

It is seldom that any country can boast one individual in whom are combined so many extraordinary and diverse talents - talents which have been used throughout a lifetime for the service and betterment of a people, and which have been sought by governments and institutions of most countries in the world. Today the Institute of Jamaica honours such a man, one whose achievement has been to explain Jamaica to herself and to the rest of the world, to help identify her as a remarkable country of remarkable people, and to help her assume a position of importance in world affairs far out of proportion to her size.

Citation to Professor the Honourable Ralston Milton (Rex) Nettleford O.M.

Born some 56 years ago into a simple rural family, he demonstrated an irresistible urge to direct troupes of performing artists, staging several variety shows whose casts were drawn from the people of the streets.

His quick intelligence, broad interests and single-minded ambition to excel led to his winning a scholarship to the University College of the West Indies where he read for a degree in History. At Mona he came under the influence of West Indian luminaries such as Elsa Goveia and Philip Sherlock, who stimulated his interest in History and the emerging Caribbean reality.

PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE RALSTON MILTON (REX) NETTLEFORD, O.M.

It is seldom that any country can boast one individual in whom are combined so many outstanding and diverse talents - talents which have been used throughout a lifetime for the service and betterment of a people, and which have been sought by governments and institutions of most countries in the world. Today the Institute of Jamaica honours such a man, one whose achievement has been to explain Jamaica to herself and to the rest of the world, to help identify her as a remarkable country of remarkable people, and to help her assume a position of importance in world affairs far out of proportion to her size.

Born some 56 years ago into a simple rural family, in humble circumstances, from an early age he discovered and developed his love for the theatre and it might have appeared at that time that he was headed directly towards the footlights. He demonstrated an irresistible urge to direct troupes of performing artists, staging several variety shows whose casts were drawn from the people of the streets.

His quick intelligence, broad interests and single-minded ambition to excel led to his winning a scholarship to the University College of the West Indies where he read for a degree in History. At Mona he came under the influence of West Indian luminaries such as Elsa Goveia and Philip Sherlock, who stimulated his interest in History and the emerging Caribbean reality.

In 1955 the UCWI student publication The Pelican had this to say of him: "He has drive, a strong personality and unselfishness as a student, initiative and a wealth of fair-play, willingness always to share the honours with others, and a highly developed critical faculty". Today, that summing-up reveals uncanny insight and foresight, for we recognize these attributes as having remained with him throughout his life

His post-graduate career began with the winning of both an Issa Scholarship and a Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford, where he pursued studies in politics.

In Oxford his flat was an international centre where food, music, dance and intellectual exchange (in that order of priority) were attractions. It was also a dance studio and was patronized as much by the English aristocracy, including Royalty, as by Oxford-based colonials. And no less a person than a king of Swaziland was discreetly taught to do the waltz there.

The Bachelor of Philosophy studies which had purportedly been the reason for his attending Oxford formed a low-profile background to other more spectacular activities. His artistic talents were soon recognized. He worked with the English actors Dudley Moore and Alan Bennett on a revue which was presented at the Edinburgh Festival.

It was perhaps inevitable that, on completing his studies at Oxford, he should return to his alma mater, the University of the West Indies, to participate in the work that had been started by his friend and mentor, Philip Sherlock.

His outstanding contribution to the field of adult education has received world-wide recognition in the form of numerous appointments and invitations to lecture. He is a member of the International Planning Committee on Global Education and he has delivered papers on that subject in the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Canada. Other international appointments as an educational consultant include membership of the Academic Council of the Latin American Programme of the Wilson Centre in Washington, the Social Review Committee, the International Development Research Centre of Ottawa, the Commonwealth Advisory Group on Distance Education and Open Learning, and an Honorary Trusteeship of the Foundation of the Association of Caribbean Universities and Research Institutes.

One of his earliest appointments at the UWI led him into an area of education, where his contribution as Director of this department soon established an international reputation for the department. It became a model of its kind for its scholarly yet practical

approach to a volatile area of activity which, in a country like Jamaica, could have ended disastrously had it not been handled with such finesse and innate understanding of the Jamaican man and woman.

In this field, his contributions to both practice and theory have led to his appointment as a Visiting Fellow of the Centre d'Etudes Industrielles in Geneva, and as a consultant for the International Labour Organization, monitoring sanctions against apartheid.

His academic activity at Mona has also encompassed the disciplines of Politics and Government, on which he has lectured both in the Department of Government and the Institute of Mass Communications.

His research and insight into the process that led to Jamaican self-government and the role of the Rt Excellent Norman Washington Manley in achieving that goal resulted in a publication which is still considered one of the most authoritative works on the subject and is required reading for students of Government and Politics in the Caribbean.

In his early years at Mona he was involved, with M.G. Smith and Roy Augier, in the pioneering study of the Rastafarian Movement.

Ten years later, his critical, fearless evaluation of plantation society, published at a time when racial and political issues had reached a watershed, had enormous influence both here and in other Third World and Caribbean countries in helping to clarify issues and achieve solutions to problems of race and identity which, at the time, seemed unanswerable. It, too, is now required reading in many universities in the western hemisphere, as part of Afro-American and Third World academic programmes.

World recognition as an authority on Caribbean politics and government and problems of race and identity facing students of plantation societies world-wide has led to numerous invitations to visit universities abroad. He has delivered lectures and papers at Harvard and Temple Universities, the University of Pennsylvania and Atlanta University.

Despite his international commitments he still finds time to write extensively on politics, culture, history and public affairs. He has been widely published. Anthologies and collections of his essays and articles exist in international editions and he writes regularly for Jamaican newspapers and journals.

Throughout his life he has been a student of Jamaican and Caribbean folklore, placing his extensive knowledge

constantly at the service of other researchers and at the same time encouraging and attracting attention to the work of others.

His own publications related to the arts are numerous and he lectures extensively on the subject. But his scholarly activity in the field of culture and the arts has been complemented - and even at times eclipsed - by his activities as a performer. No one who knew him at the height of his performing career in the sixties and seventies can forget the singular authority he brought to every role, his immense technical assurance or the magnetism of his presence on stage.

Today the company of which he was co-founder and which he bullied and inspired into becoming a company of which the nation can be proud, stands as a monument to his vision, energy and leadership. His commitment to excellence, the permanence he has given to the language of folk expression in creating a Caribbean artistic style, his imaginative gifts which have ranged over numerous aspects of Jamaican, Caribbean, African and black American life, have given to the company an identity which has enabled it to project a Jamaican persona and its African roots on stages as far afield as Moscow and New York, London and Caracas, Sydney and Atlanta.

Inevitably, he has perceived and developed his craft in an intellectual context, as an instrument for helping to define a Caribbean world-view, to sharpen self-perception and provide a visionary force in the shaping of national life.

But it should not be believed that he trained only a company; over the years, he also trained an audience that has become one of the most perceptive in Jamaica and has been drawn from all classes of Jamaican society. Nor should his patient and tireless efforts to explain the Caribbean aesthetic to critics and audiences abroad be overlooked. The fact that leading metropolitan newspapers today produce criticism that does not judge everything by European or American aesthetic norms owes much to those few, such as he, who have taken time and energy to articulate and demonstrate other criteria of aesthetic judgement.

His pre-eminence in the field of culture has led to numerous appointments both here and abroad. He is regarded as the friend and mentor of almost everyone connected with the arts in Jamaica. An artistic amateur whose talents have been placed constantly at the service of his people for more than three decades, his warm approachability and his generosity with his time and energy, particularly towards young artists and scholars, make his office a haven of artistic sensibility and good sense - a place where ideas are aired and