

# ARTS & CULTURE

## Pinkins and Thoms Star In 'And Her Hair Went With Her'

BY DARLENE DONLOE  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

A black beauty shop has always been a therapeutic refuge for black women. Be it good, bad, indifferent, or just downright scandalous gossip, it all comes out in the wash (pun intended).

So it is in "And Her Hair Went With Her," Zina Camblin's poignant one-act play about African American sisterhood.

In this two-hander, Tony Award-winner Tonya Pinkins plays Jasmine to Tracie Thoms' ("Cold Case") Angie. Jasmine is a mature, apolitical sort who is set in her ways. While Angie is a radical single mother majoring in women's studies, who also is an aspiring writer ready to set the world on fire. The two women are Nina Simone enthusiasts who find themselves at the opposite end of the spectrum when it comes to understanding and fulfilling one's life purpose. The persona and music of jazz singer and civil rights activist Simone is pivotal to the play's banter.

The two friends run a beauty salon frequented by familiar, yet endearing and eccentric characters.

Pinkins, a regular on "All My Children," and Thoms are on their "A" game. They are exceptional as they effortlessly weave (pun intended) in and out, playing not only the salon owners, but also their over-the-top customers — with only the help of a wig.

There are several memorable characters, including "Miss Bernadette, a gray-haired older woman who sees and scolds imaginary children.

Thoms is exceptional as obsessive-compulsive, sanitized wipe carrying Keisha, as well as Denise, who, because of her pitiful and comical work ethic, is unable to hold down a job for more than a few days. Thoms is hilarious as Debbie, a fledgling actress under a long straight wig, preparing to audition for Ntozake Shange's "For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf."

Without a doubt, the best scenes are when Angie visits Phylicia Miller (Pinkins), a woman on death row for killing a man who killed one of her female lovers. Angie is interviewing Phylicia for a book project.

Here is where Pinkins shines! She is brilliant in her quiet, yet riveting portrayal of this unforgiving murderess. With only a slight slouch in her gait and a resolved and emotionless face, Pinkins brings Phylicia's pain, wisdom and surprising joy and freedom, to the forefront. It's truly amazing to watch.

And then there's Chrystal, a black woman with blond hair who has decided she is really a white woman.

While the play is comical, it brings to bear some of the hardships and inner conflicts African

American women have had to and continue to endure. Whether it's self-worth, self-love or just moving above and beyond the pain, it's a right of passage that every African American woman must confront and conquer.

Watching Pinkins and Thoms makes for a very enjoyable evening of theater.

Camblin's witty, penetrating, volatile and in-your-face writing is true to the black experience. She addresses and confronts many stereotypes, which may prove to be too much real for some audience members. But, it's all good!

Diane Rodriguez's masterful and energetic direction keeps the story moving, while Sandra Burns' set design, Tony Mulanix's lighting and Adam Phalen's sound, gives the play a lift.

This production is a National New Play Network world premiere. "And Her Hair Went With Her," directed by Rodriguez and written



Photo by ED KRIEGER

**'HER HAIR'**—Tracie Thoms (left) and Tonya Pinkins star in the world premiere of a National New Play Network presentation of "And Her Hair Went With Her" written by Zina Camblin and directed by Diane Rodriguez. The play runs through June 15 at the Fountain Theatre.

by Camblin, stars Pinkins and Thoms. Fountain Theatre, 5060 Fountain Ave., Los Angeles; 8 p.m., Thursday through Saturday; 2 p.m., Sunday; Ends June 15; \$18-\$25; (323) 663-1525 or www.Fountain

Theatre.com.

On the Donloe Scale, D (don't bother), O (oh, no), N (needs work), L (likable), O (Outstanding) and E (excellent), "And Her Hair Went With Her" gets an E (excellent).

## BRIEFS

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### LA Gang Member-Turned-Author Gets Six Years for Carjacking

Kody "Monster" Scott, 44, who wrote the critically praised autobiography "Monster" while in jail, was sentenced to six years in state prison May 5 for a 2006 carjacking. He was sentenced after pleading no contest to the charge. Four other counts against him were dismissed as part of a plea agreement. On May 5, Los Angeles County District Attorney's spokeswoman Sandi Gibbons said Scott was arrested last year and was accused of taking a silver Jaguar that belonged to a friend, whom he beat so badly the man needed facial surgery. Scott previously served four years in state prison for armed robbery and possession of an AK-47 assault rifle, and had shorter terms for other crimes.

## THE NATION

### Howard University Chooses New President

WASHINGTON (AP)—One of the nation's most prestigious historically black schools named a new president May 7. Howard University officials said that Bowling Green State University President Sidney Ribeau will become the 16th leader of the school in Washington, D.C. Ribeau will succeed H. Patrick Swygert, who is stepping down in June after 13 years at the helm of Howard. Swygert was credited with bringing stability to Howard. Ribeau has been president of Bowling Green State for 13 years. Under Ribeau's leadership, the Ohio school has been recognized for its residential learning communities and innovative graduate programs.



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Photo By IAN FOX

**PLAYBOY JAZZ**—A free jazz concert took place in Watts May 9, featuring the Los Angeles Multi-School Jazz Band. The event, which took place at the Bradley Senior Center in Watts, was part of the Playboy's free community concert series held in conjunction with the upcoming 30th Anniversary of the Playboy Jazz Festival.

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