

My Children! My Africa!

Players premier Fugard production in Southwest

By JOHN MABRY

The Aggie Players continue their international season of theater tonight with the Southwest premiere of South African playwright Athol Fugard's "My Children! My Africa!"

A&M is the first university in the world to perform the latest play written by Fugard, whom *Time* magazine has called "the greatest active playwright in the English-speaking world."

Fugard's other theatrical successes include "Master Harold... And the Boys," "Blood Knot" and the recent "The Road to Mecca."

Set in a South African township classroom, "My Children! My Africa!" focuses on the relationships between Mr. M, the idealistic teacher, Thami Mbikwana, a student with his eyes set on political revolution, and Isabel, an upper-class English girl.

In an attempt to improve the educational opportunities for his black students, Mr. M sets up a debate between Thami, his prize student, and Isabel, a student from a neighboring school. Under the guidance of Mr. M, the two then join forces as a combined team in an English literature quiz in a local school festival. The play continues as an observation of the social and political realities in South Africa that ultimately destroy their beautiful but fragile relationship.

Originally planning to use August Wilson's "Fences," director Roger Schultz decided instead on "My Children! My Africa!" because "the show became available, it was very timely and it speaks on louder issues than 'Fences'."

"I think the title of the play might just as well be 'My Children! My World!', or, perhaps even better, 'Our Children! Our World!'," Schultz said. "It is a story of education, birth and rebirth, and impending change, all of which come about when unreconcilable forces and beliefs are brought together. In many ways it's mythic — the challenge of the new versus the old, the challenge of the young versus the established."

During the production of the play, Schultz kept in contact with Fugard, who is now in London overseeing the production of "My Children! My Africa!" at the National Theatre of Great Britain.

Fugard, who very much sees himself as Mr. M, has said "the spirit of generous reconciliation between South Africans of different skin colors has been my inspiration in writing 'My Children! My Africa!'."



SONDRA N. ROBBINS/The Battalion

Sophomore theater arts major Jessica Lowe and senior theater arts major Oliver Tull run through their lines one more time. Lowe and Tull star as Isabel and Thami in the Aggie Players' production of Athol Fugard's play "My Children! My Africa!"

To help the actors prepare for their roles in the play, Schultz invited three guest speakers to visit rehearsals.

Tony Cheenah, a South African refugee, spoke to the cast on his personal and often painful experiences as a South African citizen. Pastor Craig Borchardt of Peace Lutheran Church explained the doctrines of Cal-

vinism, upon which much of white South African ideology and prejudice is based. Professor Larry Yarak of the A&M history department gave the actors insight about South Africa's people and its past.

"They helped me understand the specifics of living there for a long time that I could never possibly get liv-

ing here," senior theater arts major Oliver Tull, who plays Thami, said. "You know, there's racism in Texas but it's nothing compared to what's going on over there."

The actors independently read literature explaining the South African apartheid system and watched several films that dealt with the subject.

Like the actors, costume designer Susan Kelly, professor of theater arts, also did extensive research for her inspiration.

"It was almost all black-and-white and color documentary books, books on the Soweto Uprising, for example," she said. "I went to photos of actual South Africans, so the costumes are exact replicas of something like Mr. M would have worn."

Senior theater arts major Billy Thomas said he possesses an additional insight to creating his role as the Martin Luther King-like Mr. M.

"Being black, I can bring more to my character because if I were in South Africa, I would be treated in the same way," he said. "Being in the play helped me realize that I am an extremely fortunate person because I'm here in the United States. We sometimes forget about that."

Schultz describes working with the actors as "wonderful. They are three excellent artists/scholars who have been devoted, creative and energetic."

Thomas said he has enjoyed the rehearsal process well, especially working with a small cast.

"Being in such a small cast was a big push on me," he said. "You have to keep up with your fellow actors. But when you work with quality, you produce quality."

Sophomore theater arts major Jessica Lowe, who plays Isabel, said she hopes the insight she gained from being involved in the production will carry over to those who come to see it.

"I didn't know anything about South Africa before I began," she said. "I knew that there was political turmoil, but I didn't know how far it had gone. I learned a tremendous amount from the whole experience and I think that the audience will as well."

Schultz said he hopes the audience leaves with something else, too.

"I would hope that they would leave with that which Mr. M calls Hope," he said. "That there are other ways of resolving differences than resorting to confrontation."

After performing "My Children! My Africa!" for audiences at A&M, the cast and crew will perform as entrants in the American College Theater Festival later this month.

"My Children! My Africa!" will premier at 8 tonight as well as Oct. 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, and 13 in the Rudder Forum. Tickets are \$6 for the general public and \$5 for students, and can be purchased at the Rudder Box Office and all Ticketron outlets. Information and reservations can be obtained at 845-1234.

HIGHLIGHTS

Dr. Love prescribes comic relief tonight

Dr. Love and the Erogenous Zones will prescribe their usual dose of humor in their show at the Flying Tomato tonight. The quintet will perform "nothing-compares-to-it" parodies of hard rock as well as original songs.

Dr. Love, supposedly wanted for noise pollution and forgetting lyrics on stage, is joined by his co-

medic cohorts Vinnie Vomit, Hans Wulfgang Amadeus von Axe of Ulhm, Nurse Chastity and Guido.

Dr. Love and The Erogenous Zones are scheduled to start their show at 9 p.m. There is a \$1 cover. For more information call 846-1616.

Recording artist integrates music at Tippy's

Integrating blues, country, rock and Zydeco, Full Circle recording artist Bobby Sheron will perform at Tippy's tonight.

Sheron, a native of Temple, is touring in support of his release,

Bobby Sheron. Sheron is scheduled to begin at 9:30. Tippy's is located at 1803 Greenfield Plaza in Bryan.

For more information, call 846-7203.

Acappella performs sans instruments tonight

By HELEN WOLFE

The Baptist Student Union will present Acappella tonight in Rudder Auditorium at 7:30.

Combining music and ministry, Acappella, a full-time Christian group, features tight harmonies, innovative vocals and a no-music approach. A capella is a musical term referring to vocals without instrumental accompaniment.

The members of Acappella are lead singer George Pendergrass, tenor Gary Moyers, baritone Wayburn Dean and bass singer Duane Adams.

The all male ensemble was formed when Keith Lancaster, songwriter, arranger and former lead singer decided to pursue a full-time music ministry. This began an acappella group dedicated to glorifying God in a lyrical and musical way.

The Christian music community became aware of the group when their first single, "Acappel-

la" reached number twenty-nine on the Christian music charts in 1986.

Since then the single "More Than A Friend" has risen up the charts and the albums, *Conquerors* and *Better Than Life* appeared in the top 40.

In 1989 the album, *Sweet Fellowship*, appeared on the charts following the strength of the single "Well On My Way."

The Paris, Tenn., based group records in-house at Clifty Studios. All recordings are then released on the independent Clifty Records label.

The goals of Acappella Ministries are to glorify God, encourage Christians, reach the lost and provide an alternative.

Admission for the Acappella concert is free. Associate director of the Baptist Student Center Andrew Buckner says the Baptist Student Union is covering all expenses. For more information call Rudder Tower at 845-1234.



The staff behind Dr. Love and the Erogenous Zones: (Clockwise from bottom left) Dr. Love, Guido, Nurse Chastity, Hans Wulfgang Amadeus von Axe of Ulhm and Vinnie Vomit