



THE BLOG

Not Just Talk - *The Carmen Mathis Show*

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NY based Writer

Since 2010, Carmen Mathis has hosted a multi-cultural menagerie of local and international artists on her bi-weekly Thursday night show seen on Manhattan cable access channels or streamed live on www.mnn.org Lifestyle Channel 2 at 9:30 p.m. *The Carmen Mathis Show* is a half hour variety/talk show on the public access cable station Manhattan Neighborhood Network (MNN). The Americus, Georgia native is an actress/singer/playwright who has appeared in films, television and theater productions including performances with the prestigious Negro Ensemble Company. [Full Disclosure: Carmen played the title character in two New York City productions of my one-act play, *Bessie* (now titled *The Bessie Show*) in the early '90s.]

Her television show is not just a talk show, the weekly guest or guests must perform — sing, dance, play an instrument, do magic tricks, comedy, act in a scene or monologue, slam poetry or read from an original novel. And they all have, both new and seasoned artists, including Philadelphia's The Gospel Blenders, up-and-coming performers such as magician Apollo Riego, the transplanted Italian native singer Simona De Rosa, the poets, Sisters Black Like Me Collective or singer Ednah Holt,

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themselves and their projects.

Manhattan Neighborhood Network is a labor of love for the performers who appear on its network. MNN's mission statement describes its goals are

to ensure the ability of Manhattan residents to exercise their First Amendment



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rights through the medium of cable television and to create opportunities for mutual communication, education, artistic expression and other noncommercial uses of video facilities on an open, uncensored and equitable basis. (Revised 9/12/07)

With the exception of a small, professional technical staff or facilitators, MNN is a network manned by an all volunteer staff of hosts, actors, producers and camera and control room personnel. All participants seeking to produce a show, who must be Manhattan residents, are trained to use the studio cameras and control room equipment in a series of workshops by its team of facilitators. Many of the on-camera talents are seasoned performers, journalists or writers whose passions for ideas, news and performance are given an outlet on the network.

The impetus for Carmen's show began many years ago when she first appeared on MNN as a singer on *The Ophelia DeVore Show*, a well-known modeling agent and coach, in 1980. In the late 1990s, Mathis showcased her one-woman show, *30 Years in the Life of Cleopatra Jackson* (1998) on two MNN shows, Dorothi Fox's *Fox Concepts* and the late Jo Tanner's *Dusky Divas*. Carmen learned about the MNN workshops at that time, but she "put it on the back burner" while she pursued her performing career. One day in 2010, a friend from her church gave her an MNN orientation packet and Carmen decided it was time to put her dream for a show into action.

After training for the control room track (there is also a video/camcorder track) and receiving her producer's certification, Carmen began hosting her show featuring guests who had personal or professional connections such as longtime friend and colleague, actress/playwright Lorey Hayes, who recently performed scenes from her Audelco award-winning play, *Power Play*. Many of her guests are also referrals like the Latino pop trio, Cris & Lucho. Nowadays, along with her sign-off mantra to "help somebody" Carmen usually requests tapes from those interested in appearing on the program. Also, information can be sent to her website info@carmenmathis.com. In the future, Carmen envisions her show reaching a wider audience, internet streaming notwithstanding, a larger television audience so that maybe her family in Atlanta can watch. Although the show requires arduous preparation — personally requesting and receiving tapes and bios as well as coordinating the schedules of talent and crew — she hopes to see it air weekly. Carmen enjoys "showcasing talented performers, particularly young, aspiring talent who might not be seen elsewhere." Here's a link to a

["target=" _hplink">promo for the show.](#)

Sandra Kwesi Cameron is a writer who lives in New York City. She has reviewed The New York International Fringe Festival (FringeNYC) for nytheatre.com.

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