

Each season, Crossroads presents five productions, with emphasis on new works developed through its New Play Rites program and also with artists in its Associate Artists program. The Associate Artists program provides a "home" for playwrights, actors and technical personnel to develop new work for African American theatre. Crossroads' Associate Artists include playwrights George C. Wolfe, Leslie Lee, Ntozake Shange, Emily Mann, Denise Nicholas; actor Avery Brooks and director Harold Scott.

Crossroads' support of the Black theatre artist is evident in its annual new play festival, *Genesis: A Celebration of New Voices at Crossroads*, featuring two weeks of staged readings of new works. *Genesis* was first produced in 1989-90 and is funded in part by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. A showcase for new work in African American theatre, the festival has featured such works as *Buses*, by Denise Nicholas, *Oak and Ivy*, by Kathleen McGhee-Anderson, *The Love Space Demands*, by Ntozake Shange, *The Disappearance*, *Dream* and *Mothers* - all which became or will be mainstage productions.

In 1990-91, the work of Sangoma, the women's company at Crossroads came to fruition with the premiere of *The Mother Project*, a collaborative work developed by Sangoma's members under the direction of Sydné Mahone, Crossroads' director of play development.

Through its touring program, the company has reached out to new audiences in order to enrich diverse communities with the cultural and educational experience of fine African American theatre. Crossroads' productions have toured the country as well as Canada, the Bahamas, U.S. Virgin Islands and West Indies, while such plays as *The Colored Museum*, *Spunk*, *The Rabbit Foot (Ground People)* and *Further Mo'* went on to off-Broadway runs. In 1989, Crossroads brought Sandra Reaves-Phillips' *The Late, Great Ladies of Blues & Jazz* to New York's Apollo Theatre. In 1990, *Sheila's Day*, with an all-female cast of African American and South African women, directed by Mbongeni Ngema, dazzled audiences from Toronto to Washington and was revived in 1992 for the National Black Arts Festival in Atlanta. In 1991, Leslie Lee's *Black Eagles* informed thousands about a little-known chapter in African American history on stages in Washington and New York. In 1990, Crossroads mounted a 15-state tour of *Woza Albert!*

The 1992-93 season will turn the focus on families and children. Notably, Crossroads will premiere *The Disappearance*, the first in Ruby Dee's "Books With Legs" series, an adaptation of the Rosa Guy mystery novel and *Mothers*, by Kathleen McGhee-Anderson, commissioned by Bill Cosby. *Betsey Brown*, a musical by Ntozake Shange and Emily Mann will be given a new production.

Crossroads is committed to the future of Black theatre through its African American College Initiative Program. Funded by a grant from the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, AACIP works with theatre arts faculty and students at seven colleges and universities with large African American populations. The program fosters the development of new talent through workshops, internships, faculty exchanges and arts advocacy.

Crossroads' work has attracted support from such sources as the National Endowment for the Arts, New Jersey State Council on the Arts, AT&T, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, American Express Company and Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

The company is a major force in developing new audiences for African American theatre. Crossroads has helped to create a theatre-going audience among African Americans, while simultaneously attracting traditional audiences. It holds the distinction of being the only theatre in New Jersey drawing a multi-cultural audience on a steady basis.