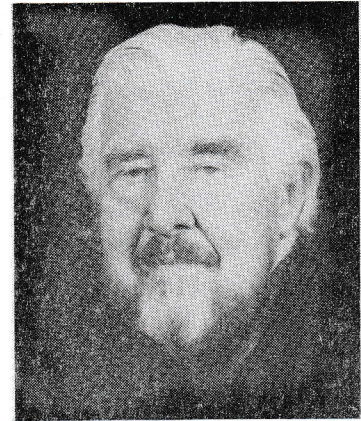


**A PROFILE OF
NAIROBI CITY PLAYERS OVER THE LAST 40 YEARS**

BY

RURIK RONSKY

Consultant Member of the Committee and a
Founding Member of the Group



Way back in 1956 a group of friends including John Ebdon, Donald Whittle, Noreen Antrobus and Bryan Epsom got together to form an amateur theatre group dedicated to producing plays of the highest standard and called themselves "Nairobi City Players". The Constitution of this new group was unusual for an amateur society as the main aims and objectives were stated as follows:

- a) Regularly to present theatrical productions of a good dramatic and artistic standard by utilising and coordinating the best available acting talent, directors, set designers and technical stage assistants in Kenya.
- b) Towards the fulfillment to a) above, to be unstinting in the cost of productions, subject to the budget limits set by the Standing Committee.
- c) To take all necessary steps to encourage drama and to improve the facilities available for theatrical productions.

The Nairobi City Players, despite vastly changed circumstances affecting theatre in Kenya since their inception, have adhered faithfully to these aims and presented over 120 productions, including many full scale musicals, mostly at the Kenya National Theatre.

In fact this year marks the 40th year of N.C.P.'s association with the Kenya National theatre which the group affectionately regards its home ground. Since 1956, the rentals paid by N.C.P. have formed a major contribution to the Kenya National theatres' revenues; in addition the group has given donations from time to time to assist the theatre. Apart from this, N.C.P. has made substantial contributions to a number of worthy charities by way of Charity Premieres and also gifts in cash and kind.

Contd/.....

A PROFILE OF NAIROBI CITY PLAYERS OVER THE LAST 40 YEARS

Over the years many talented people have made major contributions to the work of the group, working in all fields of theatrical enterprise. Their remarkable endeavours have resulted in high standard of production of which this group is understandably proud. Some of the highlights of our 40 year history are as follows:

Among the musicals were: "The King and I" (1961). This was revived in 1977, sixteen years later with the original leads Peter Pearce and Dulcie Atwill, known as the Bangkok Pensioners for the latter production. "The Sound of Music" (1967), "Guys and Dolls" (1968) and revived in 1979. "My Fair Lady" (1968), "Fiddler on the Roof" (1971) and revived in 1991, "Hello Dolly" (1972), "Godspell" (1974) and revived again in 1990, "Cabaret" (1976), "Side by Side by Sondheim" (1980), "Cantebury Tales" (1982) and "Westside Story" (1992).

Gilbert and Sullivan works have also been presented - "The Pirates of Penzance" (1979), "H.M.S Pinafore" (1980) and the "Gondoliers" (1984) with Nairobi Music Society, In recent years, the group has presented pantomimes at Christmas with "Cinderella" (1984) to mark our 100th production, "Mother Goose" (1987) and "Little Red Riding Hood" last year. Travelling revues has also been a popular part of our programme with "Minstrels" (1974), (1975), and (1978), "Happy as a Sandbag" (1983) and "Cabaret Magic" (1993).

Particularly successful plays offered by the group were "Love of Four Colonels" (our first production in 1956), "The Diary of Anne Frank" (1960), "Conduct Unbecoming" (1973), "The Business of Murder" (1987) and "Twelve Angry Men" (1989) and for the first time in Nairobi, the group presented a Dinner Theatre play "Darling I'm Home" at the Norfolk Hotel in June of this year which was very well received.

Over the last 25 or so years, Nairobi City Players have followed a policy of "importing" professional directors, choreographers, actors, singers and musicians. These have included Directors Larry Oaks, David Kelsey, Robert Robinson, Gerry Tebbutt, Fernard Monast, Jon Wiliamson, David Middleton, Olivia Breeze, Sid Livingstone and Barry Martin and for the productions of "The Merry Widow" and the "Barber of Seville", director, musical director, soloist and musicians from the Vienna Volksoper and the Opernhaus Graz. This policy of strengthening local talent with visiting professionals has been fully justified, we feel, by the ambitious productions we have been able to stage, and has certainly raised theatre standards in this country.