

## TNB's Production of "The Importance of Being Earnest" a Hit

by Roy Crawford, Jr.

February 14, 1995 marked the centennial of the debut performance of Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest" at the St. James Theatre in London. To celebrate this occasion Theatre New Brunswick is touring the province with what has been called "the funniest play in the English language." This production represents the only Canadian production of this play in its hundredth anniversary year.

The all-star cast assembled for this production includes six returning performers, Oliver Dennis as Jack (Earnest) Worthing, Patrick Galligan as Algernon Moncrieff, Laurie Paton as Gwendolen Fairfax, Deborah Drakeford as Cecily Cardew, Terry Tweed as Miss Prism, and David Hughes as the Rev. Chasuble. Two performers making their debut with TNB are Ben Carlson, who did an incredible job portraying both Lane, Algernon's manservant, and Merriman, Jack's butler, and Darcy Dunlop, who played Lady Bracknell. All of the Canadian actors gathered for this performance have long lists of credits from stage to television and film. The television credits include American and Canadian shows from the Commish to Street Legal, and X-Files to Kung Fu.

"The Importance of Being Earnest" is a light-hearted play about a respected country gentleman, Jack Worthing, who is the guardian of Cecily Cardew. Jack feeling that he needs to get away has created a fictitious brother named Earnest, living in London, who he goes to visit on weekends. While in London, Jack lives as Earnest and has fallen in love with Gwendolen, the cousin of his best friend Algernon. Gwendolen's mother, Lady Bracknell, is a strong-willed woman, who has very high standards for the man that her daughter is to marry. Because Gwendolen believes that the man she loves is named Earnest and has vowed to marry a man she loves is named Earnest and has vowed to marry a man named Earnest, this presents the first of the obstacles to be overcome by Jack/Earnest.

Add to this the energetic, mischievous friend, Algernon, a couple of butlers, the governess Miss Prism, and Rev. Chasuble and you have what I consider one of the funniest love stories that I have ever read or seen. The characters who got the most laughs per line were the two butlers, both played by Ben Carlson, who didn't have many lines, but gave the audience a chuckle almost every time they made an appearance. Ben Carlson was a performer who stood out simply because he added to the great lines written by Oscar Wilde with his facial and body expressions.

"The Importance of Being Earnest" is a play which I read when I was in high school because I was looking for a scene to perform in Theatre Arts Class. As I read the play I found myself enjoying the use of double meanings and role reversal to create comedic situations. When I had the opportunity to see and review this play, I jumped at the chance. Theatre New Brunswick did a wonderful job in producing this play. I think some recognition should go to Patrick Clark for costume design and John Ferguson for set design and all the people involved behind the scenes for these are the people who recreated the look of 1895 London.

This production opened in Fredericton for student previews on March 8 and 9, opening for the general public on March 10 and running until March 18. On March 20 TNB took the show on the road and it will be touring the province until the final show on April 1 in St. John. If you are going home and would like to catch this play you can call the Playhouse for more information at 458-8345 or 1-800-442-9779. If you have the chance to see this play in one of New Brunswick's other cities, I strongly suggest that you do.

The next TNB production will be "The Search For Signs of Intelligent Life in The Universe" which will be presented in student previews on April 19 and 20. This show promises to be very humorous as it involves a bag lady and extra-terrestrials.

TNB has a reputation for putting on very professional productions and they offer very good price reductions for students. For the price of an evening drinking in a crowded bar you could spend the night seeing a very good live performance.

## Celebrating Africa Nite '95 with a Smiling and Happy face

by Eugene Omboli

Africa is a continent of diverse countries with rich cultures, civilizations and resources. It is a mosaic of nations for too long pressured to struggle for the liberation of its people's energies, originality, imagination and creativity. In its quest for the establishment of an economically sane and democratically stable environment conducive to real societal growth, Africa has always been confronted with the challenge to devise innovative ways to most effectively utilize the potential of its multiple assets. Efforts in that direction have often been torpedoed by, both inappropriate foreign assistance, and inadequate local ownership. But, when good news is overriden by the fixation of mega-news monopolies with Africa's bad news, the perception of Africa outside and inside its borders can only be negative.

That perception is further accentuated by biased curricula of schooling systems deficient of materials and instructions on developing and changing the African continent. The combined effect of the above mentioned mega-media's attitude, is the proliferation of a distorted image of this continent through the restriction of aired and printed news about Africa to catastrophe, calamity and other disasters. As a result, the world has grown accustomed to Africa's excesses, tragedies and other misfortunes, instead of excesses, tragedies and other misfortunes of particular African leaders or countries. Some media gurus have even ventured to forecast the continent's doom and incapacity to catch up, or reverse the perceived trend of declining societies.

This has led to a generally negative perception of Africa, and its reduction to one poverty stricken country subject to economic decay or stagnation, as opposed to a continent of geographically, historically, culturally, politically, socially and economically distinct and diverse nations, longing for peace and prosperity. Africa is not a united country yet, but it surely is a glimpse of the infinite.

Given the above statements, it is my profound belief that it falls upon each one of the ever growing number of African intellectuals to demonstrate bold leadership in grab-

bing any opportunity to attempt to not only redress that wrong perception, but most importantly, do one's best to effect positive change in Africa. Each one of us should vow to provide a considerable dosage of good African news, whenever and wherever possible, and commit oneself to representing our countries and our continent as responsibly as possible, in this

Let us demonstrate to them our resolve to embrace efforts to foster law and order, hard work, sustainable development and continuous improvement. Let us expose our abilities to learn, our capacities to plan, produce and deliver quality products and services, as well as our management skills for self-determination and self-sufficiency, in addition to our capabilities to master technologies and induce innovative transformations. Let us brace our audience for a balanced image of Africa and greater African renewal.

Therefore, let us celebrate a Smiling and Happy Africa, during Africa Nite '95 on Saturday, March 25, 1995, from 6:30 p.m. at the Cafeteria of the Student Union Building. I urge you to come and enjoy an exciting evening of learning, cultural entertainment and fun, delivered and served with the participation of a live band from Halifax, and dancers from Moncton; and a lot more in a maze of some of the following precedents.

For the first time, Africa Nite will incorporate the African francophone component and content in its programme. The two major official linguistic options in Africa will be, not only acknowledged, but most importantly shared with the bilingual community of Fredericton and New Brunswick. Also, participation from other cities, like Moncton and Halifax, and other provinces, such as Nova Scotia, has been sought, secured and is to be delivered in an Africa Nite event. Last, but not least, Africa Nite is commemorated under a theme of "Reclaiming Africa's Image", a theme which attempts to educate and share anything that not only helps promote a better perception of the African continent and a greater understanding of on-going changes, but above all helps improve the respect and dignity of its most valuable assets; the Africans.

We are going to travel a lot in space and time, after the visitation of African exhibits and supper. A libation ceremony will open the programme, followed by the singing of the anthem of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The keynote speech of the Nigerian-born guest speaker, will dissect the theme of Africa Nite '95 following the presentation of ASU's president. The cultural show will then kick off with a powerful bilingual recital exhorting us to acknowledge and embrace the living and celebrating Africa, as well as to extend our compassion for the yet suffering and struggling Africa.

A video projection of a portion of the Walt Disney film, The Lion King Parade, will precede the live fashion show performed by the UNB students and members of the Fredericton community. This will be followed by a video presentation of a fashion show of an African designer from Niger. We will then dance to the traditional and modern beats from Cameroon, Gabon and Zaire, executed by female and male dancers from l'Université de Moncton. One of the female dancers will even interpret a popular tune from incomparably dynamic Janet Jackson. We will, of course, listen to the captivating songs of the Afro Musica Band, performing live.

All of this will be packed in a mix of new knowledge about Africa and delightful cultural customs and colourful costumes, as well as live performances, video projections, lucky draws, a safe dose of poems and anecdotes or jokes and the dance party with the band and a DJ. As you can see, it will be better to see for yourself than to hear it said, so see you there!



ceptional environment that the University of New Brunswick, the city of Fredericton and the province, all together offer us.

Africa Nite is undoubtedly one of these occasions that assembles people either converted or accepting of changes to Africa, as well as the rest of open-minded people in search of convincing evidence of democracy, stability and growth in regions of our continent. Let us therefore do our utmost best to present to them the faces of a changing Africa. Let us help them discover the emerging economic dragons, stable democracies and growing societies of a stoic continent. Let us welcome, accept and share good news about our countries and our continent, as well as the resiliency of our people to bounce back from tragedies with our friends.

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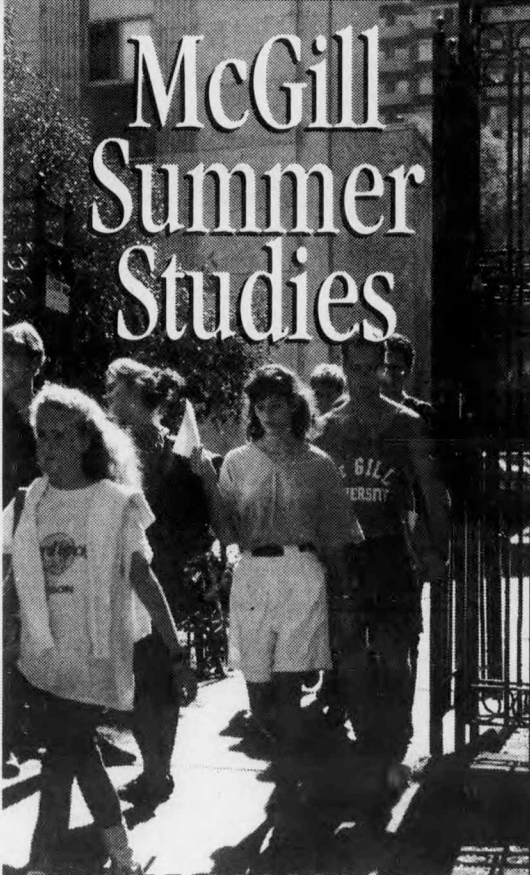
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