

## **RUBY DEE** **“AMERICAN GANGSTER”**

Acting legend **RUBY DEE** (Mama Lucas) recently completed work as the lead in 2007's *Naming Number Two*, a New Zealand comedy-drama scheduled for release. She is also featured with Julie Harris in the upcoming independent drama *The Way Back Home*. She co-starred with Halle Berry, Terrence Howard and Ruben Santiago-Hudson in the award-winning television production *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

Although born in Cleveland, Ohio, Dee considers herself a product of Harlem, where she grew up and began her career as a member of the American Negro Theatre. She received her BA from Hunter College and later studied acting with Paul Mann, Lloyd Richards and Morris Carnovsky.

Dee made her Broadway debut in *South Pacific*— a drama, not the Rogers and Hammerstein musical—and subsequently appeared on Broadway in such plays as *Jeb*, *Anna Lucasta*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Purlie Victorious* and *Checkmates*. Off Broadway, she received an Obie Award for her performance in *Boesman and Lena* in 1970 and a Drama Desk Award for *Wedding Band* in 1974. Other off-Broadway and regional theater credits include *The World of Sholom Aleichem*, *King Lear*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Oresteia*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *The Ohio State Murders* and *Flyin' West*. She most recently appeared on stage in the New York and Atlanta productions of *St. Lucy's Eyes* and in the New York production of *A Last Dance for Sybil*—a play written for her by husband, Ossie Davis.

In 1978, Dee's original work *Take it From the Top*, a musical about the end of the world, premiered at the New Federal Theatre. She has also adapted works for the stage, including Rosa Guy's novel "The Disappearance" and "Zora Is My Name," which featured the writings of Zora Neale Hurston and was later filmed for PBS. *Two Hah Hahs and a Homeboy*, a compilation of original works, folklore and music—featuring Dee, Davis and their son, Guy Davis—opened in 1985 at the Crossroads Theatre Company. Ms. Dee was inducted into the Theater Hall of Fame in 1988.

Dee's film career began in 1950, with the release of *No Way Out* and *The Jackie Robinson Story*. Since then, she has been featured in many films, including *St. Louis Blues*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, *The Balcony*, *The Incident*, *Buck and the Preacher*, *Cat People*, *Do the Right Thing*, *Jungle Fever*, *Just Cause* and *Tuesday Morning Ride*. Dee co-wrote the screenplay and co-starred in Jules Dassin's *Up Tight!* and co-produced the 1974 film *Countdown at Kusini* with her husband, Ossie Davis, and the Delta Sigma Theta sorority.

Among Dee's notable television credits are *Seven Times Monday*; *Peyton Place*; *To Be Young, Gifted and Black*; *Long Day's Journey Into Night*—for which she received a CableACE award; *Go Tell It on the Mountain*; *The Court-Martial of Jackie Robinson*; *The Stand*; *The Wall*; *Passing Glory*; *A Storm in Summer*; *Having Our Say*; and *Taking Back Our Town*. She received Emmy nominations for her performances in *The Nurses*, *Roots: The Next Generations*, *Gore Vidal's Lincoln*, *China Beach* and *Evening Shade*, as well as two Daytime Emmy nominations for her recurring role as Alice the Great on Bill Cosby's animated series, *Little Bill*. In 1991, she was awarded an Emmy for her performance in *Decoration Day*.

Dee is the author of two children's books, "Tower to Heaven" and "Two Ways to Count to Ten," as well as a book of poetry and short stories titled "My One Good Nerve"—which she has adapted into a solo performance piece. She has also narrated several audio books, including Toni Morrison's "The Bluest Eye," Shirley Williams' "Dessa Rose" and Zora Neale Hurston's "Their Eyes Were Watching God," for which she won an Audie Award for Best Female Narration. In 1998, Ms. Dee and Mr. Davis marked their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary with the publication of their joint autobiography, "With Ossie and Ruby: In This Life Together."

Through their company, Emmalyn Productions Company, Inc., Dee and Davis produced some outstanding programming for PBS: *Martin Luther King: The Dream and the Drum*, *The Second American Revolution* for *A Walk Through the 20<sup>th</sup> Century With Bill Moyers* and, for three seasons, the critically acclaimed series *Ossie and Ruby!* For CBS, they produced *Today Is Ours*, a program for young people based on Ms. Dee's anthology of mostly junior high school poets, "Glowchild." Together, they were inducted into the NAACP Image Award Hall of Fame in 1989, awarded the Silver Circle Award by the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences in 1994, the National Medal of Arts Award in 1995 and the Screen Actors Guild's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2001. In December 2004, Ms. Dee and Mr. Davis were recipients of the John F. Kennedy Center Honors.

Dee has been a member of the Actor's Equity for more than 50 years and is also a member of the Screen Actors Guild, the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists and the Writers Guild of America.

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