

Rihanna's officially 'right excellent,' named Barbados hero

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico, Dec. 1. (AP): Rihanna smiled under her face mask as she heard her name called in the pre-dawn hours of Tuesday, but hesitated before she stood up.

Before her, top Barbadian government officials encouraged her to join them at a crucial moment in her nation's history.

"You can come my dear," Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley told the multi-Grammy winner.

Rihanna had just been declared a national hero by the Barbadian government and bestowed with a title, "the right excellent," as the island bade farewell to Queen Elizabeth II as head of state and celebrated becoming a republic for the first time in history.

"On behalf of a grateful nation, but an even prouder people, we therefore present to you the designee for national hero of Barbados, Ambassador Robyn Rihanna Fenty," the prime minister said. "May you continue to shine like a diamond and bring honor to your nation by your words, by your actions, and to do credit wherever you shall go. God bless you, my dear."

Rihanna raised her palm to her heart as she stood next to Mottley and said thank you before they walked offstage and briefly put their arms around each other.

Before Rihanna sat down again, she greeted several people, including Prince Charles.

On Wednesday, the singer was officially honored in a separate ceremony where she received a large medal emblazoned with the outline of Barbados and blew a kiss to the cheering crowd.

"This is a day that I will never, ever forget. It's also a day that I never saw coming," she said in a brief speech in which she encouraged the youth to continue pushing Barbados forward. "I have traveled the

world and received several awards and recognitions, but nothing, nothing compares to being recognized in the soil that you grew in."

It is the first time in more than 20 years that Barbados has bestowed a national hero honor: The last person to receive the title was former cricket player Garfield St. Aubrun Sobers. A total of 11 people have now been honored since 1998, including a slave who led a rebellion and the first person of African descent to serve in the island's Parliament.

When Mottley presented Rihanna early Tuesday before the official ceremony, she noted that the pop star came from humble origins and was born less than a mile from where the ceremony was taking place.

She congratulated the singer for "commanding the imagination of the world through the pursuit of excellence with her creativity, her discipline and above all else, her extraordinary commitment to the land of her birth."

Louis Vuitton's first ever US fashion show turned into a somber yet whimsical tribute to groundbreaking designer **Virgil Abloh** days after his death.

The Miami menswear event, an unofficial kickoff to the prestigious Art Basel fair, had been in the works for months. Guests were ferried by yachts to the star-studded affair held on an island. Celebrity attendees, including **Kim Kardashian West** and her daughter **North, Ye**, the rapper formerly known as **Kanye West**, model **Bella Hadid**, **Joe Jonas**, **Maluma** and **Pharrell**, arrived in sleek LV monogrammed silver speedboats.

Kid Cudi and **Erykah Badu** performed at an after-party. "Hey Vir-

gil," she yelled at the start of her set, later saying "we want to see you fly."

Abloh, who died Sunday after a lengthy battle with cancer, was known for pushing boundaries as the head of the legendary French fashion house, thanks to his childlike curiosity and an eagerness to instill a sense of playfulness. His groundbreaking fusions of streetwear and high couture made him one of the most celebrated tastemakers.

A focal point of the show was a giant, red LV monogrammed hot air balloon that puffed flames as Abloh's voice was heard in the background.

The brand's CEO **Michael Burke** said Abloh's wife and family wanted the show to go on. He had just spoken to the young designer on Saturday night, describing the inspiration for the show as a coming of age of sorts because "inspiring and empowering younger generations defined who he was."

"We had imagined it all and he was distraught not to be here in person," Burke said.

Models walked the meandering runway, showcasing the collection that featured everything from neon colored amphibian, aqua-gear looks with colorful fish backpacks to letterman style school sweaters and snow bunny looks with furry boots.

There was a sleek matte black ensemble that resembled SWAT gear, military style suits in olive with belted coats and even brightly color Southern-belle style hoop skirts. Prints included tie dye hues and the iconic checkered logo redone in new color patterns.

While the clothes were like Abloh — playful, colorful and vibrant — the mood was somber. During and after the show, many in the audience wiped away tears, standing to hug each other or offer a pat of comfort.

People

Variety



This image released by NBC shows the cast of 'Annie Live!', (from left), Taraji P. Henson as Miss Hannigan, Tituss Burgess as Rooster Hannigan, Nicole Scherzinger as Grace Farrell, Celina Smith as Annie, and Harry Connick, Jr. as Daddy Warbucks. The tale of the spunky young orphan with her dog Sandy set during the Depression airs Dec. 2 on NBC. (AP)

Television

'It is a musical about hope and optimism'

NBC hopes sun will come out with 'Annie'

By Mark Kennedy

There's a famous saying in showbiz: "Never work with children or animals." NBC is wisely ignoring that as it mounts a live version of the hit Broadway musical "Annie."

The tale of the spunky young orphan with her dog Sandy set during the Depression will be NBC's first live musical since its triumphant "Jesus Christ Superstar Live in Concert" in 2018. "Annie Live!" airs Thursday.

"It is a musical about hope and optimism, and it couldn't come at a better time," said Neil Meron, who has served as executive producer on all of NBC's live musicals.

Twelve-year-old newcomer Celina Smith has the title role, backed by co-stars Harry Connick Jr. as Annie's rescuer, Daddy Warbucks, and Taraji P. Henson as the orphanage's callous Miss Hannigan. Nicole Scherzinger, Tituss Burgess and Megan Hilty also are in the cast.

Henson admits to being nervous but says she needs to be: "Nerves mean you're alive and you're in the moment. It's not a bad thing. Nerves are good," she advises. "Go out there with shaky knees and shaky hands and use it."

The musical premiered on Broadway in 1977 and was revived in 1997 and 2012. The 1977 original show won the Tony as best musical and ran for 2,300 performances, inspiring tours and revivals that never went out of style.

"Annie" has been adapted many times for the screen, including a 1982 film version featuring Carol Burnett, another in 1999 featuring Kathy Bates and one in 2014 starring Quvenzhané Wallis.

The musical contains musical gems like "Tomorrow" and "It's the Hard Knock Life." Martin Charnin's lyrics, which earned him and songwriter Charles Strouse a Tony for best score in 1977, are playful and moving: "You're never fully dressed/without a smile" and "No one cares for you a smidge/when you're in an orphanage." Strouse, now 93, attended rehearsals and hugged the new Annie.

"The show was written in the wake of the Vietnam War and the Nixon administration, and I think these guys were consciously trying to do something uplifting at a dark time in the country," said Bob Greenblatt, who oversaw live musicals during the years he ran NBC and has teamed up with Meron to executive produce "Annie Live!"

The creative team has gone back to the first Broadway show to add in songs that movie versions have cut. Meron says they are honoring the roots of the original show. "We've basically gone back to the original Broadway version and more or less have followed the structure of that show, adding back songs that no other film production ever used."

Discover

Tony Award-winner Emilio Sosa has designed the costumes, and the choreography will be led by Tony-winner Sergio Trujillo, who says he saw the 1982 film version but otherwise came to it like a blank slate.

"I began to discover what a gem it is," said Trujillo, whose Broadway work includes "Ain't Too Proud" and "On Your Feet!" He adds: "It has been one of the most surprising experiences in my career thus far because I have just let myself go and be carefree in the room."

NBC has found success with live musical events. Previous productions include 2013's "The Sound of Music Live!," 2014's "Peter Pan Live!," 2015's "The Wiz Live!," 2016's "Hairspray Live!" and 2018's "Jesus Christ Superstar Live in Concert." Other networks have gotten in on the act, with Fox doing "A Christmas Story" and "Grease Live!" and ABC's "The Little Mermaid Live!"

Each has tried to evolve the viewing experience: "The Sound of Music Live!" was done in a movie style, and "Peter Pan Live!" gave producers license to be more fantastical. Over time, live audiences have been added.

"We didn't really know how to do one of these things, and we kind of invented it as we went along," said Greenblatt. "Each time we try to look at the show and the show kind of hopefully guides us to what we

should do with it."

Greenblatt and Meron note that while "Annie" is set in the 1930s, it does have some parallels to today, in terms of economic turbulence, big government spending and social isolation.

"We sort of felt after a year and a half of this crazy pandemic and a political climate that's really dicey and very divisive at the moment that a show like this would be so welcome because it's just about optimism and hope," said Greenblatt. "There's some real parallels to what's going on. So we thought it was really relevant."

Henson has been sure to check out each of the live musicals but missed the last one and hated to be out of the conversation the next day. "If you don't want to get left out of the water cooler conversation the next day, I suggest you record it," she says. (AP)

Also:

LOS ANGELES: "Zoey's Extraordinary Playlist" has wrapped its two-season NBC run, but there's another chapter for the musical dramedy starring **Jane Levy**. In "Zoey's Extraordinary Christmas," the title character is determined that her family get the memorable Christmas that her now-ill father always provided. The movie, which picks up where the series left off, debuts Wednesday on the Roku Channel and co-stars **Mary Steenburgen**, **Skylar Austin**, **Bernadette Peters**. **Peter Gallagher** plays dad Mitch, who suffers from a neurological disease. The holiday movie is available free on the channel, as are the series' 25 episodes.

If the big city vibe falls short of your holiday expectations, UpTV is offering a travel-free solution with its new "Small Town Christmas" reality series, hosted by **Megan Alexander** of "Inside Edition." Each episode (airing 9 p.m. EST) promises to share what the "heart and magic of Christmas celebrations" in towns nationwide, showcasing their music, entertainment, food and faith. The destinations and air dates: **Branson, Missouri**, on Sunday; **Charleston, South Carolina**, on Sunday, Dec. 12; **Bethlehem, Pennsylvania**, on Sunday, Dec. 19; and **Natchitoches, Louisiana**, on Friday, Dec. 24. (AP)

Features

ARABIC TIMES

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2021

LAS VEGAS: Police said Tuesday they're investigating sexual assault allegations involving R&B artist **Trey Songz** at a Las Vegas Strip hotel.

In a statement, Las Vegas police said six crimes detectives received a complaint about a Sunday incident involving the singer and actor whose name is **Tremaine Aldon Neverson**. Sunday was his 37th birthday.

Neverson was cooperating with the investigation and no arrests have been made, said Officer **Misael Parra**, a Las Vegas police spokesman. Parra declined to name the hotel.

A representative for Neverson didn't immediately respond to messages.

Neverson has had several legal issues in the past. He was arrested in January at Arrowhead Stadium in **Kansas City, Missouri**, but criminal charges were not filed after he was accused of scuffling with police officers over complaints that he wasn't following coronavirus protocols and other rules at the AFC Championship game.

As Songz, he's a three-time Grammy-nominated singer. He debuted in 2005 with the album "I Gotta Make It" and earned his third No. 1 last year on Billboard's Top R&B Albums chart with "Back Home." His other two chart-topping albums are "Trigga" and "Tremaine The Album."

He also has appeared in films including "Texas Chainsaw 3D," "Baggage Claim" and he starred in "Blood Brother" in 2018. (AP)

SANTA FE, NM: Authorities pursued new leads Tuesday on possible sources of live ammunition involved in actor **Alec Baldwin's** fatal shooting of a cinematographer on the **New Mexico** set of a western movie, as they searched the premises of an **Albuquerque**-based firearms and ammunition supplier.

The search took place after a provider of firearms and ammunition lodged in the shoulder of director **Joel Souza**, for doctors later to remove. Baldwin was told the revolver was "cold" and had no live rounds, investigators say.

Seth Kenney and his business PDQ Arm & Prop provided movie-prop ammunition and weapons

21 killed cinematographer **Halyna Hutchins** and left a projectile lodged in the shoulder of director **Joel Souza**, for doctors later to remove. Baldwin was told the revolver was "cold" and had no live rounds, investigators say.



Songz



Baldwin

to the "Rust" production. Kenney told a detective on Oct. 29 that "a couple years back, he received 'reloaded ammunition' from a friend," and that the ammunition stood out in his memory because of a star-shaped company logo, according to an affidavit from the Santa Fe County Sheriff's Office that is leading the investigation.

Kenney could not be reached independently for comment. A sheriff's office spokesman declined to elaborate on details in the search warrant.

Investigators initially found 500 rounds of ammunition at the movie set on the outskirts of Santa Fe — a mix of blanks, dummy rounds and what appeared to be live rounds.

Industry experts have said live rounds should never be on set.

Investigators have described "some complacency" in how weapons were handled on the "Rust" set. They have said it is too soon to determine whether charges will be filed, amid independent civil lawsuits concerning liability in the fatal shooting. (AP)