

Brecht at UNB

By RICHARD RENAUD

With only days to go until opening night, the students of Workshop Productions are frantically putting on the final touches on this year's play - Bertoldt Brecht's "The Caucasian Chalk Circle". This may be all well-and fine; however, this is not about the students of a noted theatre school, but it is about the students of English 2140 & 3150 or Workshop Productions.

Although U.N.B. does not at this time have a theatre department or even a faculty of fine arts, it does have a strong English Department which offers courses in drama production, where any student can earn credit for acting, producing or stage managing.

John Ruganda-Director

By Kwame Dawes

John Ruganda, an exceptional playwright from Uganda, has over the years established himself as one of the leading theatre directors in Africa today. His skill as a poet and playwright is demonstrated in his several publications which include *Black Mamba*, *The Burdens*, *The Floods* and *Echoes of Silence* a play completed while he was in Fredericton. His role as a theatre director has involved extensive work in East Africa where he had close association with The Makerere Free Travelling Theatre while being a founder member of The Makonde Group in Kampala. In Kenya, where Ruganda taught in the Department of Literature of the University of Nairobi, he was actively involved with the

University of Nairobi Travelling Theatre and the Nairobi University Players, companies that toured much of Kenya presenting a wide variety of works many of which were directed with notable success by John Ruganda.

Ruganda has also toured his works throughout Europe receiving outstanding acclaim for his staging of Ngugi's *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* which was featured in festivals in Europe, amongst other plays.

Since arrival to do his graduate studies here at UNB, Ruganda has been active in the theatre having worked as a director with Enterprise Theatre for several years and with the University Workshop theatre, a credit course programme

in theatre production. Ruganda also directed the TNB's workshop reading of Kwame Dawes' new play 'In My Garden' late last year.

John Ruganda lends an energy and respect to theatre that is often missing in the works of many directors. His commitment to careful study of text and its background does not stifle his remarkably imaginative readings of texts. Such creativity gives his work a unique stamp which validates the notion of director as creator in as much as the writer may be regarded as such. His approach to the staging of Brecht's play is an example of this combination of textual devotion and idiosyncratic rendering of the action and conceptualization of the work.

There is no doubt that UNB is privileged to have as accomplished an artist as Mr. Ruganda on the campus. Perhaps John's unassuming nature along with his conviction that one is constantly learning has served to make him seem like merely another international student searching for the much vaunted degree. However, for those who have been directed by him and those who have had dialogue with him, there would be little doubt that contact with him and his work can be a remarkably enriching experience.



Clockwise from top. Actor Richard Renaud; director John Ruganda; The text; members of the cast; one of the lead actresses improvising with a bundle; Prof. Ed Mullaly lecturer and supervisor of production.

Layout by Kwame Dawes

Photos by Jayde Mockler



The students who make up English 2140 and 3150 are not necessarily theatre students. They may be computer science students with an interest in theatre and are looking for the English credit or they may be students of English drama option. It is these people who will make the most of the course. It is these people who share a common interest in theatre.

