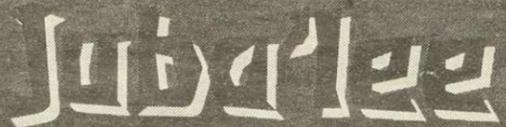


ARTS & CULTURE



300 Years in 3 hours

BY SHELLEY ROBINSON AND
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If you can imagine three hundred years of music, 9000 clapping fans, and a 2000 person choir, all celebrating the musical achievements of Black Nova Scotians, then you have a rough idea of last Saturday's *Juba'lee*.

The name of the event is a Yoruba word which means to celebrate, or pay homage to one's home. And celebration certainly sums up the atmosphere of the evening — the crowd responded to every performer with warm enthusiasm.

The show was invigorating and extremely diverse, with acts ranging from gospel to country, blues to African drumming, opera to hip hop, and even a bit of poetry. Standout performances included the frenetic dancing of Kumba, a talented troupe of girls from Ross Road school; Afro Musica, an African-inspired funk band; and the singer/poet Papa Graham, who rapped about equality and past prejudice with deliberate slowness to ensure that everyone got his message.

The event also featured performances by the Carson Downey Band, Dutch Robinson, jazz great Bucky Adams, Linda Carvery, Four the Moment, the Freedom Jazz Band, and Dal's own Suzy Gangoo singing with Shawn Colley.

If there was one way in which *Juba'lee* fell short of its potential, it was that it became such a big event that at times it stretched itself too thin. In trying to pack as much of the past 300 years into one evening, it didn't allow many moments to really stand out. The much publicized event took place at the Metro Centre — a venue that allowed for a large audience, but not the intimacy that so much of the music cried out for. In addition, the organizers decided to place the stage in the middle of the floor, and while this meant that they could make use of almost every seat in the stadium, it also meant that acts had

to move around a lot while they performed, or else remain invisible to half their audience.

Even the best acts were hampered by having to compete for time on a full schedule, and for space on a crowded stage. Symphony Nova Scotia, who provided musical accompaniment for some of the acts, occupied most of the platform, and dancers such as the Kumba girls were confined to the spaces around the edge. Each act performed only one number, sometimes not even five minutes long. You often got the sense they were finishing before they really got a chance to show off their stuff. In particular, the two gospel choirs — the Nova Scotia Mass Choir and the Hallilujah Praise Choir — seemed to be building up to a level of excitement they never

actually reached. The inclusion of some more rhythmic numbers would have been all it took to get an already excited audience on its feet.

In the end, though, *Juba'lee* was a delightful evening, and a fitting tribute to a rich musical history. And if there were a few too many performances packed into a short a time span, it only illustrates the vast reservoir of musical talent that exists and has always existed throughout Black Nova Scotia. It's not that there should have been performances cut out of the show (though not all of them rocked tremendously); it's just that *Juba'lee* was the kind of event that could have fulfilled its objective better in a three day festival than in a three hour concert.

