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Stephanie Anne Johnson lights *SHE*

BY ELENA FEATHERSTON

Mayor Tom Bates honored Berkeley artist Stephanie Johnson last year, for her many and varied contributions to the community by declaring October 30, 2012 as Stephanie Anne Johnson Day. A cultural activist, visual artist, lighting designer, educator and an original faculty member of the Visual and Public Art Department at California State University at Monterey Bay, Johnson serves as Education Committee Chair for Berkeley's Civic Arts Commission.

Since the Mayor's proclamation, Johnson has completed a doctorate and joined Rhodessa Jones and Idris Ackamoor, of the acclaimed theatre company Cultural Odyssey, to bring *The Resurrection of SHE* to the Brava Theatre in San Francisco. Together they breathed life into Jones's multimedia, autobiographical solo work, which ran from March 28 – April 7.

Johnson and Jones, bound by a shared commitment to art, service, and elevating women's voices, have collaborated frequently during an association spanning over twenty years. Interestingly, both women have taught theatre arts to imprisoned women. Jones founded the renowned Medea Project: Theater for Incarcerated Women and Johnson has nurtured prisoner creativity and hope in two states.

Partnering with Pam Peniston to create the visual backdrop for *SHE*, Johnson used both digital and 35mm projection technologies to transport audiences between surreal dreamscapes and Tokyo nightclubs.

"We used shadow and light to provide a landscape for the unfolding of this quilted chronicle," com-



photo by Lorraine Capparelli

With lighting by Berkeley artist Stephanie Anne Johnson Day, *The Resurrection of SHE*, came to life last week at the Brava Theatre in San Francisco.

mented Johnson about the production.

Weaving elements of performance, family lore and lived experience, *SHE* illuminates the power of cultural legacy to heal, strengthen and save lives.

"My visual designs support the overarching theme of women's value in the world," Johnson explained before elaborating. "It stresses the importance of recognizing that women who are marginalized, jailed or disappeared are not gone."

During her career – more than

30 years, Johnson has lit local productions for The Purple Moon Dance Project, Dimensions Dance Theater, Anne Blumenthal & Dancers and Afro Solo and worked with The Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the Arizona Repertory Theatre, and La Mama Theater in New York. Johnson's theater design has been presented in India, The Netherlands, Belgium and France and her visual art has appeared in exhibitions nationally.

To learn more about Johnson, go to lightessencedesign.com.