

CALENDAR

MALCOLM X FORUM—The Durham and North Carolina Central University Chapters of the African Liberation Support Committee will sponsor a forum commemorating the life and teachings of Malcolm X on Friday, February 23 in the Education Auditorium on NCCU's campus at 7 p.m.

Tirivafi Kangai, North American representative of Zimbabwe African National Union, and Nelson Johnson of the Workers Viewpoint Organization will be the guest speakers. All are invited to attend. Child care will be provided.

SHAW PLAYERS AND COMPANY SPRING PRODUCTION—The Shaw Players and Company, under the direction of Dr. Patricia C. Caple, will open their spring season with Langston Hughes' "Simply Heavenly" on Friday, February 23 in Raleigh Memorial Auditorium. Curtain time is 8:15 p.m.

Ticket information and reservations are now available by calling 755-4972 or 755-4919 (Raleigh).

ANNUAL VALENTINE PARTY—The Floral Club of Ebenezer Baptist Church at 2200 South Alston Avenue, will hold its annual Valentine Party, February 24 at 6 p.m., in the Fellowship Hall.

OPTIONS IN EDUCATION—A report on the educational system's approach to black history and culture. What's being done to acknowledge the contributions of black men and women to American culture. Tuesday, February 27, 8 p.m., WUNC 91.5 FM.

PLANNING FOR FUNERAL COSTS—A special interest meeting on "Planning for Funeral Costs" will be held on Wednesday, February 28 at 10 a.m., at the Durham Agricultural Extension Building, 721 Foster St., Durham. Mike Poole, a local Funeral Director and Mrs. Bernadette G. Watts, Associate Home Economics Extension Agent, will present this informational public program. The public is cordially invited to attend. Please call 688-6770 to pre-register.

CONCERT IN HONOR OF PAUL KOEPKE—On Sunday afternoon, March 4 at 4 p.m., a concert will be given in the Music Department Auditorium on the NCCU Campus in honor of Dr. Paul Koepke, retiring head of the Theory Area of the NCCU Music Department. Admission is free, and the public is invited to attend. Performers will consist of both music faculty members and music students. The concert will consist of the honoree's compositions and there will be a reception immediately following.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED—The Durham YWCA Women's Health Cooperative is looking for volunteers to do walk-in and telephone counseling on pregnancy, childbirth, problem pregnancy, and other women's health issues. A counselor training session will begin on Monday March 5 at 7 p.m., at the UWCA, 809 Proctor St., in Durham. For more information and to register, call the YWCA at 688-4396 by Friday, March 2.



The first lion tamer on record was "Manchester Jack" of Wombwell's Menagerie, a traveling show in England during the early 19th century.

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ROSSOM'S UNIVERSAL ROBOTS INFORMATIVE, BUT . . .

REVIEW BY
KELVIN A. BELL

One must somehow question the appropriateness, and particularly the relevance of Rossom's Universal Robots, NCCU last production, to today's society and what we are, or should be about. The North Carolina Central University Theater is a "learning theater" for the exposure to all types of dramatic writing and performances. With this fact firmly in mind, the appropriateness of the play becomes more clear. And though I might have chosen something else, the exposure provided by this play makes it so much more valuable.

It is remarkable that the Bohemian born, Karel Capek could have been so far off, having written the play in 1920. The setting was in 2292 A.D., but we as a complete society, have already progressed dangerously near the point about which he warned. But the warning that he issued against over-mechanization of society, and the dehumanization of its workers will, no doubt, go unheeded. The result should bring us to the robot revolt, of which he spoke, at least a hundred years earlier, if we manage to survive that long.

The play lacked pep and vitality as it dealt with the issues of work and the servitude of man to man. The play pointed out that machines would be happier, not because of their suffering, but because they were "more technically perfect." The old philosophy that without work worries, man will be free to perfect his mind, was also brought out.

One would have to take all the arguments together to keep them from seeming silly (which they did separately). But technological learning instead of developing ideas, theories, etc., and their possible consequences was the most prevalent warning brought out.

Of particular problem with the performance was the lack of interaction among the dialogues, in which the part of Helena (though extremely well performed by Ms. Jennifer Lanier) overshadowed all others. Another problem was that of timing—the play moved too slowly (with an additional lag here and there). Perhaps director Johnny Alston missed the timing problem because he was part of the—portraying Mr. Alquist. As to the part of Helena Glory, I cannot say.

Hilda McCoy (as Harry Domin) is still having some problem becoming the character he portrays, and it often appears that he is looking into a mirror.

Ms. Sharon Hildebrand, a new comer to the theater, was quite good as the robot Sulla, while Nana (Constance Williams),

through Lerwell performed a humorous part that kept many of us awake.

Scene designer Doris Mahaffey provided a rather unique setting replete with computer and automatic sliding doors. Costume and lighting designers Randolph Umberger and James Knight also

helped make the scenes rather attractive.

For direction, movement, and flow I give the performance a...yawn. Clearly their next production, which has its "world premier" next week will prove to be much better. Say you'll join me.



R.U.R. — Several of Rossom's Universal Robots showed no emotion as they were photographed by theater personnel.

Jo Anne McKnight— One Who Perseveres

BY KELVIN A. BELL

She gained much of her skill and proficiency under the tutelage of Owen Dodson. And though she studied under Dodson, Sterling Brown and other greats of the Harlem Renaissance era, it was Dodson—whose technical training was so thorough, so intense that it allowed her to jump from form to form. It is he who, as she put it, "was an extremely important force in my life," influencing the direction of her work.

Her name is Jo Anne McKnight and one of her most recent productions, "The Incense Burners," completed in 1976, will have its World Premier at North Carolina Central University next week.

the beginning of her own questioning and research of spirituality. Even now, she continues this quest for knowledge as she continues to work on a Master's degree in Divinity at Duke University.

Having also worked as a professional dancer and having danced at the World's Fair in Spokane, Washington, she, at one point, had to choose between dancing and writing. It would appear that her choice was correct.

Written in the format of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, "The Inverted Crow," Miss McKnight's first epic poem, will be produced in book form by Flame International Press next year. The graduate of Howard University

is also working on a play which is set on another planet, in a different parameter of time. The play will deal with the concept of those beings sent among the masses to elevate the quality of life—who are killed because of their teachings or their dreams—the correctness or appropriateness of whose thoughts is later realized. It will envelope the extremes of consciousness and delineate the essence of those extremes.

Miss McKnight contributes her aggressiveness and her dedication to children and humanity to her family ties. One of nine children born to Dr. Herbert Vincent and Mrs. Alma Maye Mitch-

ell McKnight, she considers herself very much like her father as far as persevering kept his office in the heart of the ghetto in Washington—with service to humanity (instead of for profit) as his motive. His dream was rejected, but he persevered and was eventually accepted. Her mother had cancer following the birth of her first child—then became pregnant with a second child—Jo Anne. Advised to "get rid" of the child because pregnancy could cause reactivation of the cancer and the resultant loss of both mother and child, her mother refused, and we have ultimately become the beneficiary of that defiance.

With all praises being given "to our Creator and

that portion of Himself which He has portioned out to every living thing," Miss McKnight says she is "very grateful to the spirit doctors from Haiti, Brazil, Nigeria, Washington, D.C., and North Carolina who guided (her) into the world of the unseen."

"If my artistic excellence is not in shape, then there is no reason for striving," said the rather vibrant woman of about thirty, referring to her writing. She seeks to make her works great enough, not only to live in the time of their conception, but to be able to live and have meaning for generations to come. She considers herself far from teaching that point, but this is where she wants to go. We wish her success.



DIRECTOR LINDA NORFLETT AND PLAYWRIGHT JO-ANNE MCKNIGHT discuss their world premier production of "Incense Burners" at NCCU, February 28-March 4.

The Playwright-in-Residence at the New Theatre School in Washington, D.C., where she writes for both children and adults, has produced an average of one play per year since 1968 when she first began writing professionally. Since then, she has written many plays studying the relationship and interactions between people and society, and their environment. Among these are children's plays for D.C. and Montgomery County (Md.) Public Schools, notably, "The Trees Talk Back"—dealing with how man treats nature; a modern version of Mozart's "The Magic Flute" for The New Theater School; "On Human Kindness," a TV special for WMAL-TV in Washington; a Christmas special for Ebony Exposures called "The Modest Touch" which will be the pilot for "Voices of the Ancients" a half-hour, serious children's program being performed by the children of the Young People's Theater of St. Joseph's Church through the assistance of Rev. W.W. Easley, Jr., which will be seen on WUNC-TV, and "Tones of the Lady of Ebony"—a tribute to Nina Simone performed at the Smithsonian Institution—the research for which first brought her to North Carolina in 1974.

She categorizes these plays into two types: Commercial and "Gut" plays. The Commercial plays help to keep her craft sharp, as well as bread on her table, while the so-called "Gut" plays are those which express her innermost.

The former may take as little as three to four months, while the latter may take up to eight years, as did "The Incense Burners" and are based on both book research and actual experience.

"The Incense Burners" was an outgrowth of "A Thousand Years Black Spirituality," a one-act play performed in 1967 at a church in Washington, D.C., where she grew up. It was

entitled "Omniloka," while working in the Academic Skills Center at NCCU. She is excited about this play

after her own dreams no matter who tries to discourage her. Dr. McKnight has always

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