

# Jumpin' Juba breaks ground for black history theatre

By Carole Price  
*Special to the Advocate*

Jumpin' Juba! It's witty, engaging and historically authentic. The play moves you into better understanding of black history through the wedding of Bubba and Belle in the 1800s. It's history theatre at its best.

"We want to have the theatre group back in the summer," says Boots Smith, of Friends of San Jacinto County Historical Commission. Smith is referring to the cast of the performing company Talking Back Living History Theatre that recently presented two performances of the one-act play Jumpin' Juba in Coldspring. It's one of many plays in the repertoire of the theatre troupe that San Jacinto

County audiences will want to attend.

The Houston-based group performs throughout the country and last year caught area audience attention during the San Houston Folk Festival sponsored annually in April by the San Houston Memorial Museum in Humbleville.

Rainy weather no doubt reduced the turnout in Coldspring, but not the enthusiasm of all those who attended. Audience member Margaret Williams, a teacher in Shepherd, relayed her compliments for the quality performance and thoughts for the future. "This is a beginning," she said with a smile, conveying her desire to see more of the black history interpretive productions.

Positive response from Williams, from Coldspring's Rosie Reed, who sold her locally

famous pies to cast and audience, plus enthusiasm from all who attended, affirms the commission's intention to continue in this direction. "We're breaking new ground as this was our first black history theatre production," says Dr. John Roane, SJCH Historical Commissioner, who also thanked the Optimist Club of San Jacinto County for its support to book the play.

Jumpin' Juba is a play about a wedding of a slave couple in the 1800s.

Slaves were not citizens, so they did not have available to them the legal institutions of marriage. So slaves came up with their own Christian wedding ceremony: Jumping the broom from the "old life to the new." The play was written by Naomi Carrier, a noted Texas playwright and author who owns the Talking Back company.



Photo by Ted Rains, Spotlight Photo

**PLAY.** In a spirit of camaraderie and appreciation for a captivating performance, both the cast and oral audience members of Jumpin' Juba gathered for a group photo. Front left: Tim and Cora Moore, Boots Smith, Florence Edwards and Donna Manfeld. Back row: Carole Price, Gladys Jackson, Reed, James Reed, Frankner, Norelia Reed, Elliott Jordan and Jia Taylor.

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