

One less brick in the wall

By TOBY SANGER

Actors with Halifax branches of Amnesty International are playing a small part in knocking down the 7 foot wall the South African government recently started building around the township of Soweto. Metaphorically speaking, of course.

They are working on two plays to be presented December 11 through 14 at the Dunn Theater dealing with interrogation and oppression. Nova Scotia poet and member of Dalhousie's board of governors, Maxine Tynes says her involvement in the project is, she hopes, "helping to remove one more brick in the wall in the consciousness of North Americans" about South Africa.

"No. 46 — The last Days of Steve Biko" is a first ever dramatization with music and poetry of transcripts from the inquest into the death of the black consciousness leader in South African police custody in 1977. He was the 46th prisoner to die in custody since detention without trial was introduced in the country in 1963.

Director Karanja Njoroge is tired after a recent rehearsal. He speaks of his many other commitments; of how he doesn't have a

free day on his calendar until Christmas. But when he starts trying to explain what the group is trying to do with the play, a fervent energy begins to run through his body.

"We wanted to do something different — not too documentary and not too dramatized." What it has developed into he describes as a "poetic interpretation of the death of Steve Biko," workshopped through the collective efforts of Maxine Tynes, Colin Smith, David Woods and Four the Moment musician Delvina Bernard.

"One thing we wanted to bring into drama is the overplaying of the division of black and white. The suffering in South Africa is a human suffering... the white suffering is psychological."

There is a partial reversal of the master-slave relationship that they are trying to bring out in this play, explains Njoroge.

"The architects of the system (of apartheid) are instruments of the system and, by virtue of this, are slaves of the system. They themselves are oppressed by the system... they are tormented."

A cross-examination of the interrogator himself is also an element in the other play to be



Producer Colin Smith interrogates sadistic desire in Harold Pinter's "One for the Road". Photo by Jacques Roy/Dal Photo.

presented in the benefit, Harold Pinter's *One for the Road*.

Producer Colin Smith says the play is an uncovering of the character of the interrogator who, dressed as a business executive, sadistically torments a tortured prisoner, his wife and child.

Smith says he believes this cruelty and sadism is latent in most people. He sees the play, the first he has been involved in, as a

form of exorcism.

"There's a lot of the interrogator in me and a lot in most people. The key to this play is the problem of control, of self-control breaking down — which is the hallmark of all Pinter plays."

The two plays seem set to deal with a lot more than Amnesty International originally had in mind, which publicity coordinator Julia Creighton says was "to

bring public awareness to the plight of prisoners of conscience."

Njoroge explains that with the plays, they are trying to do more than just raise awareness of political prisoners.

"We're trying to say that we must learn what creates the systems that allows these seeds of injustice to grow... we must also have an appreciation of how the oppressor acts."



Photo: Courtesy of Conn

ZANY BRASS

By THOMAS BAUER

If you've never been to a concert featuring a drunken trombone player, you obviously weren't at the Cohn last Saturday evening to see the Fine Arts Brass of England.

Actually, trombonist Simon Hogg was far from drunk; however, his convincing impersonation, complete with musical hangover, was just one example of the zany British humour offered by these five young musicians from Birming-

ham. Their concerts consist of a unique blend of humour, polished playing, and a wide-ranging repertoire.

In addition to Hogg, the Fine Arts Brass are Andy Culshaw and Bryan Allen on trumpets, Owen Slade on tuba, and Stephen Roberts on horn. Roberts also writes most of the arrangements and acts as the group's announcer. His witty and engaging preambles are delivered in an absolutely deadpan yet refreshing manner.

TALKING ABOUT ART

By HEATHER HUESTON

You're in a gallery looking at art. Suddenly, the dominant, loud-mouth partner of the couple next to you declares: "This painting is so opaque." The subordinate partner obediently and eagerly asks, "Oh, what does opaque mean?" And then the pedant of the lovers launched into a long, laboured definition for everyone's benefit.

Sometimes listening to people talk about art is irritating. But there are other times when art and talking about art seem to go natu-

erate time is at the symposium to rally together. One such appropriate held this weekend in conjunction with a major exhibit by Visual Arts Nova Scotia (VANS).

To celebrate the association's tenth anniversary, local artists and critics as well as guests invited from outside the region, will discuss the past and future of arts in Nova Scotia.

"We want to find out how we see ourselves and how we are seen from outside the province," says VANS Executive Director Loreen

Bennett. "Criticism is welcome."

The exhibit, *Visual Facts '86* contains juried entries from any artist resident in the province at least three years. It will be at the Dalhousie Art Gallery from December 4 to January 11.

Several galleries and museums are holding open houses this Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 2-5 pm. Some of these include: Fireworks Gallery, 1569 Barrington St.; Centre for Art Tapes, 2156 Brunswick St.; and Anna Leonowens Gallery, 1891 Granville Street.

The Brass incorporate a wide variety of visual gags into their performances, such as Hogg's reeling around stage while playing a solo in "Landlord, Fill the Flowing Bowl... (Tomorrow We'll be Sober)". Tuba player Owen Slade generated some of the evening's heaviest laughter with several of his solos. "The Epic Tuba Sonata," subtitled "Man's Struggle Against Nature," had Slade literally trying to crawl under his chair in order to reach several exceedingly low notes. In "Doin the Raccoon," he was compelled to take his solo while trying to dance the Charleston.

Were it not for the high calibre

of the Brass' playing, some of the gags might have risked falling flat. However, the group's combined sound, which at times had an almost bell-like clarity, reinforced the notion that this was first and foremost an ensemble of fine musicians. The Brass are to be commended for the accomplished manner in which they play such a wide range of musical repertoire.

A sampling of the evening's programme, a veritable potpourri, included a selection of Renaissance dances, jazz standards such as "Manhattan" and "Ain't She Sweet," and several contemporary works. The musical highlights had to be the

"Sonatine" by French composer Eugene Bozza, with its wide palette of tone colours and shadings, and the serene "Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring" played as a second encore.

Saturday's concert concluded the Fine Arts Brass' first North American tour. They now return to England for two days' rest before beginning a tour of the Middle East. With three albums to their credit, the Fine Arts Brass of England, most of whom appear to be in their late twenties, have already accumulated an enviable track record. Given their relative youth, these fine musicians seem destined for even greater heights.