



Slippin' Through the Cracks – The Blues Journey of Bobby Rush

By Jackie Hampton
Publisher

Since last summer, New Stage Theatre has been involved with the development of a new musical play about the life of Bobby Rush. A very talented group of Mississippi actors, singers and musicians gathered to work on the new musical, SLIPPIN' THROUGH THE CRACKS, THE BLUES JOURNEY OF BOBBY RUSH with songs by Bobby Rush and written by Stephen Helper and Bobby Rush. The piece was presented as a stage reading on Saturday, June 2 and Sunday, June 3, to an invited audience at New Stage Theatre.

“SLIPPIN' THROUGH THE CRACKS is a true story of the pride and promise of Mississippi and the American South. It is an American story of faith, joy, resilience and triumph,” said New Stage Theatre Artistic Director Francine Reynolds. “It is very exciting for us to be part of the development of this new musical about the life of Bobby Rush.”

The show dramatizes Bob-

by Rush's journey: from juke joints to world tours, from harecropper to blues superstar, even some false arrests as so often happens to black males as they sometime follow a path not traveled by many others.

Reynolds said, “Rush's story is carried forward across eight American decades by his boisterous and moving songs, the hallmarks of the Blues.”

Helper was very pleased with the production. He spoke well of the entire cast. When asked specifically about Joy Amerson, who played the part of Bobby Rush's mother, he responded, “Joy is a gem, a wonderful actress, she is a very hard worker and I love her.”

At the end of the play, after the cast took their bows, Bobby Rush ran upon the stage with his guitar playing while singing “Slippin' Through the Cracks. The audience was apparently thrilled.

“I appreciate that the creators of the theatre piece wanted the workshop to take place

in Mississippi and we were able to hire Mississippi artists. All of this was made possible by a generous donation. We hope to do a full production of the show in the future and that will take more generous investment,” said Reynolds.

After the play, Bobby Rush, while reminiscing with Dr. Tanya Moore about her grandfather, the late Charles Evers, paused for a moment to tell *The Mississippi Link* that he really wanted his life story to be told and was very pleased with the production. Rush said he was by no means surprised that the play was so well enjoyed by the audience. He said, “I know God can do anything.”

Rush said that his friend Stephen Helper wrote this play with and about him but it was not written so that people could feel sorry for him and the trials he had to endure.

Rush said, “I want people to know that if a country boy like me can make it through the cracks, then they can too.”



Frequency: Weekly

City: Jackson

Circulation: 7852

State: MS

County: Hinds



Dramatic scene by cast

PHOTOS BY JACKIE HAMPTON AND LYNN ORMAN



(L) Mark Henderson as father of Rush and Yohance Myles as young Rush



Cast surrounding Rush after the performance (seated)



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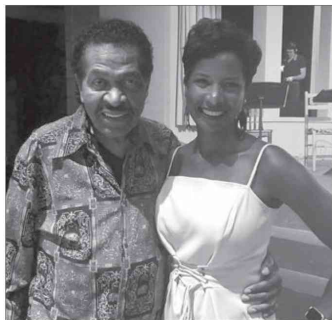
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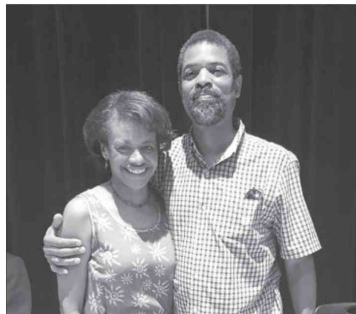
Cast and others



Carolyn Amerson and Rush



Rush and Dr. Tanya Moore





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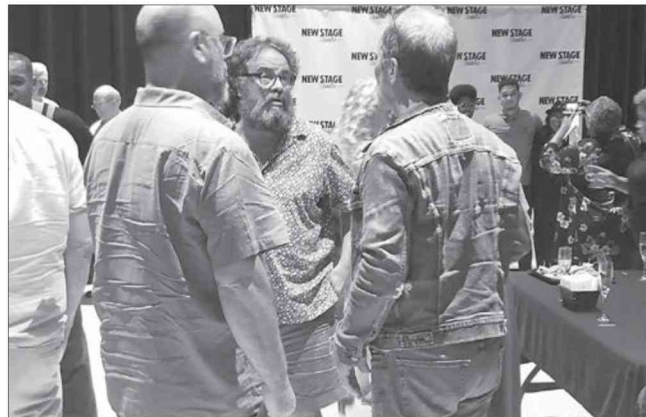
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Joy (cast member) and Cleophus Amerson



Stephen Helper and Rush



Reception



LOCAL NEWS



WOMEN BUILD 2022: In memory of Elise Winter



Habitat for Humanity Mississippi Capital Area (HFHMCA) will begin Women Build on July 16. This year's project has a deeper meaning than years past. HFHMCA is dedicating this special home to Elise Winter and her legacy. For decades, Women Build has taken place because a diverse group of women banded together to empower a local family to purchase a safe, decent, affordable home with a zero-interest, thirty-year mortgage – which Elise believed was HFHMCA's mission. Modeling past Women Build shirts are some of the 2022 Women Build committee members (from left, back) Kara Washington, Jennifer Studebaker, Monica Galloway, Shirley Tucker, Merrill Tenney McKewen, Betty Smithson; (from left, front) Maura Jelliffe and Juanita Sims Doty. To volunteer or support this project, call 601-353-6060 or visit www.habitatmca.org.

'Slippin' Through the Cracks': The Blues Journey of Bobby Rush

By BRINDA FULLER WILLIS, PhD
JA Contributing Writer

"Slippin' Through the Cracks" is the first time a musical has been developed depicting the life and times of Grammy Award winning funky Bluesman Bobby Rush.

Author/Director, Stephen Helper, and Music Director, Vasti Jackson, respectively, brought the stage biopic of Bobby Rush to the world at the New Stage Theatre via a Reading Workshop. Helper scripted the story that was told to him by Bobby Rush, and Jackson arranged and laid down the music to bring the script to life. Jackson has been the musical architect behind the signature Bobby Rush sound from the early days of the 1950s that has become known to the world. And Tiffany Anderson choreographed the dance steps to the Bobby Rush songs that aligned with the life-scenes of "The Blues Journey of Bobby Rush."

A very special, select, and appreciative group of invited guests and Bobby Rush fans had the privilege of attending a reading of the new play with dedicated music from the man's considerable repertoire on Saturday, June 25, 2022 (7:00 p.m.) and Sunday, June 26, 2022 (1:30 p.m.) inside the intimate seating of Jackson's premiere neighborhood theatre, New Stage.



Jackson's own MADDRA founder Mark Henderson (right) portrays Bobby Rush's father, Emmett Ellis Sr.

The cast of local talent read the script with cinematic bravado that one would expect from Broadway stars. Mark Henderson portrayed one of the lead roles as Bobby Rush's father, Emmett Ellis Sr., and he had the crowd standing on their feet. Several of the cast members sang songs that the audience chimed in to sing-along to because they were so familiar with the lyrics of Bobby Rush hits. The dance scenes were also just as well-known to the audience and as much chair dancing as could be was observed.

The reading of the play received rave reviews and accolades along with a standing ovation during several scenes and at the end of each act that climaxed with the final curtain.

Artistic Director, Francine

Reynolds, welcomed everyone to the reading workshop and informed the audience that New Stage wishes to put the show into full production with the help of donors and financial sponsors in the near future.

Visit www.newstage theatre.com and/or call 601-948-3533 to inquire about upcoming shows, memberships, and ticket packages.



Director/Playwright Stephen Helper, Robert Terrell, Bobby Rush, and Willie Simmons. (Photos by Lynn Orman Weiss)



Bobby Rush sits in with part of the cast at the end of the Saturday night performance of "Slippin' Through the Cracks."



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June 24, 2022

Contact: Melissa Tillman
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MEDIA ADVISORY

What: Staged Reading of *Slippin' Through The Cracks, The Blues Journey of Bobby Rush*

Where: New Stage Theatre; 1100 Carlisle St, Jackson 39202

When: Saturday, June 25 at 7:00 pm (reception to follow); Sunday, June 26 at 1:30 pm

JACKSON—New Stage Theatre has been involved with the development of a new musical play about the life of Bobby Rush. A very talented group of Mississippi actors, singers and musicians have gathered to work on the new musical, *Slippin' Through The Cracks, The Blues Journey of Bobby Rush* with songs by Bobby Rush and written by Stephen Helper and Bobby Rush. The piece is ready presentation as a staged reading and we would like you to be one of the first to experience this new play in the early stages of its development.

Mississippi's own Double Grammy winner Bobby Rush has an exciting and entertaining story. This musical celebrates the deep Southern roots and Mississippi heritage that feed the drive and inspiration that took him to the top of the charts and around the globe. His astounding resilience in the face of hardships makes it a great American story everyone can share. The show dramatizes Bobby Rush's journey: from juke joints to world tours, from sharecropper to blues superstar, and is carried forward across eight American decades by his boisterous and moving songs, the hallmarks of the Blues.

Slippin' Through The Cracks is a true story of the pride and promise of Mississippi and the American South. It is an American story of faith, joy, resilience and triumph.

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