

UNB Alumnus C. David Johnson returns to UNB

Press Release

C. David Johnson, star of CBC Television's hit series *Street Legal*, comes to Theatre New Brunswick to star in Tennessee Williams's Pulitzer Prize-winning drama *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. His continuing role as Chuck Tcholanian in *Street Legal* has earned C. David Johnson ever-growing popularity and raised him to star status in Canada. He has been a principal on *Street Legal* since it began six years ago. "When we first started the show I didn't think it was going to succeed at all, I thought we would do a season and that would be it. But, the numbers have just kept climbing and climbing and we get more and more response to the show. It's been quiet fascinating to see people jump up and down about a Canadian show."

Theatre New Brunswick offered the perfect lure to coax Johnson back onto the stage. *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* is a piece that holds a personal interest for him. "When I was in theatre school at the Vancouver Playhouse, I met Tennessee Williams. He was the writer-in-residence at the University of British Columbia and he mounted a show at the Playhouse called *The Red Devil Battery Sign*. He was there during rehearsals so I got to meet him. After that I became a big fan of Williams and, when this opportunity came up, I just left at it."

Johnson's starring role in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* represents something of a homecoming for the actor. He began his professional career at Theatre New Brunswick almost fifteen years ago when TNB Young Company founder, the late Paul Hanna, hired him to perform in a summer stock production at King's Landing Historical Settlement.

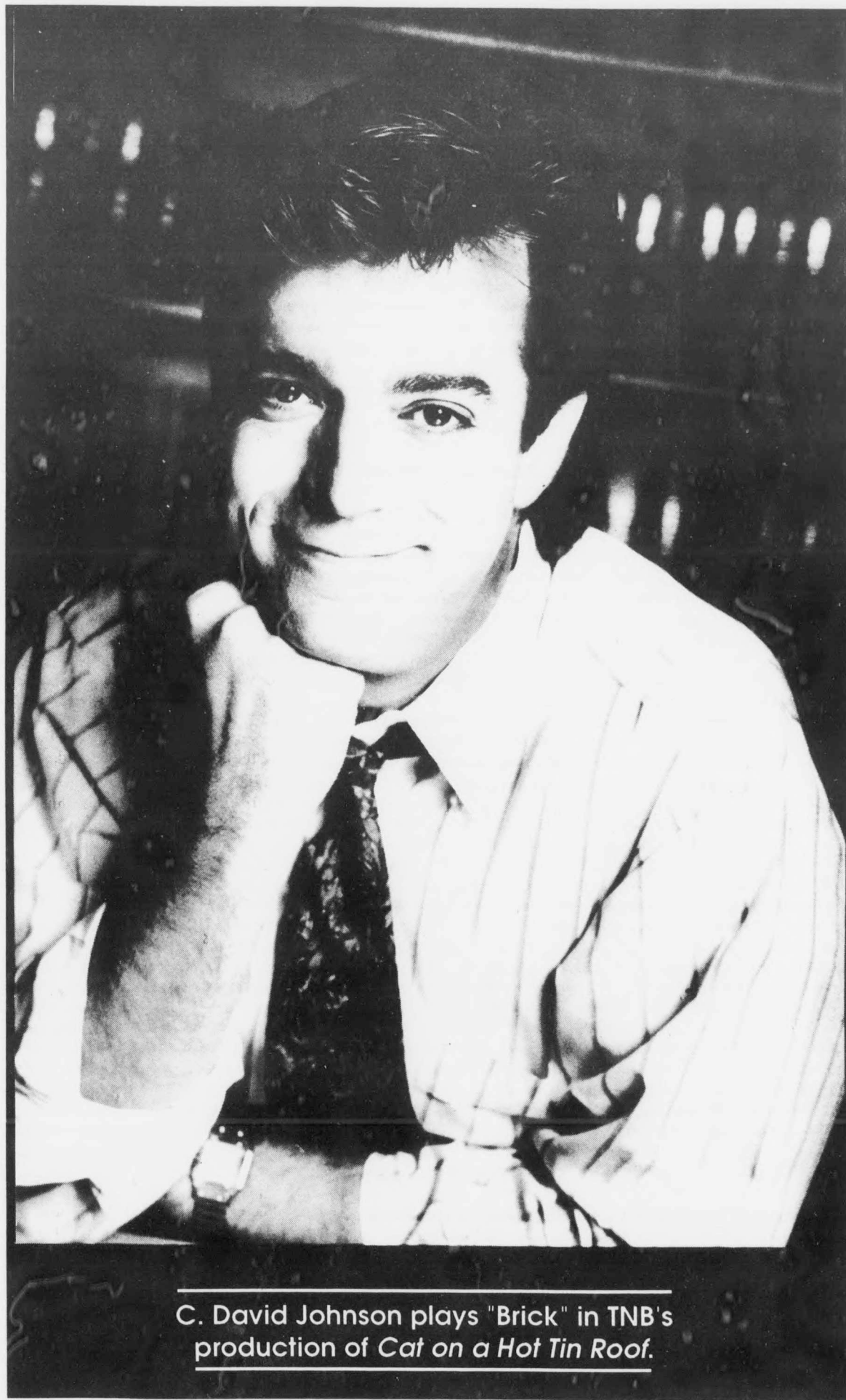
Johnson came to the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton in 1974 and tried most of the faculties offered at the time. He eventually took a course from Hanna who

was teaching a theatre production class. Johnson had found his niche. Hanna was impressed and after the stint in summer stock, hired Johnson as part of the Theatre New Brunswick Young Company. Malcolm Black, Artistic Director at the time, subsequently offered him roles in mainstage productions during the '78 and '79 seasons. The rest, as they say is history.

Now that he is back in New Brunswick rehearsing for *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, he is constantly being stopped on the street by fans seeking autographs. Refreshingly, Johnson has maintained a sense of humour about himself and his rise to the top of his profession. Home is a farmhouse in Nova Scotia and he retreats there whenever his schedule allows.

Johnson last appeared at Theatre New Brunswick in *Jitters* in 1986. He admits to being a little apprehensive about returning to stage work after such a long hiatus. "Technically it involves so much more than television," he said in a recent interview. "You have to sustain the role physically, emotionally and mentally over two or three hours as opposed to the little choppy bits and pieces you do in television where you leave it to someone else to do the continuity. It's much harder work in the theatre." However, he takes comfort in the fact that his first appearance on stage in seven years will be with his theatrical alma mater. "I do feel nervous about getting on the Theatre New Brunswick stage. It's like being back home. It is really daunting, though, to walk into the rehearsal hall and there's Douglas Campbell and a wonderful company of actors..."

C. David Johnson plays Brick, son of Big Daddy (Douglas Campbell) and indifferent husband of Maggie "the Cat" (Sarah Orenstein) in Theatre New Brunswick's production of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. He feels there is little comparison between



C. David Johnson plays "Brick" in TNB's production of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*.

Brick and Chuck Tcholanian, the ambitious lawyer who audiences love to be suspicious of. "I think Chuck is one of those guys who genuinely has a good heart but is overwhelmed by his ambition and impulsiveness," Johnson observes. "He just opens his mouth or moves his feet before his brain has caught up with him. Apart from the fact that they're both really capable of being insensitive, just

in terms of the script, Brick is much more complex, there's a lot more going on there. The approach for an actor is totally different. I'm really quite in love with this play, much more so now than I ever was before."

Sponsored by Moosehead Breweries and NB Tel, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* opens in Fredericton January 22 until 30, then performs across the province in St. Stephen (February

1), Sussex (February 2), Moncton (February 3 to 6), Bathurst (February 8), Campbellton (February 9), on the Miramichi (February 10), and finished in Saint John (February 11 to 13). Tickets are on sale across the province at least one week prior to the performance date. For information contact Theatre New Brunswick at 458-8344 or 1-800-442-9779.

Theatre UNB Presents A Stage Left Production Of Bill MacDwraith's "THE ANNIVERSARY"

On January 28-30 at 8pm "The Anniversary" is appearing at in Memorial Hall.

A black comedy about a Mom with an unhealthy attachment to her 3 sons. The youngest son, Tom, brings his fiancée, Shirley, to meet his family. What Shirley finds out (quickly) is that this humble home is actually more like a cobra pit.

Everyone has their turn to spit their venom - not unlike an upscale Bundy family. The play stars both graduate and undergraduate U.N.B. students and alumni and is directed by Paula Dawson.

Admission \$4

Call 459-8763, 458-8832/info & 459-8778 reservations