

THEATRE

A REVIEW

By DOUGLAS BARBOUR

CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE

Stuart Baker tells us in the program notes that Brecht thought of his plays as 'theatre'. Theatre, in the good sense of the word, was what the lucky few who ventured forth to watch this controversial play last week were treated to in the Theatre Arts Guild production, "Caucasian Chalk Circle".

This is one of the high points of Twentieth Century theatre, and it is a distinct challenge to any group, especially a more or less amateur group like the Players. It gives one an even greater feeling of elation to be able to say that their production was a success artistically.

Most of the cast had really worked on the play, and put their hearts into it. This is never enough alone, but Stuart Baker's direction was highly competent, and most of the play came across well. Joan Evans as Grusha was truly moving in a performance that must have been technically very hard on her, for Grusha is a demanding part. Ed Rubin in the other lead part, the equally demanding Azdak, seemed to really enjoy himself, and dint of real effort, came over from beginning to end. Azdak, by the way, is one of the few truly original stage creations of this century; he completely overwhelms one with his self-existence: he's there, and nothing more can be said. The rest of the cast in their many changing roles were really quite good, and special mention should be made of Roger Crowther as The Corporal, Les Gallagher as Shauwa, and Norman Perry who gave us a quietly dignified Simon Shashava (almost too dignified at times, but there).

Of the performance as a whole, there is no doubt that the second act seemed to move faster than the first, but the first act is a complicated one in this respect, there is so much to say, and so many more people to say it. The emotional highspots of the script came across always though, and that is a real tribute to the group.

The setting was finely evocative, and the lighting was always used to the advantage of the set so that we were always aware of it, but never too aware. The costumes were good, in the case of the nobles, a treat. The music was jarring enough to match the play the way it should.

I don't know in the end just what I should say about this production as a whole. Praise it certainly deserves, but I do not think it means to qualify this praise with the knowledge that it was an amateur performance, and as such far better than ever expected. The thing about this production which is really most surprising is that it ever happened. It took guts to put on a play like this, a play that is great, but tarnished in the eyes of the fickle public with the term *avante-garde*.

In actual fact, it is a play I would unhesitatingly recommend to anybody, because it is so moving and so completely and excitingly theatrical. Those who did go to see it, were I am sure, rewarded for their pains with a great evening of theatre; those who missed it: I feel sorry for them.

Colour This White

A Committee

ON HUMAN RIGHTS

By DON OLIVER

The government of Nova Scotia has taken a big step forward with the formation of a Committee on Human Rights. The Committee comprises Premier Stanfield, the Minister of Labor, the Provincial Secretary, the Chairman of the Nova Scotia Housing Commission and five deputy ministers. Premier Stanfield has said the responsibilities of the Committee will be to make continuing recommendations on how suppressed groups in the province can become useful citizens in their community.

NEGRO STATUS

The Committee is of special significance to the province's 13,000 Negroes. The inter-departmental committee is concerned with the "Rights" of Negroes as "Humans"; this has been interpreted (by those painfully familiar with the status of Negroes, during the Wars) as a recognition of the fact that Negroes are citizens. There is substantial evidence to support the contention that the Nova Scotia Negroes have not always been afforded this distinction.

For years the status of the Negro in North America has been un-naturally low. The opportunities for individual advancement have not been great. Progress towards a workable, human understanding in schools, work and play has been slow and arduous. But today, no longer the reluctant ostrich, the central organ of political control in our province has raised its head proudly from the sand and has set out to see what can be done for the Negro in such basic fields as housing, education and wage-earning. It is an attempt, in effect, to raise the social and economic status of the Negro in Nova Scotia.

IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS

The formation of this inter-departmental committee is not the first real effort the government has made at improving the status of the Negro in this province. We have, the Fair Accommodation Practices Act and the Fair Employment Practices Act, both of which are designed as legislative obstacles to types of discrimination. Both acts have proven useful and beneficial. But while these acts are administered by the Department of Justice, the new Committee is an attempt to co-ordinate the efforts of several branches of government.

There are Negro families in most major towns and cities in the province. But of all Negro communities the most notorious is Africville, a scattered collection of families clinging to their squatter land in the north end of the city of Halifax.

Depressed areas are to be found in virtually every city in the world from New York to Paris to Addis Ababa. The problem of the Negro in Africville is remarkably similar to other depressed and backward areas. But as Premier Stanfield remarked, it is alright to be concerned about discrimination in other parts of the world, but Nova Scotians ought to be even more alert to possible injustice at home.

HOPE FOR PROBLEMS

What are the major factors which have held Africville back? What hope might the new Committee on Human Rights give the citizens of Africville?

One spokesman who is fully aware of the problems of the community suggests that some of the trouble springs from the confused nature of land ownership. There has been considerable uncertainty in the land holding system in the community and this uncertainty doubtless has helped very little in any attempt to achieve such a thing as community development.

At the least, the citizens enjoy squatter's rights. These are obtained by the beneficial running of the Statute of Limitations. The law is clear that the Act is not positive but negative: nothing is transferred to the citizens of Africville. The Act only serves to extinguish the former owner's claim. Clearly this points to uncertainties and confusion which has not been of positive value to the Negro citizens of Africville.

An Orphanage

For Colored Children

THE HOME

By Kamau and Lautrec

Six miles outside of Dartmouth is an orphanage that has no equal in Canada. It's external appearance is like that of any other building but it's occupants are unlike those of other orphanages. It is exclusively for colored children.

The Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children cares for the many neglected and unwanted children of unwed mothers. The matron, Miss Mary Paris, tries to make the children feel at home.

The home, founded in 1915, was chartered in 1917, and first opened in March 1921. It was necessary then to have such a place because other orphanages refused to accept Negro or mixed-blood children. Many wards of the Home have become worthy Nova Scotians.

The orphanage does not accept children straight from their parents but gets them through the Children's Aid Society. They accept children ranging in age from three months to eighteen years. At 18, the children are transferred

to private homes and their upkeep paid by the children's aid society until they are 21, after which they are able to look after themselves.

There are at the moment 46 children ranging in age from 3 months to 18 years. Seven are in the 15-18 age group. Schools are close by and the children attend them regularly.

Mr. James A.R. Kinney, Secretary-Supervisor, when interviewed by the Gazette revealed that they get their finances from Provincial and Municipal Governments through the C.A.S. \$14 a week per

This contention may even lead to something deeper: that legal ownership of one's property is basic to the development of mature citizens in any community. The problem should have been settled generations ago; perhaps we will see some improvement under the new Committee.

Besides the property problem we must next ask: has there been a fair challenge placed in Africville which would be conducive to self-improvement? It is doubtful. The city used part of the Community for its dumping grounds. For years the city did not enter the community with a snow plough in the winter or a road grader in the spring. An exhibition of mass expropriation being carried on elsewhere by the city was certainly inhibiting.

These factors had their negative effects on the people. The Negro had little to give him any sense of aspiration or any direction. He had little reason to assume that education offers a way out of his condition. It would seem to follow that the Negro's apathy toward education would make it virtually impossible for him to obtain work which would provide him with both dignity and status.

SURVEY

From this cursory look at the problems of Africville, (leaving aside, at present, any discussion of the more commonplace general discrimination which has beset the community and its individual members since they first settled in Halifax), it is clear that there is room for the government to assist the Negro people.

The Committee is new; relatively little is known of the way in which recommendations from various departments of government will be acted on. The committee may not be a success, but it is clear that it has the power to do things for the Nova Scotia Negro which could help produce for him unprecedented status in the community. We shall watch the workings of this committee with keen interest and hope.

child. Other finances come from private sources, bequests donations, presents and a little from the sale of the surplus products from the home owned farm. He went on to say that an Annual Christmas Broadcast is made to solicit gifts from the public.

The home as such is well kept considering the resources available; and the children whom I visited seemed healthy and happy. Mr. Kinney said that they have no pending projects as they have just opened the \$88,000 wing. There are eighteen employees (all colored) under Mr. Kinney.

The Board of Trustees, headed by President M. Kinney, a local doctor, is predominantly white. Most donations come from whites.

Miss Paris feels that because of the source of its backing, the home should be a public place for everyone. The name, "Home for the Colored," perpetuates the color problem and should be changed. She considers the children as Canadians who should be brought up together with other Canadian children, without the segregation bar.