

Cricket Notes

CLR James



A Century Ago

A team of English cricketers is going to the Caribbean to play a series in the year 1986. I am once more reminded of the cricket that used to be played in the Caribbean a hundred years ago.

My father used to play around the year 1900 and when a team from QRC, of which I was a member, went to Tunapuna (his country town) to play, a man came up to me and told me: "Boy I am glad to see you. Your father used to hit the ball always on the top of those houses there."

Some of my most precious cricket memories are the stories my father used to tell me and I shall now relate one which will show what cricket meant to a village population in the Caribbean a hundred years ago.

My father played for the Young Modern Ones. They were modern not only because they were young, but because they bowled overarm whereas the older team in Tunapuna bowled underarm. My father warned me not to despise underarm bowlers because they got surprising pace with the strange delivery. They could get the ball to rise and they could also spin it.

The young ones challenged the old boys to a match. The old boys refused to play against such trash. However, both sides joined the competition run from Port of Spain so that the two clubs had to meet finally. The young ones gave the oldsters a proper beating and kept on reminding them always that they and their underarm were an ancient and out-moded team of players.

The old men, for the most part, took it. But one of them told my father and his team: "Go ahead Robert. One day we are going to play you a match and put you in your place". The youth and my father were sceptical and derisive.

At least one day the Seniors, as they called themselves, challenged the youth for a match and it was one of the greatest events of the time. My father and his team were certain that they would win, but they lost and they lost substantially.

The cause of the disaster was a new player brought into the match by the senior men. This man batted and made 97 runs, a tremendous score in those days and but for the fact he was run out he would have made one hundred and never been dismissed.

But worse was to come. When the youth batted, this newcomer bowled. He bowled overarm and dismissed the young batsmen one after the other. They were lucky to make twenty. When the game was over the defeated had nothing to say, but crawled away in silence to lick their wounds.

The question, however, which occupied them was: who was this player? The older team would not say and as it was the practice in those days to bring someone from a far part of the island to strengthen your team, the matter remained a mystery for years.

One year the island of Grenada was playing the island of Trinidad in one or two friendly matches. The photograph of the Grenada team appeared in the press. To the astonishment of the youth of Tunapuna, in the centre of the picture was their former conqueror, no less than C.A. Olliverre. He was a famous West Indian cricketer who had played for Caribbean XI's not only at home, but abroad.

My father told me that when they realised who the great man was they were not dissatisfied because it meant that the older men were so determined to defeat the impertinent youth that they must have gone to an infinite amount of trouble and expense to get this famous Caribbean player to come to Trinidad and play a match in the country.

I, for my part, have always thought that this event symbolised the deep roots cricket had made in a West Indian village a hundred years ago.

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Press
26 February 7.00pm

The play will run from
27 February
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C L R James's **The Black Jacobins** February 21 — March 15 1986

In what will be a unique experience for British theatre, Talawa Theatre Company will be presenting **C L R James's** famous historical play **The Black Jacobins**, from February 21st to March 15th at Riverside Studios.

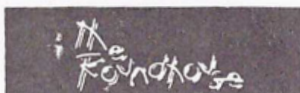
The Black Jacobins portrays the only truly successful slave revolt in history: the uprising inspired by Toussaint L'Ouverture and the savage revolution in Haiti which was triggered off by the French Revolution.

Norman Beaton as Toussaint L'Ouverture, **Trevor Laird**, **Mona Hammond** and **Brian Bovell** head the cast of over twenty. The play has been performed only once in Britain, 50 years ago, with Paul Robeson in the lead. It has, however, been successfully produced in Africa, the West Indies and the United States. For **Yvonne Brewster**, the play's director, the project is of vital significance:

"When a play of such historical authority, proven distinction, a play of elegance and vision exists, then it is right that not only the black community but the general theatre going public should have an opportunity of seeing it produced."

The Black Jacobins is to be presented as part of the Focus on **C L R James** Festival 'Man of the People', a major exhibition to be held concurrently at Riverside, on the life and works of this writer, philosopher, Marxist historian, Pan-Africanist and cricket writer, now in his 85th year.

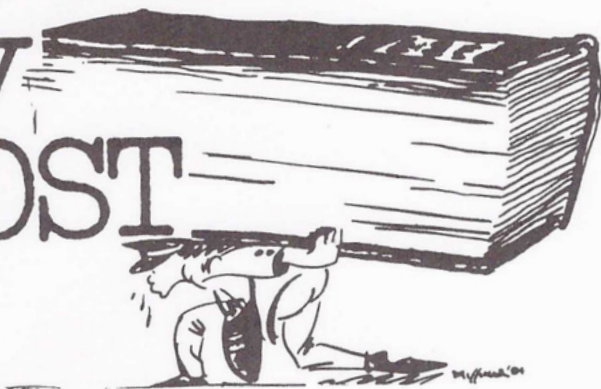
Talawa Theatre Company was set up by **Yvonne Brewster** with the aim of using ancient mythologies and the political experience of our forebears to inform, enrich and further enlighten modern black British theatre. So with its first major production Talawa is now honoured to fulfill that commitment by presenting **C L R James's** classic work: **The Black Jacobins**.



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The Black Jacobins portrays the only truly successful slave
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