1943: A Requiem

Saturday, August 13, 2011
Cleveland State University
Dedication

The cover photo of dancer Shenee King reminds me of so many people from the African American past (and present), including those amazing women in “Daughters of the Dust,” the award-winning feature film by Julie Dash, and the members of Brazil’s *Irmandade de Boa Morte* (Sisterhood of the Good Death). In a larger sense, however, the image also seems to embody the spirit of serenity and Sankofa, because, like the bird in the traditions of Africa’s Akan peoples, the model looks backward while facing forward. This program is dedicated to everyone who is willing to look backward while facing forward and learning from the past.

— RNW

Acknowledgments

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For its support of the undergraduate research assistantships for Audrianna Rodriguez, Dominique Brookes, and Annette Rudolph

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**The 2011 Cleveland Chautauqua Planning Committee**

and

**The Initiative for the Study of Religion and Spirituality in the History of Africa and the Diaspora (RASHAD)**
Welcome to “1943: A Requiem.” This evening’s activities are part of the second annual Cleveland Chautauqua series. The Chautauqua theme for 2011 is “Engaged Learning in Times of War and Peace,” and program content focusing on the World War II era and beyond is central to our first Staging African American History and Culture project. This staged reading of a new work inspired by the life and times of Lena Horne is also part of a larger program focusing on the life, art, and legacy of writer Zora Neale Hurston, winner of the Anisfeld-Wolf Book Award in 1943.

Some writers refer to the 1940s as the era of the Chicago Renaissance, but I am convinced that African American culture flourished in all parts of the country in this decade. In addition to Hurston’s achievements in literature during the 1940s, for example, Duke Ellington conducted and toured with his big band, Lena Horne graced the silver screen in “Stormy Weather” and other films, and Billy Strayhorn composed and performed some of his greatest works, including “Take the A Train,” which became the theme song for Ellington’s band.

Even as these artists shared their incredible gifts with larger and more diverse audiences, African American wartime migration helped fuel the social and economic transformation of cities in the North and the West, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) remained in the forefront of the struggle for Civil Rights. The words and the music for “1943” were selected with a view toward helping members of the audience gain a better understanding of the significance of these and other historical events.

All activities for Staging African American History and Culture are designed to enhance student learning, through co-curricular programs, performing arts activities, lectures, faculty and student research projects, and related publications. With that in mind, I spent part of the spring semester of 2011 working with four student research assistants: Austin Stewart, Audrianna Rodriguez, Dominique Brookes, and Annette Rudolph. Using the collections in Cleveland State University’s Michael Schwartz Library and Yale University’s Beinecke Library, these students identified books, scholarly articles, documentary films, photographs, and other materials related to RASHAD’s on-going research and programming activities. Selected titles from their master bibliography are included in this program booklet, and I hope that you will use this information to learn more about the themes that playwright Nathaniel Rhodes explores in “1943.”

You are also invited to join us in celebrating the 75th anniversary of the publication of Zora Neale Hurston’s greatest novel, Their Eyes Were Watching God, during the upcoming academic year. Our colleagues at Cleveland Public Library have already agreed to help launch the official celebration with a Hurston birthday party in January 2012, and RASHAD is planning a fall 2012 academic conference and a special Hurston-related issue of The Journal of Traditions and Beliefs. For periodic program updates, please visit the Cleveland Chautauqua Blog at http://rwilliams.csuelearning.org/.

Thanks, always, for your support!

Regennia

Dr. Regennia N. Williams
Associate Professor of History, Cleveland State University
Founder and Director of the Initiative for the Study of Religion and Spirituality in the History of Africa and the Diaspora (RASHAD)
Nathaniel Rhodes
Playwright / Director

**The Cast**

Jessie C. Sims (Lillian Bramley)
Robin Bradley (Lizzie Mae)
Wilhelmenia Glenn (Ernestine)
Theresa Ann Scott (Mama T)
Christopher B. Batiste, Jr. (Pvt. C. Baptiste)
Nathaniel Rhodes (Nathan)
Shenee King (African Dancer)

**The Band**

Christopher Burge, Saxophone
Jovan Johnson, Trombone
Jacob Wynne, Trumpet
Elijah Gilmore, Drums
Kevin S. Muhammed, Bass
Jacob Bergson, Piano

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Dr. Dave Moody, Guest Speaker
Mario Jackson, Stage Manager
Crazy Marvin, Special Guest
Duke Ellington
Selected Titles from the Bibliography Compiled by Dominique Brookes and Regennia N. Williams


Billy Strayhorn
Selected Titles from the Bibliography Compiled by Austin Stewart

*Identifying primary and secondary sources related to the life of Billy Strayhorn, a native Ohioan and Duke Ellington’s composing and arranging companion, is especially challenging, because Strayhorn was a very private person, and he was often overshadowed by Ellington. Austin Stewart’s bibliography includes information on articles and books about Strayhorn’s work before and during his years with the Duke Ellington Orchestra.

— RNW


Zora Neale Hurston
Selected Titles from the Bibliography Compiled by Annette Rudolph

*Annette Rudolph’s bibliography consists of scholarly articles that are contained in databases owned by the Michael Schwartz Library at Cleveland State University. In recent years, Harper Perennial has re-released most of Hurston’s book-length publications. For information on those books, please visit the official Zora Neale Hurston website at www.zoranealehurston.com.

— RNW


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Your gift to RASHAD provides funding for programs and our endowed scholarship and fellowship fund at Cleveland State University.

For more information on how you can direct your tax-deductible contribution to the RASHAD Endowment or the operating fund for RASHAD: Initiative for the Study of Religion and Spirituality,

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