Race, Sex & Politics

A new play by Kwame Dawes

Charades, a new play by Kwame Dawes, is an intense drama which explores the conflicts of an inter-racial love triangle on the one hand, and the ramifications of racial prejudice upon society on the other. His characters are in earnest, seeking to understand themselves while their selfish aspirations encroach on their communal sensibility.

The dramatist's treatment of the relationship between people of different races is never simplistic or artificial. While it discovers the differences forged by a history that entails both exploitation and cooperation, it also affirms the similarities in people who are driven by the equally potent instincts of

Though the principal characters masquerade as Christians, their racial bigotry is never far from the surface. Through the voices of two antagonistic females, one black, the other white, we learn that the latter "is confident always ... her colour helps." Lucid as the observation is, it embraces all the negative strategies that have prompted men and women of colour to look down upon their race(s).

Charades also reveals that the characters deliberately obscure the politics of race relations by putting on masks of class, sexuality, religion or indeed art (theatre) in order to better manipulate others in the game of dominance. In a self-mocking irony, for instance, one of the perpetrators of discrimination observes, "Funny how people mek you a hero as soon as you dead...the same people who squeeze the dignity out of you."

What Kwame Dawes is suggesting, however, is that until such time that men and women gather enough courage to confront racial prejudice and discrimination generally, their humanity and dignity will continue to be corroded and diminished by those negative practices.

It is in this context that in his play he drills his characters, making them go through a series of dramatic confessions that are shocking to fellow performers as they are to the spectators. But as the hidden prejudices spill out of each character's psyche, he or she becomes cleansed and is enabled to see the other in a new light; different but common in their humanity.

Thus, when Maureen and Jennifer embrace at the close of the play, it is a symbolic act that validates each one's racial colour, as it acknowledges the other's. both can exist under the same roof (sky) without the tension of having to prove who is better or more important than the other.

The play is directed by playwright and director Dr. John Ruganda whose experience in theatre has taken him all over the world. He brings to the production a combination of professionalism and fresh insight. Ruganda's work in Fredericton has included productions of Brecht's The Caucasian Chalk Circle, Jonson's Volpone, Tom Stoppard's On the Razzle, Fugard's The Island, an Downtime by local playwright, David Etheridge. He has worked as dramaturge and director for one of Dawes' plays In My Garden, which recently benefitted from a reading at the Montreal Playwrights Workshop. Ruganda led a staged reading of Charades earlier this Spring and has been a reader for the

Charades opens at Memorial Hall, UNB, on Wednesday October 17, 1990 and will run through to October 20, 1990. The show starts at 8:00 p.m. each night.

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Strike. Potemkin Black Rain

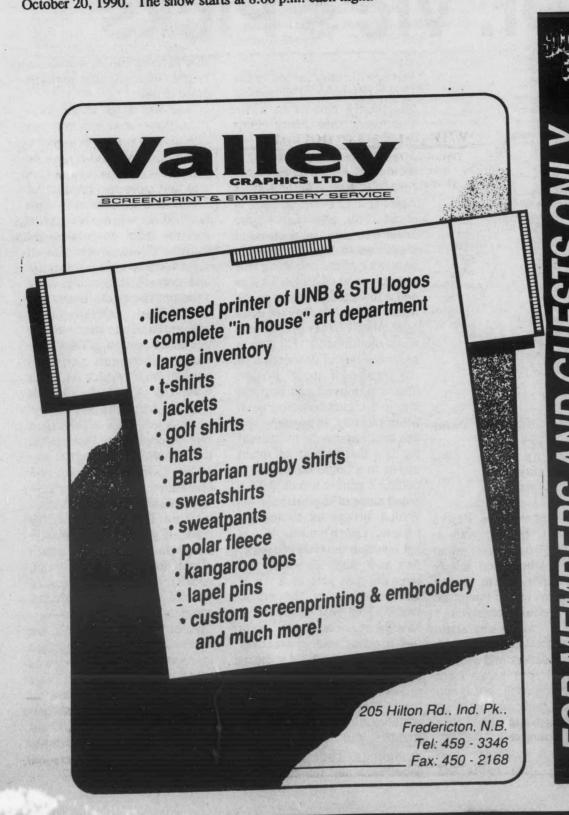
Filmnotes

by Chris Campbell

Ah, October, the time of year when the leaves begin to turn, when temperatures get colder, when Czars are colently overthrown. In keeping with the revolutionary nature of this time of year the U.N.B. Film Society is kicking off "Red October" with two films directed by Sergei Eisenstein, and are innovative in terms of their style and of their content. The first film of the evening is Strike, and it concerns one of the key events in the years before the Russian Revolution. The second film is Potemkin, and it has some of the finest examples of cinematic editing ever devised. The Odessa Steps sequence is the most famous scene in the history of cinema. These revolutionary films are being shown Friday and Saturday nights at 8:00 p.m.. in Tilley Hall 102. Wear red if you feel like it.

The Capital Film Society features Shoei Inamura's compelling drama Black Rain, that shows the effects of the first atomic bombs of those who survived in wartime Japan. The film begin at 8:00 p.m. in the theatre of the Centre Communautaire Sainte-Anne on Monday night.







by Paul

October 5, 199

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