local ballet audiences have taken a particular fancy to DTH; more than any other visiting dance troupe in a city that would rather import artists as opposed to honing its own. But then there is only one Arthur Mitchell and his gift to ballet lovers is firmly entrenched in the heart of New York's inner city.

Mitchell's spirit is both infectious and engaging. Ask any of his pupils or staff members or for that matter, any of the residents living near the company's headquarters located off of Amsterdam Avenue.

At the company's second annual Harlem Homecoming last spring, groups of parents and budding dancers gleefully sold home-baked brownies and herbal tea during intermission while others boasted of Mitchell's coup in obtaining Jerome Robbins' permission to perform his ballet "Fancy Free' — a request previously denied by the choreographer when made by other groups. It was a joyous and auspicious occasion bringing 21 ballets by many of the world's leading choreographers "uptown to Harlem" as Fats Waller used to say.

Uptown is where Mitchell continues the cultural legacy began by other Harlemites decades before. It is here that his passion produces premiere works like "Phoenix Rising," the new ballet choreographed by Mitchell and Billy Wilson slated to debut next week during DTH's five day stint.

By right, "Phoenix" is a symbolic piece. DTH, like the mythical bird for which the work is named, emerged from the ashes of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and has continually flourished in its 20 year history as an innovative force in the world of classical ballet.

Photo by Leslie E. Spatt
"Firebird" featuring Stephanie Dabney.

Seen in part last year during DTH's homecoming at City College, "Phoenix" marks the second major collaboration for the company between Mitchell and noted Broadway choreographer Billy Wilson — the force behind another of the group's signature pieces, "Concerto in F."

"It's a celebration of people who have been catalysts," Wilson said in describing Phoenix. "They have carried the light and led the way for other people."

Both Wilson and Mitchell have named Martin Luther King as one of the chief inspirations for "Phoenix" — a tribute that comes nearly two decades after Mitchell conceived DTH as a living monument of sorts to the slain civil rights activist.

He had been preparing a series of performances in Brazil but the news of King's untimely demise prompted Mitchell to stay in New York and forge a classical dance company and school in the borough of Harlem. Together with the late Karel Shook, Mitchell's vision became a powerful reality — charting new zeniths in an art form where black dancers remain a rarity.

While the turbulent 60's spawned the birth of the cream of America's black arts impresarios like Alvin Ailey and his successful dance troupe or Douglas Turner Ward's Negro Ensemble Company, Mitchell has varied his repertory to showcase his talented dancers in a broad-based idiom of works by both contemporary as well as traditional choreographers.

Along with Wilson's contributions, Mitchell's company has interpreted Serge Diaghilev's dramatic turn of the century composition "Scherazade" and dazzled audiences here and abroad with their bold new version of the "Firebird," choreographed by John Targas. Last season, Mitchell unveiled Garth Fagan's "Footprints Dressed In Red," a neo-classical milieu for the ensemble set to the futuristic music of John Adams.

This time out however, Mitchell comes full circle; staging the works of his early mentor George Balanchine.

The indelible stamp of Mr. B. — as Balanchine came to be called affectionately or otherwise in the dance community — dominated and shaped America's contribution to classical ballet for nearly half of this century.

In a medium where others are interpreted, Balanchine is presented.

For Mitchell those offerings include "Allegro Brillante" — described by Balanchine at its 1956 debut as "a concentrated essay in the extended classic vocabulary that maximizes the use of choreographic development in a rather restricted area of time and space" — and the always enchanting "Serenade" which was conceived as a "stage technique" piece for his students at the American Ballet School.

Photo by Leslie E. Spatt
"Othello" featuring Virginia Johnson and Donald Williams.

Mitchell has also chosen to resurrect "Bugaku," by far Balanchine's most sensual work. With this, he is on familiar terrain — having performed the male role while a leading dancer with Balanchine's New York City Ballet.

Here, the exotic and mysterious East is meshed with the discipline of Western dance in this depiction of a traditional wedding ceremony among Japanese royalty. (Balanchine based the work on the Gogaku, a group of musicians and dancers from the Imperial Japanese Household who appeared with his company in 1959.)

Mitchell's mixture of the old and the new will additionally feature Glen Tetley's "Voluntaries," a duel composition of tension and tranquility. Mitchell will also feature "Othello," Shakespeare's tale of a love gone haywire.

Choreographed by John Butler, the Moor Othello is manipulated by a conniving Iago — who convinces the general to strngle his beloved wife Desdemona in a jealous rage.

If tradition holds, Mitchell's smorgasbord for balletomanes this time as always will be a virtual feast. As DTH begins its third decade, the company has retained their unique ability to breath energy into their every work, providing a freshness and zeal to the classics, while claiming the new as their own.

It's this type of excitement that defines the DTH.

Whatever it is, they've got it. They've really got it.

Photo by Martha Swope
"Concerto In F" featuring the DTH Ensemble.