

# "Cooley High" & "Sister Act II" To Leave Marks Here

Playwright Judi Ann Mason and Actor Glynn Turman to be Enshrined in Bushfire's "Walk of Fame" Saturday, May 20

By Tyree Johnson  
Editor/Publisher

There will be a buzz along 52nd Street near Locust around 5 PM Saturday (May 20) as two living legends of stage, cinema and television will appear to leave their marks in the cement outside the Bushfire Theatre of Performing Arts.



Judi Ann Mason

Remember Priest in the 1970's classic urban tale and coming-of-age story "Cooley High" when at the finale he pours a libation on the grave of his fallen comrade?

That was Glynn Turman who will be posing for the cameras as he sinks his hands in the cement outside the neighborhood theatre.

Turman was also once married to soul singer Aretha Franklin.

And, remember some lines from such TV shows as "Good Times," "I'll Fly Away," "What's Happin'," and a number of other sitcoms and drama shows over the years.

Some of those episodes were written by playwright Judi Ann Mason, whose portfolio includes scores of plays as one of the 1960's artists who continues to thrive.

Ms. Mason will also leave her handprints and signature on the 52nd Street strip.

Actor/director  
Roscoe Lee



Glynn Turman

Browne, known for his suave manner and baritone voice, and Tony winning playwright August Wilson, are being honored posthumously.

The four are being recognized by the theatre for their long-time contributions to the arts and their achievements as African Americans.

The public is invited to witness the event. Their enduring will rest along side those of such notables as Esther Rolle, Loretta Devine, Charles Fuller, Woody King, Paul Robeson, Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, Orzelle Davis and Ruby Dee, Langston Hughes, and others.

At 7:30 PM, Bushfire will present the Philadelphia premiere of August Wilson's "Gem of the Ocean." (See a review of this play on Page 10.)



Roscoe Lee Brown

# Walk of Fame for blacks in films, theater and television

By Douglas J. Keating  
INQUIRER THEATER CRITIC

The country's first Walk of Fame for African Americans who have distinguished themselves in theater, film and television will be inaugurated Saturday at the Bushfire Theatre of Performing Arts, 52d and Locust Streets.

More than 150 people are expected to attend the first of what is planned as an annual ceremony outside the West Philadelphia theater, during which the handprints of director Lloyd Richards and actor John Amos will be enshrined in cement in the sidewalk of 52d Street. Four deceased theater and film personalities will be recognized with the dedication of brass plaques embedded in the pavement.

"The intent is to give recognition to African Americans who have achieved excellence in stage, screen and TV," said Al Simpkins, artistic director of Bushfire. "Many African Americans have worked hard over the years in these areas and would not get any recognition whatsoever."

Although African Americans are named on See FAME on E5

THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

E5

# Noting black achievements on stage, screen,

FAME from E1  
plaques embedded in the sidewalk of Philadelphia's South Broad Street music walk of fame, and blacks in the film industry are honored by plaques and handprints in the sidewalk of Hollywood Boulevard, Simpkins pointed out that there was no walk of fame in the country devoted solely to African Americans. He said he hoped this highly visible form of recognition would be "encouraging and a motivating factor for the community to see what these blacks have achieved."

Besides Richards, one of the most prominent stage directors in the country, and Amos, who had a featured role in the highly acclaimed television mini-series *Roots*, the first Bushfire ceremony will recognize actor/singer Paul Robeson, 19th-century actor Ira Aldridge, actress/singer Dorothy Dandridge, and theater technician William B. Dickerson.

The black-tie affair at the theater will run from 3 p.m. to midnight. It will begin with a reception, which will be followed by the outdoor ceremony. Then comes dinner, followed by the performance of the Bushfire production of August Wilson's drama *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*. A post-performance reception will conclude the evening.

Richards has directed *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*. In fact, he has directed the original productions of

five of Wilson's highly praised plays about African American life in the 20th century. Richards won a Tony Award for his direction of *Fences*, one of the Wilson plays. Richards, who is in his 70s, began his career as an actor and a director in regional theaters.

He became nationally recognized in 1959 when he directed *A Raisin in the Sun*, which was an artistic and

popular success on Broadway. For years he was the head of the prestigious Yale Repertory Theatre, and he has directed the American premieres of eight plays by the important South African playwright Athol Fugard.

Amos, 53, is familiar to Bushfire theatergoers from the one-man show *Halley's Comet*, which he performed at the theater last year. Although he is best-known for his television acting — he was Gordy in the Weatherman on *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* and starred as the adult Kunta Kinte in *Roots* — Amos has also acted in many films and stage productions. He also has written for television and is the artistic director of the John Harms Center for the Performing Arts in Englewood, N.J.

Robeson (1898-1976) was one of the great black actors and singers of the century. Famous for his rendition of "Ol' Man River" in both the stage and screen versions of the musical *Show Boat*, Robeson also played Othello on New York and London stages and first made his mark as an actor when he played the title role in a revival of *The Emperor Jones*. He also acted in several films and spent the last decade of his life in retirement at his sister's home in West Philadelphia, not far from the Bushfire Theatre.

Aldridge (1807-67) is often referred to as the first great black American actor, even though he performed only as a teenager in this country. Feeling constrained by racial prejudice, Aldridge left New York for England when he was 17 and made his career abroad. In 1833 he replaced the mortally ill Edmund Kean as Othello. Shakespeare's tragic Moor became one of his most frequent roles, but he was regarded as an extremely versatile and able actor who played both black and white parts on the British stage.

Dickerson, who died in 1993, was a Philadelphian who served the theater for years as a technician and set arranger.