



Barbara Duncan & Don Ritchie as Laura Wingfield and Jim O'Connor in Tennessee Williams *The Glass Menagerie*.



The old meet the new - the cast of the hilarious musical *Eight To The Bar* welcome new young members to the profession. The new members will appear in *A Christmas Carol* and *The Miracle Worker*.

Theatre New Brunswick: Past, present and future

By ROSS A. LIBBEY AND M.J. CORBETT

Over the past thirteen years, Theatre New Brunswick has come to be respected as one of the better (if not the best) sources of entertainment in the City of Fredericton. This says a lot for TNB because pleasing the "Fredericton audience is no easy task. Director Malcolm Black suggests that audiences here are most difficult due to the segmentation. That is, the local viewers are composed from five major groups: government workers and civil servants, military personnel from Base Gagetown, a strong religious group, those who have been here since day one, affectionately known as "Townies" and last but definitely not least, the UNB faculty, students and staff. On top of the difficulties with the local constituency, TNB also has to deal with the differences in regions. For example, what goes over well in Moncton, doesn't attract audiences in Campbellton. Black says that while he could easily set up a program for most of TNB's tour centres, as they each display a special character, it still remains a significant task to bring together a season that appeals to all. "It's a great jigsaw puzzle," says Black.

One surprising note revealed by Mr. Black was that Fredericton rates as one of the best theatre towns in Canada, possibly in North America. The ticket sales in this town are proportionately higher than in any other theatre centre, resting presently at about one eighth of the population in one week's time. If a similar proportion of people were to attend a show in Toronto, the performance would have to run for at least two years.

With respect to the demise of the once popular Student Buck Nite, Mr. Black explained that due to various problems during preparation for *Man of LaMancha*, they were behind schedule and decided to cancel Buck Nite for that show. After a study of the event it was decided that it would be cancelled permanently. The reasons stated by TNB director were that a) they weren't making money, b) people other than students were attending - those who should have gone on regular performance nights and c) the shows were being judged by the Buck Nite performance which was admittedly only a dress rehearsal.

Black went on to state that he is presently looking into the possibility of having two Previews for each show with lower rates, but emphasized that there are no concrete plans in the works.

In order to create a stronger appeal to the audience, TNB is now beginning to revamp their season. January will mark the debut of TNB's only half season; consisting of three shows. The reason behind this is that with the finish of the half season in April, all seasons following will parallel the academic year rather than the calendar year. At the same time, TNB is discontinuing their summer shows (which have played only in Fredericton, much to the chagrin and dismay of the tour centres), to be replaced by a Christmas show each season which will go on tour. These changes should have significant effects on the viewing audiences, in particular, the students. Now a student can buy a subscription to TNB and not have to worry about missing the summer shows because he/she is going back home or working elsewhere or whatever.

Similarly a student who will be graduating in May can buy a subscription and rest assured that he/she will be able to use it to its fullest advantage. Black said of the old season, "TNB was originally a summer theatre and the full-year season was added...the problem was that it was denying the university community the opportunity." Black went on to explain that fortunately one area that the greatest percentage of the audience seems to agree on is the new season: "Starting next fall, the whole province will have the benefit of the regular season."

Another interesting note is the price of the new season tickets. Ticket prices in Fredericton are the lowest of almost all theatres in Canada, for one very simple reason, according to Black. "We don't play to a cultural elite in New Brunswick," as do many theatres in larger centres. TNB plays to ordinary folks, a cross section of virtually the entire province.

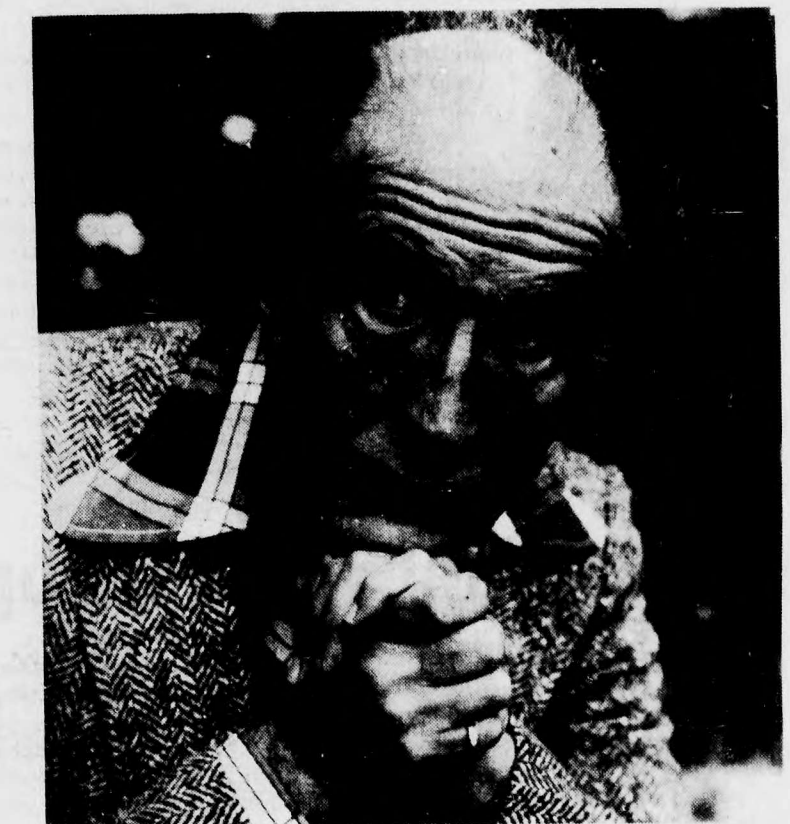
Student subscriptions for the upcoming half-season are \$11 for three shows or one-half the price that the audience paid to see only one of those shows in New York or London. Although the prices have not yet been set for the new fiscal season, Black ensures that prices will be as low as possible...guaranteed to be the lowest in Canada.

In conclusion, Mr. Black said, "Sometimes the job is very rewarding, and yet at other times I wonder what the hell I'm doing here; but if ever I'm tempted to feel sorry for myself, I look out the window and see the derelicts sitting around the heating ducts drinking rubbing alcohol mixed with vanilla extract and I'm reminded of the fact that I'm a very lucky person because I get paid to do what I love."



KEVIN BACKS Photo

Malcolm Black, Director of TNB.



Barry Morse, who will be starring as Scrooge in Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*.



The cast and crew of *Free At Last*.



Cedric Smith stars in *Billy Bishop Goes To War* coming in TNB's new mini-season along with *Chapter Two* and *The Miracle Worker*.