This Week

BALTIMORE

This is the final week for the **Arena Players'** production of Jeff Stetson's drama "The Meeting" (thru Sunday, May 7). Featured in the double cast are **Tony Yarbrough, Johnny Joyner, Art Carpenter, Jr., Frank McDougald, Keith Snipes** and **Ronald Booker.** The play centers around a meeting between **Martin Luther King, Jr.** and **Malcolm X.** Curtain for Friday is 8:30 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday 7:30 p.m. Call 728-6500.

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The **Walters Art Gallery** is hosting a special program for pre-schoolers called "Flower Power" on Saturday, May 6 from 10 a.m. to noon. Included is a special spring tour of the museum. Call 547-9000 ext. 236.

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The **Columbia Community Players** will present "The Little Foxes" by Lillian Hellman on Fridays and Saturdays, May 5, 6, 12 and 13 at 8:30 p.m. Call 992-9634 or 730-3987.

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"Beauty and the Beast: The Puppetfest Productions" will be held at the **Walters Art Gallery** on Sunday, May 7 at 2 p.m. Call 547-9000 ext. 237.

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"Smile,:" the **Marvin Hamlisch-Howard Ashman** musical about teenage beauty pageants that had its pre-Broadway try-out at the Mechanic Theatre, will be performed at the **Dundalk Community Theatre** on Friday, May 5 and run thru May 14. Call 285-9667 for further information.

Gilliam McNeil performs in "The Little Foxes."

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"Caberet" starring **Joel Grey** opens at the **Lyric Opera House** beginning May 9 thru June 4. Call 625-1400 for more details.

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The **Enoch Pratt Library** is presenting the film "Cocoon" on May 10 at the Central Branch, 400 Cathedral St. Call 396-5494 for further information.

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The **Baltimore Symphony Orchestra** will hold a "Pops" concert on Sunday, May 6 at 8:15 p.m. in the **Meyerhoff Symphony Hall.** Carian McPartland will be performing and making her debut with the Symphony. Call 793-8000.

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The **Dundalk Community College** is having their 15th annual Spring Arts Festival on Sunday, May 7 beginning at 11 a.m. Local talent is scheduled to perform. Call 285-9850 for more information.

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University Theatre at the **University of Maryland** at College Park will present the musical "Working" until May 14. Call 454-2201 for further details.

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Wolfman Jack is taping live concerts at the Baltimore Fishmarket thru May 10 in Liberty Hall. Popular group **Coast to Coast** performs at the **Officers Club** thru May 14. Call 576-2222 for additional information.

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The **Friends of the Cloisters** will host the 3rd annual spring fundraiser on May 5. Attire is black tie, white tie or hero or villain costume. Call 823-2551 for more information.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Blues Artist **John Hammond** will perform at **The Barns of Wolf Trap** on Friday, May 5 at 8 p.m. Call 202-432-0200 to charge tickets.

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"Itadi Boni and Achille Ango" will perform at the **National Museum of African Art** on Saturday and Sunday, May 5 and 7. Call 357-2700 for additional details.

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"As You Like It" starring "Cosby Kid" **Sabrina Le Beauf** thru June 18 at the **Shakespeare Theatre** at the **Folger's.** For tickets and further information, call 546-4000.

Tony Yarbrough

The **Program of Black American Culture** is presenting "Music of the Black American Composer" on Sunday, May 7 at the **National Museum of American History.** Call 357-4176 for more information.

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Bass player **Milt Hinton** comes to Carmichael Auditorium at the **National Museum of American History** on Wednesday, May 10 to discuss his newly published book, "Bass Line: The Stories and Photographs of Milt Hinton." A book-signing session follows the lecture. Call 357-3030.

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"Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill," starring **Debra Tidwell** returns to the **Studio Theatre** on May 10 for a five week run. For additional information call 332-3300.

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"Sophisticated Ladies" continues at the **Kennedy Center Opera House** thru May 27. For tickets and times call 254-3600.

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The National Museum of African Art has a full series of free concerts and films in conjunction with a special exhibit of sculpture, "Sounding Forms: African Musical Instruments," on view at the Smithsonian Museum through June 26. Call 202-357-2700 for further information.

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"A Tribute to Francis Hall Johnson and Wendell P. Whalum," a program of choral and solo songs will be held at the Carmichael Auditorium of the Smithsonian Institute's National Museum of American History on Sunday, May 7. Admission is free. Call 202-357-1481 for further information.

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The **Merce Cunningham Dance Company** will perform at the Eisenhower Theatre beginning May 2 at 7:30 p.m. For further details call 202-254-3770.

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"Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill" will play the Studio Theatre beginning on May 10 for a five week run. The show stars **Debra Tidwell** and a jazz trio will back up Ms. Tidwell on stage. For further information call 202-332-3300.

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Bass player **Milt Hinton,** who has also photographed his fellow instrumentalists and singers, will discuss his new book, "Bass Line: The Stories and Photographs of Milt Hinton" on Wednesday, May 10 at the National Museum of American History's Carmichael Auditorium. Call 202-357-3030 for more information.

Coming Soon

BALTIMORE

The Liberty Campus of **CCB** is hosting an **African American-Caribbean Festival** on May 12. Calypso and reggae bands plus live entertainment will be on the campus along with Caribbean dishes sold at 30 booths. Festival begins at noon. Call 396-0248.

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Black Women Gathering is hosting workshops and lectures, films of Black women, folk-dancing, fashion shows and hair-braiding at Sojourner-Douglass College on June 24. Call 467-3970 for more information.

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The **Baltimore Symphony Orchestra** is hosting its Seventh Anniversary Gala on Saturday, September 9. Call 783-8000 for further details.

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B&P Productions is presenting its pre-Mother's Day Cabaret Show and Dance on Saturday, May 13 for two shows at The **Gentlemen Ten.** Scheduled to appear are The **Manhattans, Clarence Carter** and **Baby Washington.** Call 728-8970 for additional information.

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The **Maryland Center for Creative Music** will sponsor the 2nd annual **Fat Tuesday Jazz** and **Heritage Festival** at Market Place on Saturday and Sunday, May 13 and 14 beginning at noon on both days. Call 752-0173 or 467-4001.

June Thorne

Actress **June Thorne,** currently seen in the Cybil Shepherd and Ryan O'Neal flick "Chances Are," is performing her one woman show at the **Arena Playhouse** on Saturday, June 3 at 7:30 p.m. Call 728-6500 for more details.

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The dance department of the **Baltimore School for the Arts** will present a program of ballet, jazz and modern dance on Friday, May 12 thru Sunday, May 14. Call 396-1185 for more information.

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Baltimore Rent-A-Tour is presenting the Insomniac Tour on Friday, May 12. Call 653-2998 for additional details.

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The **Family Circle Theatre,** a drama group made up of students from **Morgan** and **Johns Hopkins Universities,** will hold a special program for

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Ramsey Lewis and his MUSIC CONTINUES TO MATURE

Ramsey Lewis is perhaps the most consummate keyboard player recording today. His music spans the gamut from funk to jazz to fusion to classical.

Ramsey Lewis is scheduled to show you why this statement is apropos beginning Tuesday, May 9 thru Sunday, May 14 at Blues Alley, Washington.

Ramsey's exceptional piano skills were fully realized when, at the age of 11, his local Chicago teacher (the late Ernestine Bruce) felt he was beyond her teaching program and suggested that his father enroll him in the Chicago Musical College. It was there that Ramsey met the late Dorothy Mendelsohn who turned out to be very instrumental in the development of his career.

"Dorothy Mendelsohn started me playing different pieces that peaked my interest. She got me involved with Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, etc. But even more importantly, she taught me that one should be technically proficient but technical proficiency should not be one's goal.

"As she explained it, what good is it if you can play fast and play the right notes and all that but not be able to play with emotion. She taught me that technique was merely a means to an end. The end of course, being to move your audience. You just can't play a series of notes, you have to feel a series of notes." (That philosophy has become Ramsey's objective in all his work, be it the jazz-funk of his hit "Sun Goddess" or an orchestrated work such as "Legacy.")

After studying classical music with Ms. Mendelsohn, Ramsey was finally introduced to jazz at age 15 by way of a group called the Cleffs. After building a reputation in and around the Chicago area, the group was heard by a popular Chicago disc jockey who ultimately led them to Argo Records (which later became Chess Records) where they received their first recording contract. The group first recorded under the name of the Ramsey Lewis Trio in 1956 because Ramsey's piano was the dominant instrument.

The album was received so well in New York that the Ramsey Lewis Trio was invited to play the Randalls Island Jazz Festival and a popular jazz spot called Birdland. The group was supposed to stay in New York four weeks but, due to popular demand, ended up staying four months. The legend of Ramsey Lewis was beginning to grow.

The Ramsey Lewis Trio recorded several albums but it wasn't until 1965 that they had a major hit. "In 1965 we were doing our 18th or 19th album and we were lacking one tune. That's when we came across Dobie Gray's tune, "The In Crowd." The funny thing was that we liked the tune but we didn't think it was a monster.

Ramsey Lewis Trio

Ramsey Lewis's group as they appeared in the late 60's.

We were just using the tune as a filler on the album but it went on to become the first, and one of the biggest, instrumental hits of all time. Both the album and the single went gold. Then our next single, "Hang On Sloopy," went gold as did the album, "Hang On Ramsey." Then we did it again when the single, "Wade In The Water," went gold along with "Wade In The Water" LP.

The original Ramsey Lewis Trio disbanded in 1965 when the group's immense success began to cause internal problems. "I'm not sure that success didn't spoil the group. In June of 1965 we were earning something like $1500 to $2000 a week. By September of 1965 we were earning something like $15,000 to $25,000 a week. It was like all this hit us smack in the face in a period of 90 days. After that we started finding problems with each other, dissension set in and then that trio broke up."

When bassist Eldee Young and drummer Red Holt left, they were replaced by Cleveland Eaton and a young, upcoming drummer named Maurice White. Maurice stayed with Ramsey until 1970 (when he left to form his own group called Earth, Wind & Fire) but turned out to play a very important role later in Ramsey's career.

In 1971 Ramsey signed with Columbia Records. "The first three or four albums I did after joining Columbia were pretty close to what I had been doing all along. But, in 1974, I was finishing up an album when Maurice called to tell me he had a couple of tunes. We met in Chicaago and recorded 'Hot Dawgitt' which we all thought would be a monster. After recording 'Hot Dawgitt' we decided to experiment with another tune Maurice had. Maurice had some of the guys from Earth, Wind & Fire with him so we used them on the record.

"After we got the music down, we figured why not add some vocals to it just to see what would happen. I had never put vocals on any of my records but I felt it would be a new, fresh approach for me so Maurice and the guys sang. We didn't have a name for it but we eventually came up with "Sun Goddess" and the tune went on to become a gold record."

A similar situation resulted in Ramsey's next big seller. "Again, I had almost completed the record when I got a call from Stevie Wonder. He asked me what I was doing. I told him I was almost finished recording my next album and suggested he write a tune to me. He wrote 'Spring High' and the title tune, 'Love Notes,' which did very well."

Although the current Ramsey Lewis resurgence exceeds even his popularity during his mid-sixties "In Crowd" successes, the pianist is quick to point out there has been no deliberate change of image. Indicating there are a lot of good piano players around, but few well-rounded entertainers today who also happen to play piano, Ramsey states, "I'm involved in other facets of music and life. I'm aware of other people, places and things. I'm always trying to enlarge upon my musical knowledge."

Just as so many other musicians who use their instruments as a voice, Ramsey is "fighting labels and categories, which is what the cultural revolution of the Sixties was all about." Particularly frustrating to him are those who classify him, or any modern instrumentalist, as a jazz artist.

"Novelists aren't labeled Top-40, Rock 'n' Roll, Classical or Jazz," he declares. "Artists should be labeled good or bad, according to the person participating in the creative work at that moment.

"In his biography, Louis Armstrong is quoted as never recalling a Black man who termed his music 'jazz.' Even in the thirties Duke Ellington said the word 'jazz' had become obsolete.

"This Black folk music, African improvisation and tribal music coupled with European harmonies, which has become known as Jazz, is really the truest reflection of the American community," Ramsey. asserts. "Although Whites were attracted to the music's sense of mystery, they were still frightened by it's racial connotations.

"Jazz hurt itself by simultaneously becoming both conservative and avant-garde," he opines. "As the jazz musician saw his music taken away from

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ETHEL ENNIS *& Friends*

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