Labelle debuts in theatre

By John W. Templeton
Staff Writer

It's perhaps stepping ahead of the game to talk about the resurrection of Jesus Christ just before the Christmas holiday, but that stepping and singing Patti LaBelle and a superb cast of entertainers gave in the Washington, DC revival of "Arms Too Short To Box With God."

Revival is an apt word to characterize the energy and excitement which Miss LaBelle injects into the Warner Theatre audience with in her first theatre performance after 20 years as a singer.

Several times during the performance, Miss LaBelle stomps out into the audience during a raising gospel number. Not content to whirl alone in a frenzy of religious excitement, she grabs several members of the audience "get into the feeling" along with her. As thousands of pairs of stomping feet and clapping hands resound throughout the hall, one felt placed inside a rocking, rolling church where folks let their religion hang out.

"Arms Too Short To Box With God" is a celebration of the black church tradition and the unique features such as the call and response singing which have survived from the African heritage.

In the first act, the play uses black spirituals to act out the story of Jesus' crucifixion and ascent to Heaven, told in the Book of Matthews. But there more than song. There is dancing - exuberant, exciting and at times amazing as a dozen actors and actresses fly through the air in precision or an individual soloist extends his body beyond what most would consider possible.

A versatile set provides the backdrop for the entire play, shifting from the sit of Jesus' crucifixion to a pastor's pulpit in the second act.

In that second act, the scene shifts to a church where the choir and minister are in celebration over the impact of the Son on their lives.

The essential difference which makes this production stand out is Patti LaBelle. Fans who knew her only through disco hits such as "Lady Marmalade" will marvel at her touching rendition of "Were You There When They Crucified My Lord" or "I Love You So Much, Jesus."

On the latter tune, the next to the last song of the musical, Miss LaBelle gave so much of herself dancing and singing out in the audience that a concerned cast member came out to help her back up the stairs.

For this performance, the original conceiver, Vinette Carroll and her Tony Award winning choreographer, Ralf Paul Haze, team to direct the action.

"Arms Too Short To Box With God", derived from the Book of Matthew in the New Testament, continues at the Warner Theatre, 706 13th St. NW. in Washington through Dec. 20. Showtime is 8 p.m.

Best bets for weekend

Darlene Burris (L) is Mytyl; Jerina Wainwright (C) is Light and Zerrien Jomo is Tytyl in the Christmas fantasy, "The Blue Bird" being presented this weekend at Dunbar Performing Arts Theatre sponsored by the Urban Service Agency. William T. Brown is directing with costumes by Teresa Satala. Cast has over 60 people from various segments of the Baltimore community.

TV Watching

By Vanessa Johnson
Friday

Evening Magazine: Segments include shopping for bargains. 7:30-8:00 p.m.-Ch. 13.

Benson: The Governor intervenes when Benson is blamed for everything from a plumbing disaster to the death of Kelly's pet snake. —Starring Robert Guillaume. 8:00-8:30 p.m.-Ch. 13.

Sneak Previews: Reviews include "Absence of Malice", "Buddy, Buddy" and "Ragtime". 9:00-9:30 p.m.-Ch. 22 & 67.

Family Christmas: NBC stars and their families gather for a holiday celebration. Celebrities include Nell Carter. 10:00-11:00 p.m.-Ch. 2.

Strike Force: Patients have been dying inexplicably at four hospitals, including the one where Klein is taken following a heart attack. Starring Dorian Harewood. 10:00-11:00 p.m.-Ch. 13.

Saturday

12 Gifts: A snow goose gathers 12 gifts for a lonely Santa Claus in this animated story, based on the song "The Twelve Days of Christmas". Cartoon. 1:00-1:30 p.m.-Ch. 13.

Gospel Christmas: Guests The Staham Singers perform Christmas music in gospel style. 6:00-6:30 p.m.-Ch. 22 & 67.

Barbara Mandrell: Guests include gospel singer Andrae Crouch. 8:00-9:00 p.m.-Ch. 4.

Walt Disney: "Escape to Witch Mountain", a tale of two orphans with extra-ordinary powers, and the millionaire who intends to exploit them. Part 1. 8:00-9:00 p.m.-Ch. 11.

Santa Claus is Coming to Town: An animated tale which begins

Kris Kringle, alias Santa Claus, is the subject of "Santa Claus is Coming to Town," a charming musical tale that explores the mysteries and legends of old St. Nick. The animagic special airs on the ABC Television Network on Saturday, Dec. 19 (8 - 9 p.m., EST). Mickey Rooney is heard as Kris Kringle, and Fred Astaire narrates.

with Tanta Kringle finding an abandoned baby. Cartoon. 8:00-8:30 p.m.-Ch. 13.

In Los Angeles with Tina Turner and others. 11:30-1:30 a.m.-Ch. 13.

Sunday

Kids Are People Too: Guests include actor Scatman Crothers. 10:30-11:30 a.m.-Ch. 13.

Yogi's First Christmas: Jellystone Lodge will be sold and destroyed unless Yogi can endore its wealthy owner's delight in the annual Christmas Carnival. Cartoon. 12:30-2:30 p.m.-Ch. 11.

Movie: "The Littlest Angel", story about a youngster adapting to heaven. Starring Cab Calloway. 2:00-3:30 p.m.-Ch. 13.

Bear Who Slept Through Christmas: A cub who gives up hibernation to search for the holiday spirit. Cartoon. 2:30-3:00 p.m.-Ch. 11.

All-American Football Team: A look at the 1981 Kodak All-America squad, featuring USC RB Marcus Allen the first collegian to rush for over 2000 yards in a season. 3:00-3:30 p.m.-Ch. 11.

America's Top 10 Christmas: A show highlighting the top 10 Christmas songs of all time features appearances by The Pointer Sisters, Lionel Ritchie and others. 3:30-4:30 p.m.-Ch. 13.

Family Circus: Santa will be bringing a special Christmas gift, "grandaad down from heaven". Cartoon. 7:00-7:30 p.m.-Ch. 2.

Rudolph and Frosty: Santa, his nor-nosed reindeer Rudolph and Frosty the Snowman against a sinister character who hopes to make the North Pole his own evil domain. Cartoon. 7:00-8:30 p.m.-Ch. 13.

Night Before Christmas: A visit from St. Nicholas. Cartoon. 7:30-8:00 p.m.-Ch. 2.

Movie: Sean Connery as James Bond in "Thunderball", centering on SPECTRE's threat to detonate two stolen atomic bombs in the West. 8:30-11:00 p.m.-Ch. 13.

Movie: "From a Far Country: Pope John Paul II", from humble beginnings to Christendom's most powerful position, share the stirring saga of the man who faced the German occupation and the Communist conquerers. 9:00-11:30 p.m.-Ch. 2.

The Jeffersons: Curiosity gets the best of George, who is determined to read what Louise has recorded each night in her diary. Starring Sherman Hemsley. 9:30-10:00 p.m.-Ch. 11.

Trapper John, M.D.: An alcoholic sidewalk Santa becomes a real St. Nick to an 11 year old boy suffering from a chronic blood disease. Starring Brian Mitchell. 10:00-11:00 p.m.-Ch. 11.

Movie: "Christmas Lillies of the Field", has German speaking nuns urging Homer Smith to build a home for orphans in the Arizona desert. Starring Billy Dee Williams. 12:00-2:00 a.m.-Ch. 45.

Movie: "St. Louis Blues", the story of composer W.C. Handy, played by Nat King Cole, also starring Eartha Kitt, Pearl Bailey, Ella Fitzgerald, Cab Calloway, Ruby Dee and Mahalia Jackson.

Free films

Admission to all film programs is free:

"Paisan", Roberto Rosselini's unforgettable picture of life among the Italian people during World War II, will be screened at 6 p.m. on Monday, Dec. 21, at the St. Paul Street Center, 2521 St. Paul St.

"A Christmas Carol", musical version of the Dickens classic with Fredric March as Scrooge and Basil Rathbone as the ghost of Marley, will be screened at 3 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 23, at the Pennsylvania Avenue Branch, North and Pennsylvania Aves.

"A Christmas Carol with Mr. Magoo", animated version of Dickens' story with Mr. Magoo as Scrooge, will be screened at 4 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 23, at the Waverly Branch, 400 E. 33rd St.

Free events for children

Monday, Dec. 21

Edmondson Avenue Branch Film: "A Very Merry Cricket", 2:45 p.m.

Canton Center: Film, "Cosmic Christmas", 4 p.m.

Pennsylvania Avenue Branch: Film, "A Christmas Story With Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids", 4 p.m.

Tuesday, Dec. 22

Brooklyn Branch: Film, "The Great Toy Robbery", "Santa's Toys", and "White Mane", 2 p.m.

Pennsylvania Avenue Branch: Film, "Yes, Virginia There Is A Santa Claus", 4 p.m.

Wednesday, Dec. 23

Broadway Branch: Film, "Yes, Virginia There Is A Santa Claus", 1 p.m.

Edmondson Avenue Branch: Film, "Cosmic Christmas", 1 p.m.

Northwood Branch: Films, "Another Fine Mess" and "The Chimp", 1:30 p.m.

Highlandtown Center: Film, "A Very Merry Cricket", 2 p.m.

Pennsylvania Avenue: Film, "A Christmas Carol, 3 p.m.

Walbrook Avenue Branch: Film, "A Christmas Carol with Mr. Magoo", 3:30 p.m.

Waverly Branch: Film, "A Christmas Carol With Mr. Magoo", 4 p.m.

Thursday, Dec. 24

Light Street Branch: Film, "A Christmas Carol With Mr. Magoo", 3:30 p.m.

New at Ch 2

Eugene Richie is new at Ch. 2.

Eugene G. Ritchie has been named Business Manager for WMAR-TV, Channel 2 in Baltimore, Md., it was announced by Arnold J. Kleiner, Vice-President and General Manager.

Before joining WMAR-TV, Ritchie was the Director of Management Services for Harrison Boyd and Associates Management Consultants in Washington, D.C.

The former Director of Business Services for the Baltimore Council for Equal Business Opportunity (CEBO), Ritchie was also the Senior Business Specialist for Minority Business Enterprise Project at Morgan State University.

A native of Baltimore, Ritchie received his B.S. degree in business administration from Morgan State University, his M.B.A. in management from the University of Pittsburgh and his J.D. degree from the University of Maryland.

Dewar's unto others.

The gift of Dewar's. Good things never vary.

ATTRACTIVE PROFESSIONAL FEMALE SONGTRESS

Seeks the expertise of a well seasoned business manager or knowledgeable entrepreneur to handle my singing career. I am 27, dedicated to my art and proficient in showmanship. Only those who can offer financial backing and leadership need apply. Strictly contract negotiations only. Will re-locate. Write:

BOX 21T,
c/o Afro-American Newspapers,
628 N. Eutaw St.
Balto., Md. 21201

GARY BARTZ
will be appearing at THE CLOSET
221 W. Franklin St.
Dec. 25-26-27-1981

'Here comes de judge'

Pigmeat Markham, 77

By Ida Peters

Vaudeville comedian, Dewey "Pigmeat" Markham who for many years teamed with Jackie "Moms" Mabley, died last Sunday in Montefiore Hospital in the Bronx, N.Y., after a massive heart attack.

Markham, labeled as "one of the funniest and most popular of comedians" was 77. He was born April 18, 1906 in Durham, N.C. and started his career with Gilliscarnvials as a child star in 1919.

His many films included "Hellcats", "Junction 88"; "Swanee Showboat", "The Wrong Mr. Right"; "Gang War", 1939.

Also, "Am I Guilty?", "Mr. Smith Goes Ghost", "One Big Mistake", 1940; "Fight That Ghost", "Shut My Big Mouth", "House Rent Party", 1946; "Pigmeat's Laugh Hepcat", 1947.

"Doing the Susie - Q" the white showman's interpretation of the method of trucking, originated by Dewey (Pigmeat) Markham, swept the show world to become the latest dance craze in 1936.

His most famous records were "Here Come de Judge", "Crap Shooting Reverend" and "Moms Mabley and Pigmeat Markham".

He was known all over the world for his appearances at Paramount Theatre and he played the Apollo Theatre on and off since 1935.

Happy Holidays from

VALUE WXYV-FM

GR-EAT PRIZES FOR OUR LISTENERS NOW THRU CHRISTMAS

V-103 is giving away hundreds of prizes including Airline tickets and Champagne Dinners. We will also donate $5.00, in the name of every Prize Winner, to the Afro-American's Ms. Santa Campaign for the Needy. Listen to the V for details.

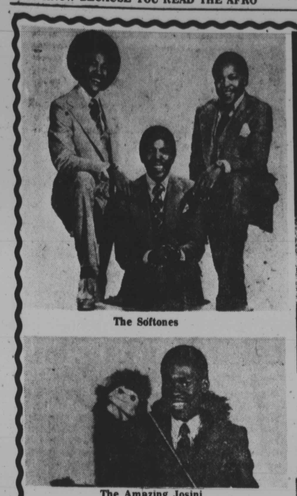
MERRY CHRISTMAS! THANKS FOR A GR-EAT YEAR!

The Music Experience of the Eighties.

Come Stay With Us? You'll Love It Better at

TOWSON EAST MOTEL

1507 EAST JOPPA RD.
BETWEEN TOWSON & LOCH RAVEN BLVD.
NEW COLOR TV-AM/FM RADIO
Air-Conditioning and Phone in Every Room
FREE MOVIE
Phone:
825-5800
Bring this Ad For $2.25 Room Discount
15 Minutes From Downtown Balto.
Via Greenmount Ave.-York Rd. Or Loch Raven Blvd.
SUNDAYS & MONDAYS ONLY



The Softones

First Class

The Amazing Josini

REDEEMER

Rev. Willie Ray and Redeemer's Palace presents a city - wide Youth Extravaganza with Softones, First Class, Brenda Alford, Jimmy Briscoe and the Beavers, Sunday, Dec. 20 at Calvert Education Center. With Rev. Ray is Steven Mark Blackmore, vocalist, the "Original Singing Bartender."

Gretchen (Carol Stockton), The Pied Piper's girlfriend, sings to Peters the Piper (Darren Page) that she will marry only for love. The children's musical, "The Magical Pied Piper," runs weekends thru Dec. 22 at the Arena Playhouse.

REDEEMER'S PALACE presents
A CITY WIDE YOUTH CRIME PREVENTION EXTRAVAGANZA
—IN CONCERT—
THE SOFTONES
"SPACE CADET"
"CARLA MY LOVE"
FIRST CLASS
"DON'T LISTEN TO YOUR FRIENDS"
BRENDA ALFORD
"BRENDA ALFORD LIVE"
JIMMY BRISCOE AND The BEAVERS
JOSINI THE MAGICIAN
—SPECIAL GUESTS—
CHARLES BENTON • JUDGE WILLIAM MURPHY, Jr.
KWEISI MFUME • TRAVIS WINKEY • TIM WATTS
MASTER OF CEREMONIES REV. WILLIE RAY
CALVERT EDUCATION CENTER
200 E. NORTH AVE. (North & Calvert Sts.) BALTIMORE
ON No. 13 BUS LINE
SUN. DEC. 20
2 BIG SHOWS--3 P.M. & 8 P.M.--TICKETS $3.50
Tickets On Sale At: YOUR RECORD SHOP · MODES · BIRDLAND MUSIC STORES · SOUNDTRACK · DOUGLAS RECORDS
READ THE AFRO

Baltimore's best...

Leila Danette steals show

'Amen Corner'

By Ida Peters

James Baldwin's "The Amen Corner" was first produced at Howard University under Professor Owen Dodson in 1971.

He said about opening night that he knew the church that James Baldwin was writing about and so did the actors at Howard. "We knew about the storefront churches and their songs, the songs of our own childhood and the crammed audience on opening night must have known it too, for there was applause like rock and roll applause".

It was a different kind of audience at Center Stage Tuesday night and Walter Dallas has softened the religious fervor of "Amen Corner" and concentrated on the anguish of an attractive woman preacher, Sister Margaret, (Frances Foster) who is torn between love for a long-lost husband and love for the Lord.

In contrast, back in 1972, when Mary West Miller played Sister Margaret at the Arena Playhouse the audience emphathized, sympathized and became involved... One sister wandered in off the street and thought she was in church during the opening scene.

Center Stage's audience was more restrained and quiet which does not mean that they were not affected by the powerfulness of the acting.

"Amen Corner" under Walter Dallas has become more Americanized more universal about the suffering of poor people who seek religion under tent preachers, storefronts or even Billy Graham to forget their loss of babies, their hunger, lack of money to pay their rent, lack of furniture and appliances.

"Amen Corner" is played on an open set designed by Richard R. Goodwin which includes a church with a lighted cross, pulpit and stained glass picture of Jesus. In the center, a kitchen to indicate downstairs living quarters and a rear bedroom.

Action starts ten minutes before curtain time as the choir rehearses and the congregation gathers one by one.

Morgan grad plays the conniving, scheming Sister Moore.

Sister Margaret in the play came north to NYC about 1900 with her sister Odessa (played by Deloris Gaskins); married a jazz musician Luke whom she loved dearly (Bill Cobbs) in the early 1920's; lost her baby girl in the mid-'30s and left him taking her young son. In the 1940's she took up the ministry. The play opens with her sick husband returning; her son in rebellion wanting girls, liquor and jazz music and the members of her church planning to put her out.

Leila Danette as Sister Moore, is proof-positive that Baltimore with all of its prejudiced ways has sent many a person out in the world to seek fame and fortune and their talent has never been revealed to the home folks. (Howard Rollins, is another).

Leila Danette with her expressive face, hands and bearing makes the most of the holier than thou sister trying to oust Sister Margaret from her pulpit.

Leila Danette is her stage name. Her real name is Leila Madison Williams. She was born in Jacksonville, Fla. and came to Baltimore at an early age to attend Morgan Academy.

Her mother was Mrs. Madison Williams prominent in Sharon Baptist Church and her sister is Mrs. Mildred Williams, former music teacher and organist for 43 years at Sharon Baptist Church. They lived with the late Dr. and Mrs. Frank Saunders... Edith is still living.

She graduated from Coppin in the Class of 1931 and recently attended the 50th Anniversary of her class. She received her B.S. from Morgan; studied Speech and Drama at Father G. HartkeCatholic University. She studied with Edward Boatner, Strasberg Institute the Arena Theatre and has been in the theatre business for the last 14 years.

Miss Danette says it is a thrill to play Center Stage as this is her first stage appearance in her home town. Her films include "Amazing Grace", "Fame", "Super Cops" and "Godfather II".

Her plays include "Great White Hope", "The Little Foxes", and "The Amen Corner" with Richard Allen Center for Performing Arts.

Grafton Gray, music director for "The Amen Corner" is just sensational. He is currently music director for St. Cecilia's Catholic Church Choir as well as a member of the Dunbar Chamber Singers.

"DELIGHTS! DAZZLES! STIRS!"

James Cagney makes a Yankee-Doodle comeback.
Howard E. Rollins is magnificent as Coalhouse Walker, the proud black drifter whose quest for justice erupts in a rampage of terror."
—Guy Flatley, Cosmopolitan

"Howard E. Rollins is tremendous and a sure bet to become a star overnight. James Cagney is feisty and engaging."
—Bruce Williamson, Playboy

"A TRIUMPH! James Cagney is nothing short of superb. Moses Gunn provides some stunning moments as Booker T. Washington. But it is Howard E. Rollins as Coalhouse, who stands out as a man of joy, of anger, of memorable stature in righteous wrath and personal sorrow."
—Judith Crist, Saturday Review

"HOWARD E. ROLLINS GIVES A POWERHOUSE PERFORMANCE."
—Stephen Schiff, Glamour

"A BLOCKBUSTER! James Cagney is absolutely splendid. Coalhouse Walker, Jr. is brought to multi-dimensional life by the wonderful work of Howard E. Rollins. Debbie Allen is more than excellent as his wife."
—Norma McLain Stoop, After Dark

"VIVID! ELEGANT! A winningly assured performance by James Cagney. Howard E. Rollins' Coalhouse Walker, a proud black pianist, is a star-making piece of work."
—Stephen Schaefer, US Magazine

RAGTIME

DINO DE LAURENTIIS PRESENTS A MILOS FORMAN FILM
"RAGTIME" with JAMES CAGNEY · BRAD DOURIF · ELIZABETH McGOVERN · KENNETH McMILLAN · JAMES OLSON · MANDY PATINKIN · HOWARD E. ROLLINS · MARY STEENBURGEN · Music by RANDY NEWMAN
A SUNLEY PRODUCTION · Executive Producers MICHAEL HAUSMAN and BERNARD WILLIAMS · Screenplay by MICHAEL WELLER · From the Novel Ragtime by E. L. DOCTOROW
Produced by DINO DE LAURENTIIS · Directed by MILOS FORMAN · Read the Bantam Book · Soundtrack Album on Elektra Records and Tapes · A PARAMOUNT PICTURE
PG PARENTAL GUIDANCE SUGGESTED · SOME MATERIAL MAY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR CHILDREN
Copyright © MCMLXXXI by Paramount Pictures Corporation. All Rights Reserved.
STARTS FRIDAY December 18th
JUMPERS CINEMA · Ritchie Hwy at Jumpers Hole · 768-5151
MAYFAIR · 508 N. Howard · 539-7128
TIMONIUM CINEMA · York Rd opp Fair Grds · 252-2202
WESTVIEW CINEMA · 6000 Baltimore Nat'l Pike · Ex 15 W · 747-6464