

African American Read-In filled with inspiring moments

Dallas: Actor Avery Brooks among those speaking at event

12:00 AM CST on Sunday, February 5, 2006

By HERB BOOTH / The Dallas Morning News

Motivational speaker Johnny Wimbrey spent part of Saturday inspiring others during the seventh annual African American Read-In at the Majestic Theater.

DARON DEAN/DMN

The Dallas Black Dance Theater performs at the seventh annual Read-In. The program also included a tribute to actor Ossie Davis, who died about the time of last year's event.

Then his 4-year-old daughter, Psalms, inspired him.

As Psalms wandered onto the stage, Mr. Wimbrey lifted her up in his arms and told the standing-room-only crowd that this might be his daughter's first memory.



"It was totally spontaneous," Mr. Wimbrey said later of his daughter's sudden appearance on stage. "I immediately thought of my first memory as a child – being in a battered women's shelter. I hope this is Psalms' first memory."

Bell Lumpkin, one of those in attendance, called it "an inspiring moment."

"When she hugged him as he was walking off the stage, that said everything about what this event is all about," Ms. Lumpkin said. "It was totally unplanned and something I cherished, something that sticks with you."

Mr. Wimbrey, actor Avery Brooks and a host of others performed *A Prince Came Out of Egypt: A Tribute to Ossie Davis*. Mr. Davis, a longtime African-American actor, died about the time of last year's Read-In. Organizers said honoring Mr. Davis also encourages young men to become more active in the community.

Mr. Brooks – best known for his role as Capt. Benjamin Sisko on *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* – lent his booming voice as the narrator for the production, which featured music, poetry and writings by the actor.

Mr. Wimbrey told the audience – especially the young men – that they had better make the right choices in their lives. He said reading is one of those right choices.

Dallas Andrews, a 12-year-old student at Richardson's Liberty Junior High School, said he enjoyed Mr. Wimbrey's presentation.

"He made you think," Dallas said. "He really got my attention."

For Hakil Shalameth, Mr. Davis' life story was captivating.

"I didn't know all those things about Ossie Davis," Mr. Shalameth said. "I won't forget it, either. It made me think about what I'm doing. It's a great example."

Besides being an accomplished actor, Mr. Davis – who was married to actress Ruby Dee – was also a director, playwright and activist. Audience members were taken on a trip through his life, replete with pictures and symbols of the civil rights movement in which he was active.

"What I took away from it was how humble Mr. Davis was," said Truth Shateek. "It makes you want to go out and read. Maybe it will make some young person stretch out and live for something greater than the here and now."

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