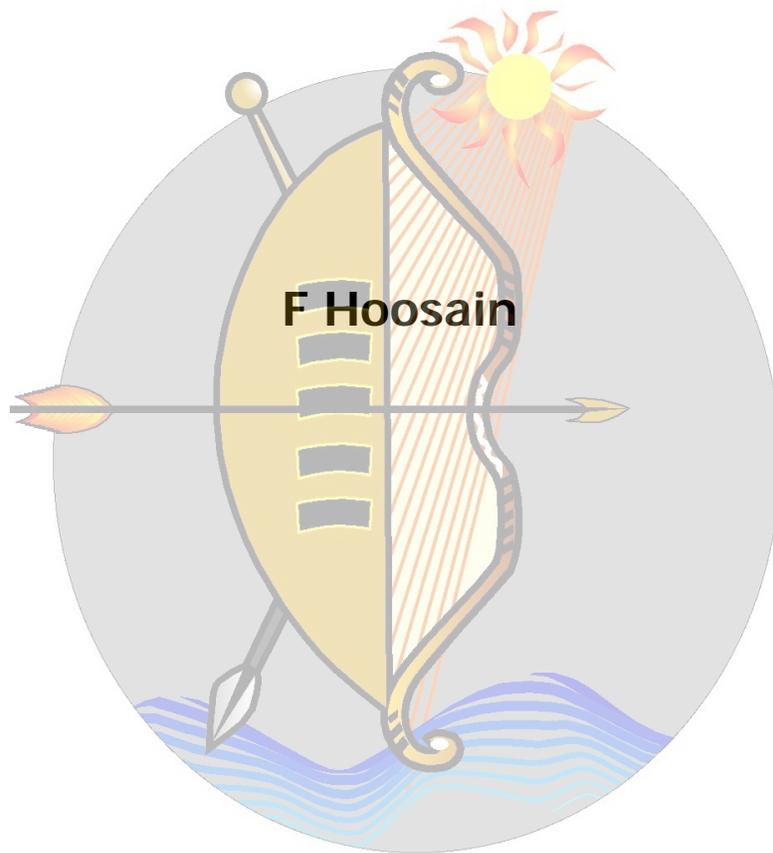


**The Changing Face of Theatre in the Indian
Community of Durban : an overview from the
1910's to 1985**



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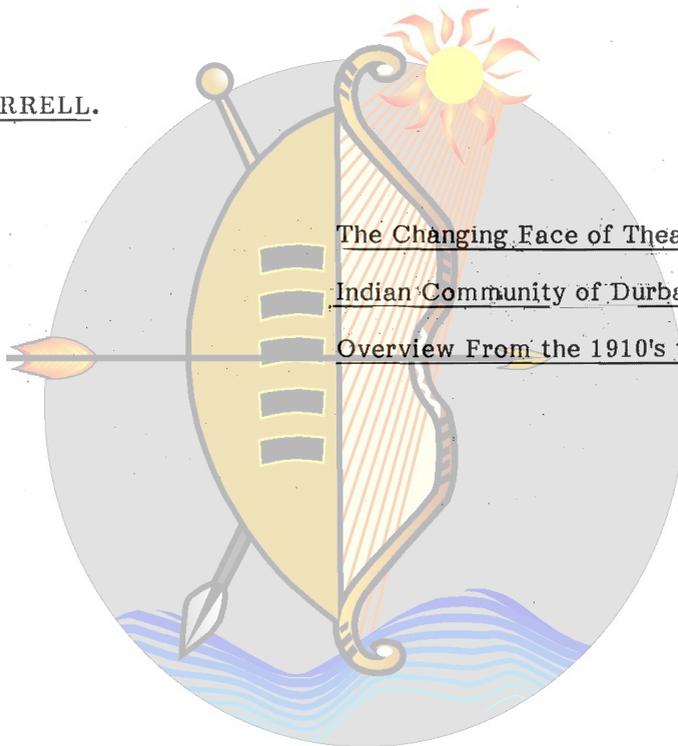
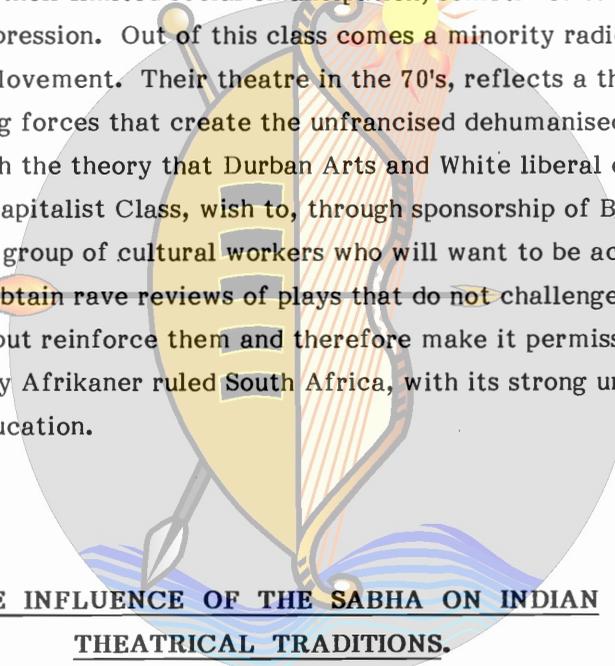


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INTRODUCTION.

What I propose to do in this essay is to succinctly focus on the changing face of theatre in the Indian Community in Durban. The essay will look at the role of the Sabha and its attempts to propagate and preserve Hindu culture and therefore its influence on Indian theatre. An overview of Tommy Lalbahadur's theatrical contribution will also be included as a case study. This earlier period will be contrasted with the drama in the Indian Community of the 60's, 70's and 80's. The essay will attempt to argue, that whilst the earlier theatre in the Indian Community was essentially conservative and traditional containing conventional mythological and ideological sub-texts, and therefore safe, since it did not seek to challenge the audience, but rather render them inactive; the previous two decades sees the rise of a petite bourgeoisie intelligensia class, and therefore a class essentially conservative with vested interests, but also posing as enlightened thinkers, whose plays reflected their limited social emancipation, sometimes to it captured their political needs and oppression. Out of this class comes a minority radical group like the Black Consciousness Movement. Their theatre in the 70's, reflects a theatre of value, since it looks at the controlling forces that create the unfrancised dehumanised state. The essay will then conclude with the theory that Durban Arts and White liberal critics, both representatives of the White Capitalist Class, wish to, through sponsorship of Black radical art groups create a pliant group of cultural workers who will want to be accountable to their sponsors and hope to obtain rave reviews of plays that do not challenge the ideological assumptions of the audience but reinforce them and therefore make it permissible for them to operate in the Minority Afrikaner ruled South Africa, with its strong undercurrents of Christian National Education.



THE INFLUENCE OF THE SABHA ON INDIAN
THEATRICAL TRADITIONS.

Swami Shankeranandji on the 19th April, 1912 founded the South African Hindu Maha Sabha. Its main aims and objectives were to promote Hindu culture and foster mother tongue education, as well as organise religious and cultural conferences and prayer meetings. The knowledge of Hindi in particular was considered important since the masses would be able to draw the unadulterated spirit of the Vedas, Upanishads, Gita, Ramayan and Mahabharat. The Sabha realized the situation of the Hindi-speaking people in a country dominated by English in every avenue of life. Both the President Sri Satyadeva and Secretary Pandit Nayamah Rajh were ardent advocates of Hindi education.

(2)

They established night-schools at their respective homes in Victoria Street and Sea Cow Lake. This evidently was the time-honoured practice of the day. Electric lights still had to find its place in many Indian homes, and seating provisions were limited, and getting to these homes via dark roads were cumbersome. Clearly social mobility and material security at work could be secured with a knowledge of English customs and an ability to speak English. The pressure of this social prestige in an Indian sub-culture in Natal, being Westernised, obviously resulted in a gradual shifting of loyalty, both linguistically and culturally, and an incorporation of the dominant English Colonial ways, by many so-called Indians. Yet, an ambivalent attitude existed amongst many Indians, since they considered India to be their 'Motherland'. A way in which the Sabha tried to inspire the people with the Truths of the Vedas, was through the vivid dramas of dharma in the Ramayan and round the priests would gather people in the evenings after a hard days work and listen enthralled. It is no wonder that people who could not read a word of Hindi, of that generation could quote freely from the Ramayanan. Thus the reading of the Ramayan was a regular weekly feature. Evidently then, the knowledge of English had a utilitarian economic value for the Indian worker, whilst a knowledge of the Vernacular was a cultural frill.

Interestingly, the written records of the Sabha in the first few years was a merry mixture of English and Hindi. However, in the fourth year when Mr. C.R. Singh and Mr. S.L. Singh became secretaries records of minutes were in Hindi. By employing such methods, the Sabha gradually built up an atmosphere of Hindi. ^{2.}

The attempt at traditional education from 1916: English had a greater attraction amongst Indians, since it could secure a vocation. It was in this atmosphere that Swami Bhawani Dayal Sannyasi arrived from India. He was a Vedic scholar, a gifted speaker in Hindi, an incisive journalist and above all a passionate protagonist of Hindi. At the Hindi Literary Conference held on 20th December, 1917 at Maritzburg he incisively accounted for the forces/factors responsible for 'corroding' Hindi Society. Thus adult classes were started in 1918, Indians could claim only a small number of meeting places for their various public activities. The Hindu Tamil Institute in Central Durban was a hub of activity. It was inevitable that the Hindi Classes held there would be disrupted. So the Adult Classes had to be abandoned. ^{3.}

The Government was approached in 1931. Permission was sought to "import" a Hindi teacher from India. The Government co-operated, but laid conditions: payment of £13 as a guarantee fee and the period of the stay of the teacher restricted to three years. A sum of £15 was

2. Archives : Aryan Benevolent Home , Road 601 , Chatsworth.

3. Lalla, B.D. : Aryan Benevolent Home , Golden Jubilee brochure , p.93

cabled to Sri Ramashankar Srivastava who offered his services on the Sabha's terms. On June 15, 1931 he arrived in South Africa and settled down to work immediately. He planned an all-round Hindi educative influence. Plays in Hindi were produced. Clubs were organised to improve confidence and fluency in speech. He planned various cultural activities too. When he returned to India, several other paid teachers followed him from India. In the Benevolent home there were a sufficient number of children - and here the Sabha concentrated its efforts under Mrs. Polly Bharat Singh. She enlarged the scope of her teaching by including music, dancing and singing. ⁴

Ultimately, the Sabha was established with a definite purpose, to preserve and pursue, protect and propagate the essential purity of Hindu Vedic Culture. However, the Sabha seems to have ignored the essential teachings of Hinduism. The Hindu philosophy is : "To serve mankind is to serve God". Mankind is certainly not so-called Indians.

Mr. Sookray Chotai, the President of the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha (South Africa) in his message to the Arya Yuvuk Sabha on the occasion of the celebration of their Diamond Jubilee says:

"That mother-tongue and English education should have received their attention too, speaks well of their far-sightedness. Whilst the building and conduct of a school under its proprietorship and management provided schooling facilities to thousands of children over the years, the imparting of Hindi education engendered a love for Hindi literature and Hindi religion and the production of plays focussed attention on their dramatic talent and musical and cultural heritage, besides being a source of revenue for the accomplishment of the numerous projects it had in mind". ⁵

This clearly underpins the sentiments of a Society formed with the idea of uplifting a section of the people in the broader community. It could be argued that the religion has a universal constitution but that the spirit of the religion was applied in a sectional manner.

The good work of the Sabha in preserving the Indian culture, rather than challenging the forces that controlled them and kept them in a state of unenfranchisement, was appreciated and noted by the arch-conservative, the then Minister of Social Welfare, Mr. C.P. Mulder, in his message to the Arya Yuvuk Sabha:

"In expressing my appreciation for the services rendered to the welfare of the Indian Community I do so in the knowledge that you have, in tending to your people, succeeded in retaining what is near and dear to any population or population group, namely his cultural heritage". ⁶

4. Lalla, B.D. : Aryan Benevolent Home, Golden Jubilee Brochure, p. 95

5. Ibid., p. 82

6. Ibid., p. 76

Ultimately, then, therein lies the clues, to the nature, scope, extent, value and function of the cultural activities, plays, dances and music items that the Sabha encouraged. It was essentially cultural items that had its roots based firmly in the mythological and ideological framework of conservative Indian Culture.

THE PLAYWRIGHT TOMMY LALBAHADUR.

Tommy Lalbahadur had a passion for drama. He channelled this passion of acting and writing plays for the benefit of the Sabha. His services were contributed entirely free of charge to the Sabha, who benefitted financially. This reflected Tommy Nanoo's public-spirited and socially committed outlook. Tommy Nanoo was his affectionate name. He was ably assisted by F. Satyapal (F. Gareeb). Lalbahadur played the triple role of writer, actor and producer.

In the museum and Archives of the Arya Yuvuk Sabha, Road 601, Chatsworth, Lalbahadur's manuscripts of plays are still preserved in their original form. His portrait, evidently, occupies an imposing place in the Gallery.

In its fourth year, the Sabha had a clear picture of its members ability, interest, skill and talent. What the Sabha needed was money, to fulfill its obligations as an organisation. So, on the 23rd November 1916, an enthusiastic group under the Chairmanship of Mr. Tommy Lalbahadur and supported by Messrs. G. Sohawan, K. Ramsuroop, J. Mahabeer, Bahadur Sing, and F. Satyapal (then F. Gareeb) constituted themselves into a Mandal, called the Arya Yuvuk Bhajan Mandal. Their objective was simple and positive - to produce a play with the sole object of raising money for the Sabha. It was to be an experiment, since this kind of venture was innovative.

THE FIRST PLAY.

The idea was initially mooted that since Shakespeare was not entirely foreign to the audience, since they knew his plays by name at least, a translation into Hindi would be rendered! This was in keeping with the Sabha's intention of propagating Hindi, at any rate. Another suggestion was a Hindi play with a Hindi tradition and atmosphere rooted in the Vedic culture.

This group felt there was enough dramatic material in the religious epic. This was eventually

- 7 Appendix (1.3)
- 8 Appendix (1.5)
- 9 Appendix (1.2)

agreed upon. The Hindus, were familiar, it was argued with the epic story of truth of Rajah Harris̄chandra and his devoted wife. Evidently, the cast did not challenge the images of women, in this male dominated epic, where the loyalty of a woman is questioned, but no reference is made of a man's equal need for commitment to a relationship.

This play was soon abandoned in favour of "Shakuntala" by Kalidas, and equally depicts loyalty and devotion. For almost a quarter of a century, this company produced successfully locally written plays by Indian writers.

THE ACTORS COMPANY.

Tommy Lalbahadur headed the company as playwright, producer and actor. Then the actors and musicians were made up of - G. Sohawan, K. Ramsaroop (popularly known as Jack Kunkum), G. Bahadur Singh, D. Naik, S. Jungbahadur, M. Ramcharan, Mahabeer, Heera Varma, S. Rughbeer, S. Ramkelawan, K. Gopaul Singh, D. Ghanmarie (D.G. Glen), G. Ramrathan. At random, the name of Ramrathan could be selected, to provide his own history of interest, outside of his commitment to the Sabha. The purpose is to show how public-spirited and socially involved these people were. G. Ramrathan, was an excellent thubla-player of rare ability, he often played a dual role in a play, as did many others. But it was on the soccer field that he earned a South African wide reputation. He was an excellent centre-forward, and netted goals with dexterity. The cast members were essentially working class people, and did not boast of big mansions or selected professions.

THE EARNINGS ON STAGE.

1917 : "Shakuntala" - Receipts £ 25.16.4

1918 : 31 August - "Subhag Soondrie" - Receipts £ 86.15.3

1919 : "Manorama Madanjith" and "Kalank" - Receipts £ 202.8.6

Four plays were written and produced upto 1919. The Sabha was rich to the extent of £630.0.0. The images and ideological sub-texts contained in the plays were rooted in the Vedic cultural pattern. For this reason, the plays were well-received by the drama fans, who saw it as a positive assertion of their identity. Ultimately, the objective was to make money.

A CHANGE OF NAME.

Upto this stage the Bhajan Mandal was a misnomer. The Mandal was not engaged in singing bhajan, though some bhajans may have been sung in the plays. The Mandal was writing and staging dramas - natak. These natak attracted packed halls. The result was the name Arya Bhajan Mandal was changed to Arya Woonathie Natak Mandal, with Tommy Lalbahadur, President, G. Sohawan, Secretary and K. Ramsaroop Treasurer, the tried and tested trojan of the Mandal.

THE CLIMAX.

On Armistice day, 1920 at midnight, a packed hall of drama fans, watched a Hindi Drama to early dawn. The play was "Toota Bandhan" and netted the Sabha £142.1.0. Durban was the centre of all productions. Centres remote from Durban to which the Natak Mandal was keen to travel, despite travelling difficulties, also faced the problems of suitable halls. Pietermaritzburg was a favourite place to perform in. It was here to that F. Satyapal had settled and established himself as a leader. It was here also he earned for himself the reputation of a playwright and producer of Hindi plays. For many years he maintained the continuity of his love for Hindi and generating creative cultural activities. But it was essentially plays for traditional cultural action not political action. On the 2 February 1924, the Mandal staged the well-received play 'Anath' (orphanage). The records indicate that it was a great night for Lalbahadur and his company. It was the glory of Tommy Lalbahadur to which his company faithfully and generously contributed and shared.

Tommy Lalbahadur resigned in 1930. The strength of the man's personality can be seen in the poor tract record that followed him. "Athma Thyag" the valiant effort by "Nirdosh Athma", the nom-de-plume of D.G.Satyadeva, was not quite successful, although it was an effort to resuscitate the Natak Mandal.

THE REHEARSALS AND THE NIGHT OF THE SHOW.

The actors were working class people. The call to rehearsals were always answered though - in spite of no transport, having to trudge dusty roads, with no street lighting, and even on rainy nights. They rehearsed in dimly lit rooms with one candle only, and scanned the manually produced scripts. They rehearsed till the early hours of the next morning. This was the extent of their commitment in what was clearly a past time and not a co-vocation.

The next morning they had to answer the call of work. The plays were staged at Rawats Bioscope, commencing near midnight, after the last 'picture-show', and lasting till early dawn the next day.

A drama stalwart at the time was Mr. A. Dalipsingh. From the age of nine he was attracted to the activities of the Sabha. He soon distinguished himself as an actor with a rare ability to impersonate female roles. Throughout his years as Secretary of the Natak Mandal, he was a favourite amongst the audience. ¹⁰

An interesting way of raising funds for the Aryan Benevolent Home, was the method of Mr. G. Hulasi from 1944 for many years. He was a good singer and harmonium player. During Deepavali, the children of the Home went from house to house singing songs. Mr. Hulasi accompanied children with his harmonium. A novel community theatre event. ¹¹

Dr. M.B. Naidoo, well-known educationalist and cultural leader in Durban, captures the atmosphere of the period sensitively in the following extract:
"There was an effective manner in which funds were raised, besides the annual street collection in which I helped delightedly and that was the Drama which was staged at the Royal Picture Palace in Victoria Street. Before the demolition of this cinema it was a favourite rendezvous for high school students who truanted from school. Many of our adults in the community will remember this.

The Dramas were great events and the cast was drawn from the members among whom was the well known playwright, the late Tommy Nunoo. Then there was Koonkoon who assumed the role of a female and enjoyed wide popularity because of the unrivalled impersonation. Young Dalip Singh used to captivate the audience by his masterly foot-work as a female dancer. Comedians were not lacking to provide entertainment between curtains. Of course, the groundlings at the foot of the stage lost no time in embarrassing disguised entertainers whom they knew.

These events were well patronised despite the fact that the cinema was made available on a Saturday after the film show was over and that was about 10.30 p.m. The first Act usually commenced just before midnight and the audience sat through until the early hours of the morning. Children who accompanied their parents dozed off and by 2.00 a.m. most of the weary patrons could be heard snoring. But the lively interludes of the comedians awakened

10. Appendix (1.5)

11. Appendix (1.6)

the audience during these periods of somnolence. Enlivened by such incidents, the patrons would continue to engage their attention on the stage. The themes of the Plays usually had the element of pathos about them and it was not unusual for women to be seen wiping their tears". ¹²

Evidently the early theatrical events in the Indian Community, did not sharpen the economic or social contradictions in their community. It did not challenge ideological assumptions, since the plays themes were rooted in traditional and conservative Indian folklore and epics. This reflects its reactionary nature, since the plays were presented against a backdrop of the political work of Mahatma Gandhi and of the African National Congress and the Natal Indian Congress. Evidently, the Sabha's plays were allowed to operate in the dominant ideology of the time, since the plays themes were divorced of political reality.

THE THEATRE OF THE 60's ONWARDS.

The late sixties and early seventies were vibrant times for Black theatre, in Durban especially. There were a number of groups actively flourishing : Tecon, MAD, Data, Club 225, Shah Theatre Academy, The Natal Drama Foundation and a host of others which presented plays.

Originally 'foreign' works were presented, but some groups like Theatre Council of Natal especially - began adapting productions like Antigone. There were many indigenous playwrights who wrote for the stage then - Guru Pillay, Kay Chinnapen. ¹³

Tecon members were later harrassed and detained which led to the imprisonment of Saths Cooper and Strini Moodley.

Tecon, believed the cultural worker must offer a critique of the controlling forces of society and explore the actual contradictions in society, and therefore was to create a dialogue between the audience and actor, a forum to pose alternatives and make the audience engage in social change. The charge sheets of Saths Cooper and Strini Moodley listed their theatrical activities as subversive to the State. Clearly Tecon's cultural action was toward an alternative society in South Africa. Following the State's action theatre activity in Durban became a mere trickle. It would appear that the State succeeded in 'placing the cop in the

- ¹² Lalla, B.D. : Aryan Benevolent Home, Golden Jubilee Brochure , p. 84
¹³ Discussion with Ketan Lakhani 20 May 1985 and
 Appendix (2.2 - 2.7)

head' in these cultural workers, thus effectively intimidating and silencing them. Theatre workers fell heavily on their safe Eurocentric plays again, which were alienated from the unfranchised community's oppression.

As a result of the Group Areas Act – geographical isolation has led to social and inter cultural isolation. Therefore theatre has developed into two distinct traditions – the franchised 'White' and the unfranchised 'Black' theatre. The 'White' Companies stressed escapist fare. Their tradition was a truly White Anglo Saxon Protestant theatre (W.A.S.P.). The W.A.S.P. theatre fare was made up of musicals, sex farces and Eurocentric plays. Their themes were of little direct relevance to South Africa. The most radical of the W.A.S.P. group is the self-proclaimed liberal Athol Fugard. His plays are wordy and tedious. His plays do not criticize the system and therefore operates within the dominant ideology of the State. This explains the ability of Pieter Dirk Uys, the satirist, to survive. Whereas their White counterparts have been avoiding the South African context, Black theatre people have been intimately involved with it from the beginning. Since theatre is susceptible to the vagaries of economics and the Group Areas Act it obviously has had a varied development.

An interview with Mr. Ketan Lakhani, Theatre Critic, Director and Radio Announcer on the 7th June 1985 went thus :

Question: Mr. Lakhani, what do you mean by 'Black Theatre'?

Response: More than any other creative medium theatre is, or should be, firmly rooted in the community in which it occurs. It is made up of the idiom, manners and more of the environment within which it hopes to operate.

The ailing theatre fraternity should take a cue from people such as Gibson Kente and D. Mothie who present stage productions to crowds of thousands.

They respond to the needs of the community and therefore earn the support of the community. Perhaps our theatre should look more at the audience rather than at what a director or actors prefer.

In this way a truly community theatre will develop, where the stage is used as an educational platform, as a tool for social change. I am not intimating that the stage become a platform for political tirades. It should rather reflect the people honestly. It seems ludicrous to talk of drawingroom dramas when the people have no homes let alone drawing rooms.

Neither am I saying that the theatre should reflect the oppression of the Black person endlessly - as somebody once told me, a Black person spends his life suffering his oppression and does not want to spend the evening being told he is oppressed.

Theatre needs to rise beyond that and lead the community into considering various alternatives.

It needs to be positive, entertaining and honest.

I do not believe that the theatre can bring about direct change but it can present the alternatives to a mass audience for consideration.

This view of theatre needs a serious re-assessment on the part of the presenters of theatre ranging from the content of plays presented, actors used and the cost of admission which, alarmingly, has become prohibitive to the average man in the street.

We need a theatre that is aware of the tradition in the community rather than functioning as if it were a saviour to theatre in Durban. We need a theatre that is aware of its community

We also need a training ground for theatre personnel that is aware of this responsibility and not Eurocentred.

We need a theatre that is theatre again and not some pale imitation of other media. Let's give theatre back to the people.

An interview with Ms. Sumbeornam Moodley, Teacher, Writer and Director, on 18th April 1985 went thus:

Question: Ms. Moodley what were the themes of some plays that Tecon presented?

Response: For one the images of women were portrayed positively. In the 'Life of Mahatma

Ghandi in South Africa' by Strini Moodley and Subhas Mahāraj there was only one male - Saths Cooper. This showed women and men as a collective force representing oppression. There was no sexist connotation. In fact we were Anti-Women's liberation, because it defused and split our forces, since our women were siding with White women in a separatist struggle. Therefore in our play it was the collective action of women against the Army and the State. That's essentially what the plays focussed on. Who were there to face the oppressors when men were at work? Women of course! Women and children kept 'the home fires burning'. So they had to be shown as positive images.

In 1971 we adapted Antigone. The Chorus had men and women. They depicted the union of people. The Chorus was not only reporters, but as a symbol of solidarity to urge Antigone against the State. So the Chorus was in essence the workers in the State.

Okay let's quickly look at 'Resurrection'. It dealt with the removal of people. We were returning from the Transvaal, and saw starving children on the road. That prompted Strini to write the play. I remember a line from the play: "Illa hama sabakathim - father, father why has thou forsaken me"? This was toward the end of the play. The boy reaches a state of self-realization and new consciousness. He re-asserts his humanity and works toward rebuilding Azania. That was a powerful ending.

Question: What kind of audiences attended the play?

Response: The audiences were non-racial upto 1972. Later a decision was taken, that we won't bar Whites, but neither were we going to invite White critics or go out and sell tickets to them. The audiences were essentially Black Middle-class. I think they came along to purge their guilt. For Antigone we had a silver collection for future productions, the bus disaster and the Unity Movement Treason Trial. Prof. Oliver, the ex-rector of the local Bush College (U.D.W.) was there too that night. There was a smoke bomb scare. Everyone evacuated Bolton Hall (laughter). He came back though. I told him : "You do realize where your money is going to"? He said : "Yes, but I've come to see my ex-students work". I suspect he came there to see what the grass-roots pulse was like, to report back to The Broederbond

Question: Did you produce any British working-class plays?

Response: Oh yes. There was this period of existentialism we were all experiencing. We produced 'Look Back in Anger' (1972), '12 Angry Men' (1970), and 'The Caretaker' (1969).

Question: Did you promote any Black actors?

Response: Did we? For sure we did. John Kani and Winston Ntshona saw the packed halls and demanded more money. Greed got the better of them. We remember their motivation well.

An interview conducted with Kessie Govender, Actor, Director and Playwright on the 20th August 1985 went thus:

Question: What do you remember of the early 60's theatre in Durban, Kessie Govender? Can you try and recreate the atmosphere of the period for me?

Response: Now that's a broad question. Let me think. Well to begin with theatre catered for an elitist group. It was wrapped up in social niceties. People dressed up for the occasion, because it was a rare thing.

The Durban Academy of Theatrical Arts headed by Prof. Devi Bughwan were into traditional European type plays. They did period plays with elaborate sets and designs. Ronnie Govender initiated the idea of indigenous playwriting. A strict hierarchy existed in the Academy. Stage managers learnt little of the craft. D.A.T.A. was essentially made up of academics. What was hurtful was being left out when plays were cast. If you weren't part of the clique, tough luck on you! Yes, a snobbish attitude existed. I don't think they were really artists. One actor who stood with a cup and a saucer on stage was seen visibly shaking with nervousness (laughter). The early 60's theatre had the conflict presented of across-caste marriage, linguistic prejudices, religious conflict. That was topical for them. Yes, rather tame compared with today's Black writing. It was at the level of a middle-class professional marrying a working-class girl. Those were the themes. Though Shubash Maharaj tried his luck with absurdist plays and other Modern European plays, but these did not take. They had a limited following. Dr. Muthal Naidoo, I remember wanted to produce a musical review. The kids wrote their own skits, like Sarie Queen Contests and Indian proposals. D.A.T.A.

refused to sponsor them. Remember pop music was just creeping in then. This music was not considered arty enough. So most people were in theatre for the status. Sometimes they had an asset of a pretty candy face or a good voice – but did not possess the personality of an actor.

Question: Did the police intimidate your work?

Response: Early 60's exposure to S.B. certainly contributed to the actors attitude to theatre and their decision to do the kind of play they did. But cops were new to this kind of work. As the years went by they actually came to the plays, enjoyed it and complimented us afterwards. But, there was an ambivalent attitude. One of them came to me one day and said : "Look, I enjoy your plays because my mind is straight, but you're getting out of hand now, my son is believing your communist stories". That was from a White cop. Would you like some coffee or tea now?

The Dare Theatre Company As A Case Study In The 1980's.

The Dare Theatre Co. (Drama Against Repressive Establishments) are an independent, anti-racial, non-subsidised fringe group of theatre people. They believe that art is the language which enables them to articulate their sufferings, fears, hopes and longings. Since the artist must bear witness to pain, reflect on the society and act on the pain; he must present a creative criticism of the iniquity of present day conditions and plead for a future where decent human existence is no longer the exception. It follows, therefore that they believe in the political effectiveness of theatre. That is the gist of their constitution.

Strini Moodley, Editor, Writer, Director and Theatre critic said of the company in the 'Graphic' 6th August 1982:

“DARE may not produce professional theatre but Durban audiences should keep a watchful eye on their work. Unlike the general fare that is dished out, DARE are searching for those themes and socio-political elements in the South African way of life that makes a refreshing change”.

The Company has produced 3 indigenous plays thus far 'Wilson's Bug' a satirical look at labour relations, with the proceeds going to the sacked Wilson Rowantree workers, 'A question of time',

which looked at forced removals under the Group Areas Act, a 'A Goodwill Lounge' investigated the conditions of so-called prostitutes in Durban against the South African political context. Proceeds went to the non-racial Southern Natal Table Tennis Union, an affiliate of the non-racial South African Council of Sports.

DARE clearly refused to accept money from the White City Council by way of 'Durban Arts' annual sponsorship of writers, actors etc. In their programme of 'A Question of Time' and 'A Goodwill Lounge' they argue why they cannot accept the money. It is felt that the Durban City Council is a White City Council and does not represent the interests of the disenfranchised peoples of Durban. The money is therefore a misappropriation of public funds. The City Council it is felt represents the interests of the White Capitalist class. Therefore, Durban Arts is an extension of this class. If Black Artists have to succumb to the temptation of easy sponsorship from undemocratic sources they stand to lose their credibility. Above all else, they will become more pliant and answerable to their sponsors. This will make the plays less honest in terms of the social contradictions inherent in society.

The accompanying documents on Durban Arts and the programmes of DARE effectively state the gist of the Anti-Durban Arts lobby. ¹⁴

THE CONSERVATIVE THEATRE TRADITION IN SCHOOLS.

It would serve a useful purpose to cryptically state the essentially conservative theatre traditions in schools. This is understandable, given that the schools are essentially dormitories of surplus labour and also training grounds for a future industrial army. The State with its vested interests, is not interested in the development of sensitive, perceptive people, and consequently the examinations at the end of the school year, by a process of arbitrary elimination of pupils, allows a trickle of potential labour units to pass, and thus enter the labour market.

It is interesting to note how the Afrikaner Broederbond controls Indian education. The following extract from The Broederbond states: "One of the most revealing secret circulars is entitled 'Indian Education in South Africa' (March 1971). It shows that Afrikaans is promoted vigorously in Indian schools, that the Broederland is adamant that control must be kept in their hands, or in the hands of Indians supporting Government policy, and the Christianisation of the largely Hindu or Muslim population of Indians is a top priority". ¹⁵

¹⁴ Appendix 3

¹⁵ I. Wilkins and H. Strydom : The Broederbond, p. 158

Not satisfied with control of INdian Education only, the Broederland went one step further – they wanted to initiate a witch-hunt against open-minded or critical individuals in the Department of Education. The book states further:

"Of much greater importance is the implementation of State policy through the medium of education. For this it is indispensable that the top structure of Indian education remains for considerable time in the hands of right-minded Whites. Although it is Government policy that every racial group must be served more and more by its own group, and that eventually an Indian will fill the post of Director of Indian Education, this must not happen prematurely. The highest posts presently filled by Indians in education are those of Inspectors of Education, and the policy is that all new vacancies must be filled by Indians. It is, however, important that Indians who are sympathetic towards Government policy are appointed in these posts, because from their ranks the higher posts will have to be filled later.

These people will have to be carefully selected, and prepared to identify and combat wrong influences in education. There must, for instance, always be a guard against integration in sport at schools, and infiltration of leftwing influences on the campuses of teacher's colleges. It is known that Nusas aims to ~~aim to~~ infiltrate these campuses and problems have already emerged there. Persons in these posts must be strong enough to withstand the pressure of certain groups such as the South African Indian Teacher's Association. It is known that the Chariman of this association is collaborating with liberals and integrationists. It is thus essential that control of appointments to senior posts in education must remain for a considerable time in the hands of right-minded Whites".¹⁶

That clearly sums up the authoritarian control of the Broederland on Indian Education. It is no wonder then that the Annual School Concert presents an evening of colonial, conservative and reactionary plays. This is how relevant theatre has in a devious and subtle way been appropriated by the bourgeoisie. It essentially added mystique to both the process and the product of theatre. Like Education, so too the building of a popular theatre tradition in school, had been wrested from popular control, by the ruling class.

Teachers are never given the chance to question the system. Answers to questions like the following are never answered:

Why do we teach/learn English, Science, Mathematics, etc? Are there fixed bodies of knowledge contained in their subject disciplines or are they in continual change? Can these subjects be taught without values? Should they be? Whose values? How far is education to

16. H. Strydom and Wilkins I : The Broederbond , p.159 – 160

do with the Governments requirements for its youth? To answer these questions means getting at the heart of Afrikaner Christian National Education.

Given the above perspective, the documents enclosed will enhance the theory of the school being the State in microcosm.¹⁷

The late Mr. D.S. Maharaj relates the following account of his early days in Dundee as a producer of school plays: (Interviewee conducted on 20th April, 1985).

Question: Mr. Maharaj what were the type of plays you produced in the early days at school?

Response: The evening was a major social event. The whole village attended. There were prayers offered in the vernacular, speeches made and traditional dances offered. English playlets were popular. I remember how Shell Motor Oil got to hear that we produced a play called: 'The Best Oil a Car Ought to Use'. We said at the end of the play it was Shell Oil. The Petrol company was grateful for this free advert and gave us a gallon of free petrol and a pound each for the cast. A lot of money in those days it was".

The late Mr. D.S. Maharaj also served as a committee member on the Republic Festival Celebrations Committee. He required Indian singers and dancers. This case study reflects the essential conservatism of the theatre traditions in school.¹⁸

An interviewee with Mr. E. Paruk, religious leader, 22 Browns Avenue, Overport, offered this view:

"Sastri College produced 2 school concerts yearly; even during the War. We put on Urdu plays and had magnificent costumes. Of course English plays were also produced. The Muslim boys were favoured in the casting, probably because they had the money to offset some of the production expenses".

It was noteworthy that Orient Secondary School, presented their bit of first street theatre that Durban had seen, in the play 'Peoples Court'. It asserted that the City Council was responsible for the litter in the Indian Central Business District.¹⁹ Not to lose the initiative, Durban Arts, significantly started with their 'Busking Scene' soon after this first ever street

- 17 Appendix (4.2-4.6)
- 18 Appendix (4.2)
- 19 Appendix (4.1)

theatre by a Black group. The enclosed document will elucidate.

We may, however, be at the end of one phase, since Speech and Drama as an examination subject has been introduced in schools. This subject under the guidance of subject adviser and well-known and popular educationalist Mr. Ben Persadh offers exciting possibilities. Here the child is forced to ask questions, look at issues critically. From that, education for cultural action and eventually social action could follow.

CONCLUSION.

Given the above perspectives then, this essay attempted to trace the changing face of theatre in the Durban Indian Community. It was grounded in the theory that the early theatre was fundamentally conservative and traditional with its mythological and ideological sub-texts drawn from Vedic Culture. That the plays were cultural and religious in their dramaturgical construction. This was essentially reactionary given that the theatrical events occurred against the backdrop of important political movements. The early period was then contrasted with the review of theatre companies in the 70's and a case study of the DARE theatre company, for the reason that the beginnings toward political theatre was initiated. This type of theatre presented a challenge and threat to the establishment, and in a devious and conniving fashion the White Capitalist Class as represented by Durban Arts, a department in the White City Council, started a feverish campaign to co-opt Black radical theatre groups by sponsoring them. The liberal definition of 'Community Arts' emphasises the 'Arts' whereas the radical emphasises the 'Community'. Effectively, the groups in a subtle way will be more pliant and silenced, since they were accountable to their sponsors, the 'White City Council'. Finally the essay, showed the conservative theatre traditions schools built up, since the school is the State in microcosm. The essay tried to argue that the bourgeoisie tried to appropriate theatre from the masses, that a concerned group of radicals saw theatre as a forum to create dialogue and present alternatives to the audience. Herein lies the value of the new-wave theatre in the Black community, that they see cultural action as the action toward social change.

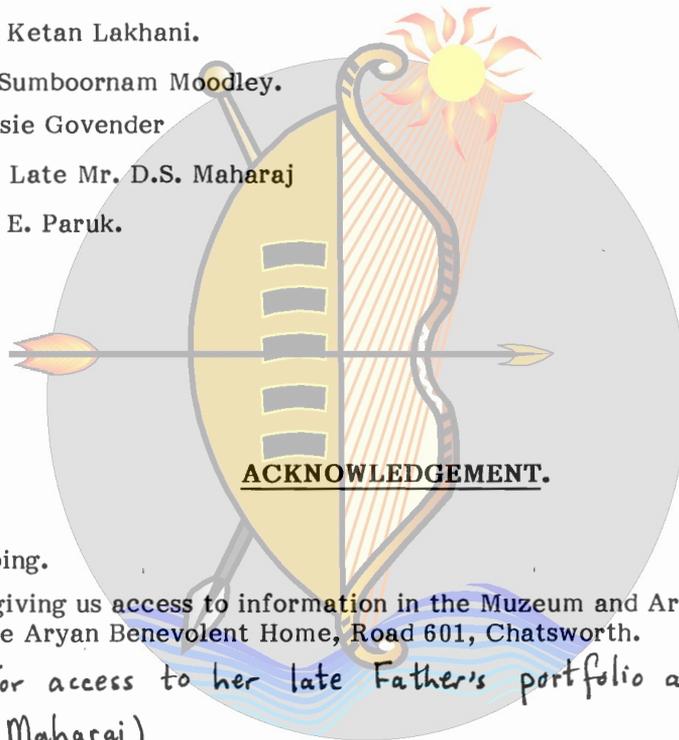
SOURCE LIST.

a) WRITTEN.

- (1) Boal, A : Theatre of the Oppressed, Red Letters, U.K., 1985
- (2) Archives - Aryan Benevolent Home, Road 601, Chatsworth.
- (3) Daily News Resource Library, Field Street, Durban.
- (4) STEDOM, H and WILKINS J : The Broederbond. Paddington Press, N.Y. , 1979.
- (5) Anderson, M : Music in the Mix. Raven Press, Johannesburg, 1981
- (6) Lalla , B.D. : Aryan Benevolent Home, Golden Jubilee Brochure , Durban, 1972

b) ORAL. (According to Interviews in Essay).

- (1) Mr. Ketan Lakhani.
- (2) Ms Sumboornam Moodley.
- (3) Kessie Govender
- (4) The Late Mr. D.S. Maharaj
- (5) Mr. E. Paruk.



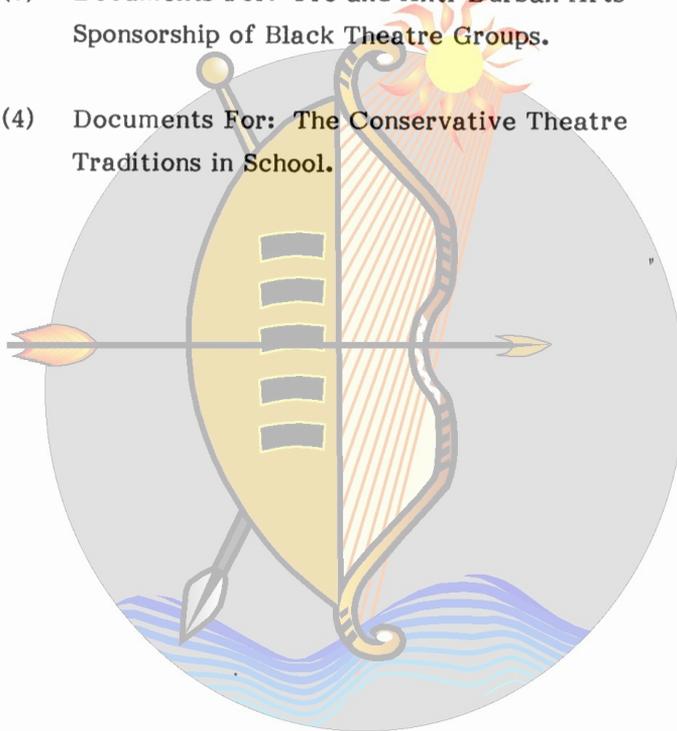
Shireen Ahmed - Typing.

S. Rambharos - For giving us access to information in the Museum and Archives at the Aryan Benevolent Home, Road 601, Chatsworth.

Raani Maharaj - For access to her late Father's portfolio and files, (Mr. D.S. Maharaj)

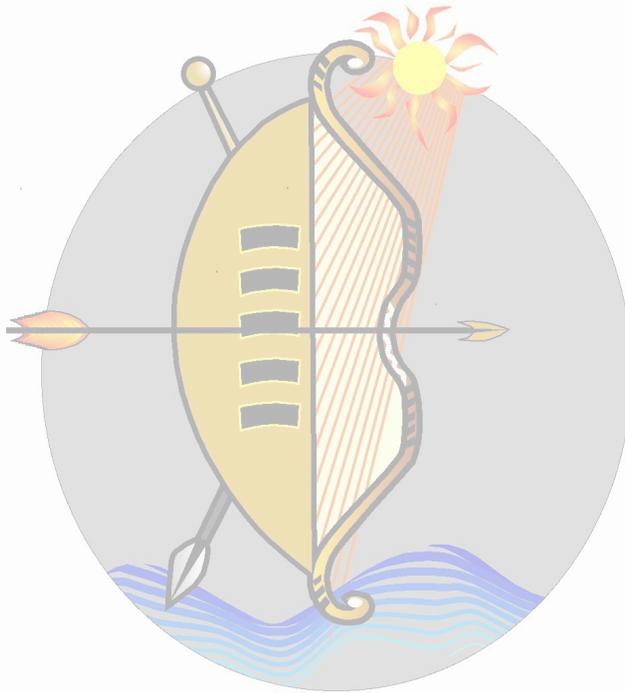
DOCUMENTS FOR:

- (1) The Influence of the Sabha on Indian Theatrical Traditions and Tommy Nanoo's Theatre Company. 1.1 – 1.5
- (2) Documents For: The Theatre of the 60's Onwards. 2.2 – 2.7
- (3) Documents For: Pro and Anti-Durban Arts Sponsorship of Black Theatre Groups. 3.1 – 3.5
- (4) Documents For: The Conservative Theatre Traditions in School. 4.1 – 4.6



DOCUMENTS FOR:

- (1) The Influence of the Sabha on Indian Theatrical Tradition and Tommy Nanoo's Theatre Company.



Museum and Archives : Aryan Benevolent Home Road 601 Chats worth.

An early press release for a play and handbill advertising play.

LATEST

September 22, 1923

This play by Nirboah Atma will be staged by the Arya Yuvak Sabha in Victoria B. Royal Picture Palace on Saturday, the 29th inst., in aid of the Indian Benevolent Home. A word about the play: In the City of Chand, Deep practices a solicitor. To regain his former position with his clerks he forms a band to pillage. They rob a rich man's home and, robbing him of a vast sum of money, murder him and throw his corpse on the roadway. The son of Ratnapur is famine-stricken, and comes the famished Ranjit to the City of Deep, and as he views the body of the murdered man he is arrested for the crime, passes through the ordeal of a trial, and happily is discharged. From Ratnapur comes also a pretty young woman, homeless and destitute to the City of Deep, and finds a home in the house of the Chief Magistrate, who is the daughter of the Magistrate, and the maiden, and offers her marriage. He rejects his offer, and the Magistrate so incensed that he casts her out of his house, forbidding her ever to enter his gates. The poor girl, in her wanderings, meets Ranjit, who is about to leave the City of Deep as he could not find a home for her. They set out together, and on their course reach the abode of a holy man and wife by this holy man, the solicitor, who has not given up hope of making the woman his wife, relentlessly follows the pair. He rolls up to the Royal Picture Palace to witness the trials and tribulations of Ranjit and his wife and the sensational ending of this soul-stirring drama. The play is a mystic East.

A Grand Domestic Drama  Dont Miss This Opportunity

ARYA WOONATHEE NATAK MUNDAL

WILL STAGE

"TOOTA BANDHUN"

AUTHOR N. LALBAHADOOR

AT THE ROYAL PICTURE PLACE
VICTORIA STREET DURBAN

ON SATURDAY 6th NOVEMBER 1923

Proceeds as usual will be devoted for the Establishment of the Indian Benevolent Home

Doors Open at 10 p.m. Commence 10 30 p.m. or as soon as opportunity permits

PRICES Reserve 7s 6d (Limited) 1st Class 5s 6d 2nd Class 3s 6d 3rd Class 2s 6d Ladies & Children 2s Top Gallery Including Tax.

TICKETS CAN BE HAD AT KAPITANS & DOWLEYS TEA ROOMS

MANAGEMENT RESERVE THE RIGHT OF ADMISSION

N. LALBAHADOOR

STAGE M. NAGER

Museum and Archives : Aryan Benevolent Home
 Road 601, Chatsworth.

The Arya Woonathee Natak Mundal
 WILL STAGE

"Nilkanthee"

The Cost of Freedom.
 (Written by N. LALBAHADUR.)

AT THE
 ROYAL PICTURE PALACE, VICTORIA STREET, DURBAN.
On Saturday, 11th April 1925.

(Freedom obtained is not by Gold. But devotion and sacrifice.—N.L.)
 Commencing at 10-30 p.m. or soon as opportunity permits

Part proceeds of this play will be devoted
 to the Funds of the **ARYAN BENEVOLENT HOME.**

Prices: Reserved 7/6. 1st class 5/-.
 2nd class 3/6. 3rd class 2/6 Ladies 2/-
 Children under 12 years 1/-
Ladies and Children to top Gallery only

Tickets can be obtained at Kapitan's Tea Room, Grey & Pine Streets,
 Mr. Bhana's International Tea Room, 118 Grey St., and T. Rughubur, Ilan Market

Plan at Kapitan's for Reserve Seats only.
N. LALBAHADUR, PRODUCER.
K. RAMSAROOP, STAGE MANAGER.

KAPITAN'S TEA ROOM is now
 daily and monthly board.

(i) Hand bill advertising play.

The Natal Mercury
 COMMERCIAL ADVERTISER

FRIDAY, MAY 18, 1923

ARYAN BENEVOLENT HOME

An Appeal

An appeal is being made to the Indian community on behalf of the Aryan Benevolent Home, Mayville, for financial and other assistance, as the institution has been carrying on the benevolent work for two years without the expected support from the public.

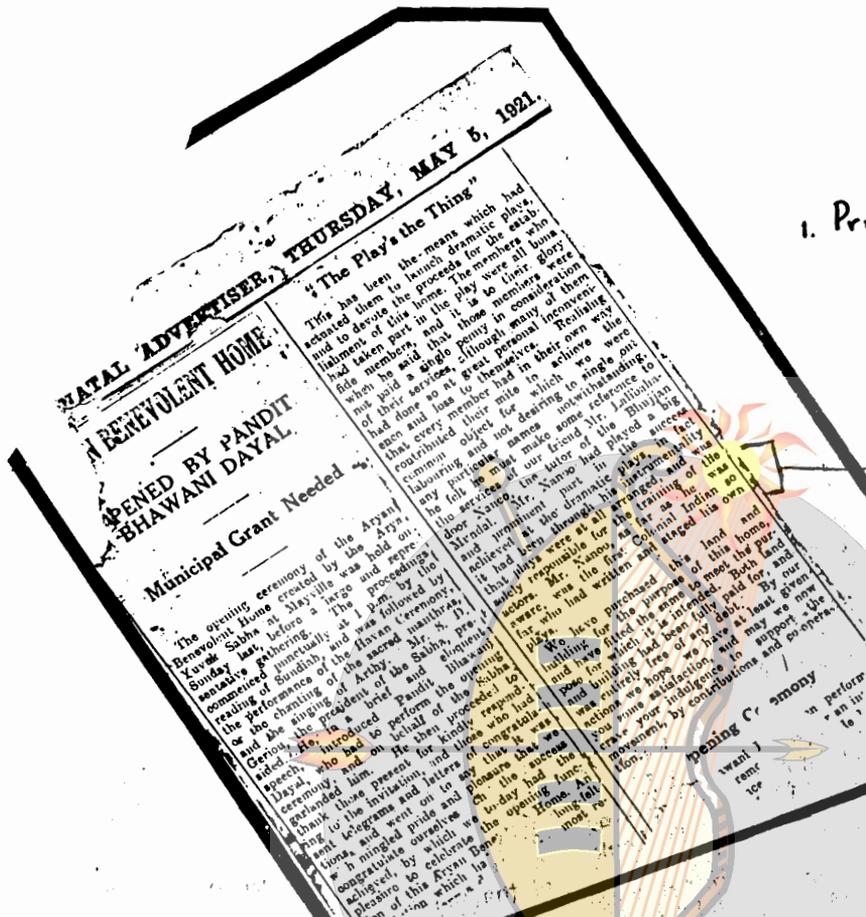
It should not be an undue burden to the more fortunate to contribute their share towards the provision for the destitute, as the benefits derived therefrom would be of service to the community, as it removes a disgraceful state of leprosy prevalent in this town, which this Home is endeavouring to remove.

All monetary contributions should be addressed to the Secretary of the Home, c/o Box 1770, Durban, or a note will bring a responsible official to collect gifts in kind.

All such donations will be recorded in the Press.
 Residents in the vicinity of the Home should take advantage of the free library established on the premises, which is open each evening from 7 to 9 o'clock, and is open to all. Interesting reading matter is placed at the disposal of English and Hindustani residents and other people who will take advantage of the facilities (communicated.)

Museum and Archives: Aryan Benevolent Home

Road 601 Chatsworth



1. Press release for play.

The credibility of Mr. T. Nanoo

Natal Mercury
31 July 1921

ARYAN BENEVOLENT HOME.

Appeal for Subscriptions.

It is fully within the cognizance of the Indian community that an Indian Benevolent Home had been established by the Aryan Yuvak Sabha, at Mayville, on 21st July 1921. The functions of the Home have been carried on since that date, and at the present time there are 22 inmates, consisting of Hindus, Mohammedans, and Christians, taking shelter under its roof. The Sabha has done and is doing everything possible to make the inmates content and happy, and in doing so had to incur heavy expenses. The land on which the Home was purchased by the Sabha at a cost of £1,000, and free from public rates. In order to enable it to carry on its work, the Sabha had staged dramatic plays, under the heading of "Arya Womaniya Akash Mandal," by which means it has raised the sum of £1,000. The completion of the building still requires the funds at the disposal of the Sabha, and it is therefore necessary to appeal to the philanthropic members of the community to give generously for the purpose of enabling the Sabha to carry on its work. The Sabha is a voluntary organization, and it is therefore necessary to appeal to the philanthropic members of the community to give generously for the purpose of enabling the Sabha to carry on its work.

Latest 7.5.21

Aryan Yuvak Sabha.

This Society had a very interesting function last Sunday afternoon at Mayville. The occasion was the opening ceremony of the Aryan Benevolent Home for Indians at Mayville. The Aryan Yuvak Sabha is composed of modern Young Hindus, professing the Hindu religion. These men are educated and some are holding very responsible positions in the community. This band of young men by their own efforts (with the assistance of the Indian Government and the Indian money) raised the sum of about £400, bought the house and land, and have now opened a place. The spirit that these were imbued with is the spirit that will make a nation.

The opening ceremony was performed by Pandit Bhawani Dayal who remarked on the necessity for such a home. He also stated that the place was not completed at the time of the visit of the Rt. Hon. C. P. Andrews and for him to have been present. The following gentlemen spoke:—Messrs. H. L. Paul, B. S. Raju, N. Sullapan (President of the Young Men's Society), O. Mungar, De. Paramund (Maritzburg), S. Kanthal, L. P. Siganmony, and a few others.

Mr. S. Ramasamy, father, a member of the Society, presented a silver cup to the Sabha to be sold by public auction. The proceeds to be handed to the Sabha. Mr. Deokun bought it for £15 15s., and presented it to be sold. A very generous offer. Great credit is due to the officials in the able manner in which they have carried out their duties, and especially to Messrs. S. Geron, S. L. Singh, Hamehuan, and Tommy Nanoo.

Eisteddfod for promoting Hindi.

PUPIL'S OF
CHILDREN'S HOME
GROUP PERFORMING
IN HINDI EISTEDDFOD



28

Golden Jubilee Brochure : Arya Yuuk Sabha
 (pictures from Brochure with relevant page references)
 Pictorial Review of Section 2 and 3 of Essay.

1. Playwright, actor and producer
2. Actor in Mr T. Nanoo's Company.



MR. TOMMY NANOO
 (page 96)



2. K. RAMSUROOP
 (Page 96)



(page 102)

Pt. B. TULSIRAM MAHARAJ
 Wrote plays and sketches
 In Hindi because of his
 very close association with
 dramatic productions of the
 Sabha.
 A Religious scholar - wrote
 and delivered numerous
 lectures in Hindi.



B. GOVIND
 A popular stylised actor
 - always played the role
 of a villain. Was Presi-
 dent of the Sabha 1946
 - 1950



5

Mr A. Dalipsingh
 The great
 female impersonator
 (page 64)

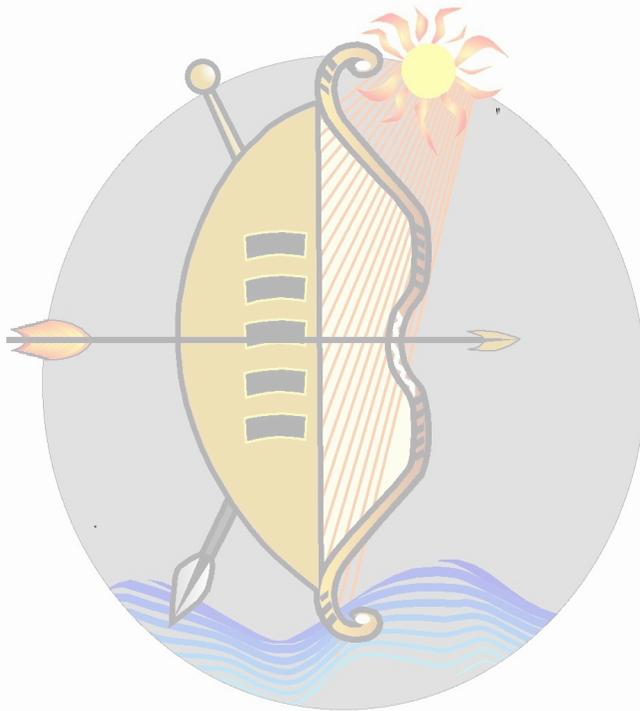


MR G. HULASI
 (page 68)

Sang with Children
 in streets during
 Deepawali

DOCUMENTS FOR:

- (2) Documents For: The Theatre of the 60's Onwards.



RAND DAILY MAIL, Tuesday, October 7, 1980

Towards a stage for social change

A SYMPOSIUM held at Wits over the weekend went some way towards a definition of the term "Black Theatre" as used by a significant group of new generation directors, writers and actors.

Playwright Maishe Maponya and Ketan Lekhana of the Durban group Communikon presented papers which effectively defined Black Theatre as theatre which deals with the practical, political realities of South Africa today as they affect blacks, and is presented to black audiences with a didactic purpose.

"To hell with the formalities of white theatre," said Mr Maponya. "Black Theatre must go into the form in which black people want it."

In a paper which amounted to an impassioned declaration of theatrical independence, he listed among the factors hampering the development of Black Theatre:

- the lack of a properly equipped theatre in Soweto and other townships;
- the negative critical reaction to plays which are disturbing rather than pleasing;
- audiences "brainwashed" by their experiences of purely entertaining theatre;
- and the predominance on radio of plays about "Jim comes to Jo'burg", which are outdated and imply that if Jim had stayed away from Jo'burg he would have been better off.

In an address entitled "Towards the Ultimate Rehearsal", Ketan Lekhana echoed the idea that black theatre needs to find its own forms, and should not be concerned with talking to a white audience: "It's not polarisation; it's expediency," he said.

Questioning the need for properly equipped theatres, he outlined some of the experiences of Communikon in taking performances to the places where people live — supermarkets and bus stations, for instance.

"The stage should be the ultimate rehearsal for social change, and if that is the point of theatre we need society. What is relevant is the people.

"Conventional theatre is a reflection of a contented bourgeoisie. There are no causes left to fight for, and instead there is

THEATRE

Rina Minervini

an effete haranguing over minor points.

"Black theatre needs to move people not emotionally, not intellectually, but to action, to move them bodily. What we need to do is look at our art form. We need to develop a true African image. We don't even have a true indigenous South African theatre."

Criticising the "Eurocentred" development of theatre in South Africa, which, he said, derives from a theatre controlled by the bourgeoisie, maintains the actor/audience split, and places emphasis on black plays aiming for successful presentation overseas, he continued:

"I don't think presenting the problems of black people on stage is useful. It won't educate the audience. We need the people taking a greater role in the decisions of what is going on on stage. Perhaps the way is to present a situation up to a point of crisis and then throw the decisions open to the audience."

A third paper, by Siphon Sepamla, was read by actor James Mthobo, as Mr Sepamla is in Germany at the moment. This took an opposing view that black writers, directors and actors must become more aware of tradition:

"For most blacks apprenticeship in the theatre is very limited. We seem to be unaware that many areas of the arts are dependent on tradition."

He also stressed the need for "critics and scholarly men" to assess the achievement from time to time.

Mr Sepamla's absence was unfortunate in that the extent of the contradiction might have been clarified during the discussion that followed the presentation of the papers.

Even so, discussion was lively.

One point that emerged was that Black Theatre need not be exclusively presented or written by blacks. Two productions regarded by Mr Maponya as qualifying for the label were "Cincinnati — Scenes from City Life" and "Call Me Woman", both of which were developed by Barney Simon with their respective casts.

Asked whether the stress on black theatre was furthering apartheid, Mr Lekhana commented that "theatre functions in a political situation. We must recognise that the needs of the black community differ from the needs of the white community."

The symposium, which was held in The Nunnery theatre on Wits campus, was convened by Ian Steadman of the Wits School of Dramatic Art.

May 17/7/80

ENTERTAINMENT

Anger at Festival permit ruling

Lynne Kelly

RACIAL ill-feeling was simmering beneath the surface at this year's Five Roses Festival of the Arts held in Grahamstown.

The eminent Cape-born writer Dr Richard Rive turned down an invitation to speak at the English for Everyman conference which ran alongside the Five Roses Festival of the Arts last week and came to Durban for a poetry reading instead.

Speaking from Cape Town he said he had discovered at the last minute that the conference was being held in the 1820 Settlers' Monument building where a permit had to be obtained for a multiracial gathering.

'The permit system implies that blacks are only admitted on sufferance. You have to be true to your artistic principles and although the festival organisers are well-meaning, until the permit system changes I and many others will not go to the Monument'.

He said he had heard that black schools in Port Elizabeth refused to go to functions in the Monument building and there was widespread antipathy towards the permit system among blacks in the Cape. 'It does not mean that if a place has to get a permit it should be boycotted. It depends on a viable alternative. At Grahamstown they could have used the university for the conference.'

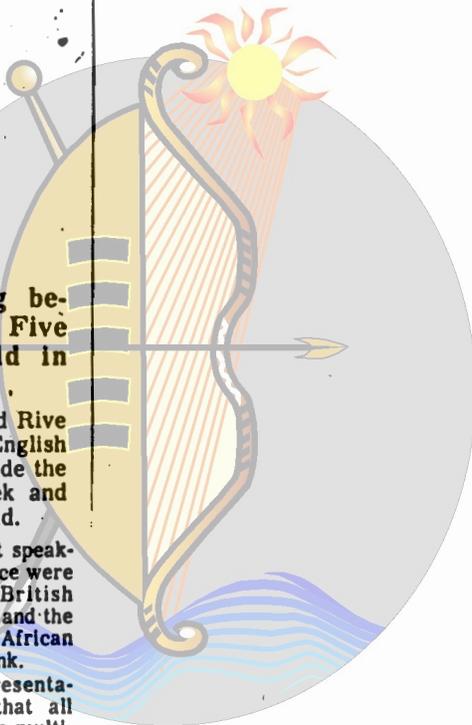
Among the guest speakers at the conference were the celebrated British writer John Wain and the outspoken South African novelist Andre Brink.

A festival representative emphasised that all events were open to multiracial audiences. He said that the English for Everyman conference was organised by the English Academy and not the Monument Foundation. 'We have a permit for the whole Monument building and it operates like international hotels in South Africa.'

Students from Durban-Westville University cancelled their production at the students' drama festival because of unrest on the campus. Speaking for them, Ketan Lakhani said: 'The unrest was our official reason for not going. But we were also aware of the permit problem and although this does not apply to the university theatres, it could possibly lead to black student boycotts of the festival in the future.'

The Natal Mercury 17/7/80

Black cultural Workers no longer see themselves divorced from the broader political reality.



Lifestyle LOOK

DURING the past few decades something has been happening off the broad way of theatre in South Africa.

Born out of the wedlock of the stereotyped theatre of soft seats and three-act plays, and forced by the extraordinary conditions of living in this country, a theatrical tradition tenuously has been taking shape.

Although very, very young, it is lusty and vibrant and can not go unheeded any more. And for the first time one can think in terms of theatre that is truly South African.

The concept of a South African theatrical tradition is still so new that it is difficult to put a name to it.

Community theatre, contemporary theatre, township theatre, black theatre, committed or popular theatre are all terms that are used, but in the end it is best summed up by Durban playwright Keesie Govender who pleads for no "fancy names".

"Theatre is theatre. It is either involved with life or it is dead. It is difficult to separate theatre from life," he says.

Dr Peter Larlham of the Drama Department at the University of Natal says this "new" theatre is mainly an umbrella of theatre for all people discriminated against because of colour.

If it is theatre that, although battling against influences from "western" theatre, has very little to do with classical theatre.

Ketan Lakhani, director of the Kommunikation Theatre explains that "mainstream" theatre that has been and is still being performed in South Africa is taken from: English- and

By CRYSTELLE SMUTS

American theatre and that a large part of the community cannot relate to it.

"This mainstream theatre is just a bad copy of Broadway and West End, where it is performed far better anyway. This could not survive here because it is not palatable to the community and is not what the people want from theatre.

"It is absurd that South Africa with all its problems should hang on to the Con-

"THEATRE is based on the lifestyle of the people. It serves their needs and aspirations and cannot possibly be divorced from their lifestyle."

tinuous without developing an own theatre."

And that is what happens. The new theatre has no formal funding. It happens when it happens and is performed wherever there is space and mostly in areas that are not white: in clinics, community halls, in somebody's lounge or backyard. It has no lavish costumes or sophisticated lighting and advertising is by word of mouth or on posters on street poles and at bus stops.

It persisted in growing in spite of a social system designed to de-

Birth of a people's theatre

THE DAILY NEWS APRIL 1 1982

stroy it.

"In the early 50s black people were actually detained and sent to Robben Island for their activity in theatre," says Ketan.

"During the late 60s and early 70s black theatre reached a peak, but once again people were detained and there was the Group Areas Act.

"Whole communities

on the lifestyle of the people. It serves their needs and aspirations and cannot possibly be divorced from their lifestyle."

And Ketan says: "All theatre should be engaging and involving. No theatrical event is meaningful unless it passes some comment on society.

"This does not mean beating on the same

with the political struggle. But even though we have this immediate problem on our doorstep, life is too vast to be stuck with the domestic.

"At the moment politics provide very fertile ground for writing, but imagine a South Africa without this racial thing. We would be stuck for something to write about and that is why we should try to push beyond it now, even if

from Afrikaans writers, not the English. Afrikaans is indigenous and their writers had the same battle to establish a theatre that talks the language of the people.

And Adam Small wrote in S'Ketsib in 1973: "Black consciousness is not a matter of kicking the white man in the pants. We are not having our thoughts determined by the white man anymore. We are living positively and creatively ourselves and not as 'non-whites' any more. (And in theatre) We shall not play outside or above ourselves, but from inside ourselves."

And in the meanwhile problems facing the "new" South African theatre, apart from practical problems like venues, rehearsal space and training facilities, transport and funds, are the need for writers and critics.

It seems irrelevant to our situation."

Is there a possibility of "white" and "black" theatre in South Africa ever fusing into one tradition?

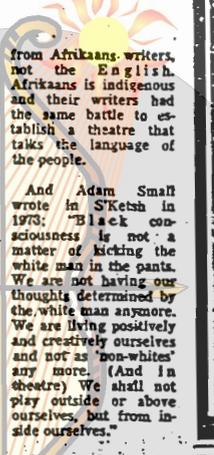
Dr Larlham says no. "Theatre has been segregated for so long now that I can see no intermingling of the two."

Keslie says no for the same reason. The white experience is totally different from the black experience. Even if an actor plays in an integrated atmosphere, he always has to go home and be confronted by his reality there.

Ketan says if at all the lead would come

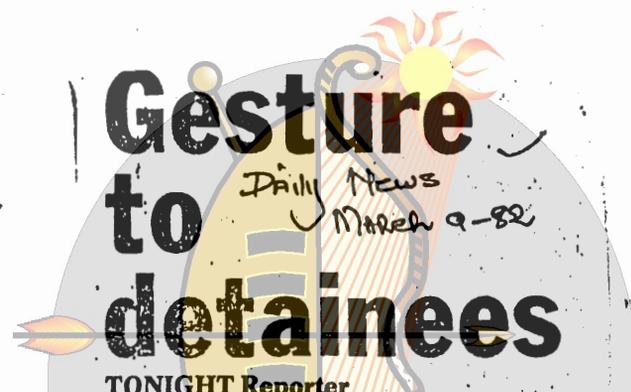


Daily News, April 1, 1982
Toward a clearer understanding of black theatre



Daily News March 9, 1982

Cultural Action toward social change.



Gesture to detainees

TONIGHT Reporter

THE final performance of "A Question Of Time", scheduled for this Saturday, has been cancelled as a mark of solidarity with the detainees and their families. The proceeds of the final performance will now be donated to the Dependents' Conference, which assists the dependents of those in detention.

Ketan Lakhani, creative director of Communikon, said that the decision to cancel the last performance was a spontaneous gesture and one made by the cast as a whole. "I think it is only an extension of the spirit of the work they are doing and is highly commendable."

Faruk Hoosein, who wrote and directed the play said that the decision to donate the proceeds of the final Friday performance was taken to assist in more than a symbolic way.

"Our aim in the DARE theatre company is to develop a theatre that would contribute to the creation of a society where such atrocities as detention are unheard of. We are not monied people — in fact to give up a Friday night's proceeds is a sacrifice to a struggling company as ours — but we can give of our talents, time and energy."

The play will have its final performance on Friday at the Communikon Theatre, Apsara House, Victoria Street. The play begins at 8pm.

1. Commercial sponsorship of programme
2. Programme Notes - an attempt at conscientising.



The D.A.R.E. theatre co.

A cast photograph in front of the set for 'A goodwill-lounge.'



The play had a big cast, who offered their rehearsal and acting services free.
- A rickety set with a strong social and political message!

FUGARD - The WHITE LIBERAL

A RESPONSE

How does Fugard see African writing shaping up? 'It is still in its apprenticeship years. I think that there is an enormous future ahead of it, but they have to reach the mastery of the craft still. The work of many young black writers I have seen needs refining. One of the greatest problems facing black theatre in South Africa is the impatience to get something up there, to say something about themselves, about their own lives—so they sort of skip the process of crafting. I think a good writer needs to live with a play—put it through three or four successive drafts before finally handing it over. I am a very old-fashioned believer in the discipline of the craft.'

Is there anybody who could become another Wole Soyinka? 'Oh, Wole is such an incredible writer. He is such a phenomenon and that West African culture is so extraordinary, so very different to anything I know. No, we haven't got anyone remotely comparable with Soyinka yet. I can't think of anything I have seen in terms of black theatre in South Africa when I thought, my God, this has got to be seen in England!'

This prompts the question, where should these aspiring young black writers find professional help and encouragement when—apart from little groups in some of the townships—the only venue where they might get the chance to cut their dramatic teeth is in the Market Theatre in Johannesburg? 'But the Market Theatre does everything it possibly can. It is wonderful, it is a venue of orthodox theatre such as my play *Mecca*, but it also throws its doors open and creates opportunities for experimental work. It is incredibly energetic and seminal in terms of the performing arts scene in South Africa.'

Now that the Space is now longer there (which Fugard created with his wife in 1972 and out of which the Market Theatre grew) is there an equivalent to the Market in Cape Town or anywhere else? Fugard says there isn't. But is there no need? 'Yes, there is a need. But you know, you've got to find a person who is prepared to hand his whole life over to something like this because it is quite a formidable fight to create an alternative theatre anywhere in this world, doubly so in South Africa.'

→ An example of the devious way in which white liberals scoff at black writers documenting the 'struggle' in S.A, thereby adding mystique to the process and product of theatre, and giving white writers a sense of initiative and power, thus reinforcing the image of blacks as followers and learners. An effective, subtle way at wrenching control of popular theatre, by deprecating its practitioners.

→ An example of a 'white liberal' lie. It supports black actors of the 'trousered-Kani' type who are black in white company and white in black company. The Market reproduces ruling class ideology!
— A further lie. Brian Astbury and Yvonne Bryceland were the founders of the Space Theatre. Mayra Fine was the Administrator.

Franz Fanon states correctly that change doesn't come about by writing, drama, songs etc. He believes you have to fashion the revolution with the people, and if you fashion it with the people, the art form will come by itself. "A similar belief is expressed by Victor Jara.

i. Andersson, M; Music in the Mix; Raven Press; Jhb; 1981.

DOCUMENTS FOR:

- (3) Documents For: Pro and Anti-Durban Arts Sponsorship of Black Theatre Groups.



...in the ~~case~~ of the creative director.....
It never ceases to amaze me how the self-
professed "community workers" need a veil
of secrecy to do their "community work"
for the "benefit" of the community.

It appears there is a group of people-
initiated by the city council - that is
establishing a so-called "peoples theatre".
One wonders which "people" were
consulted to establish their needs -
to quote one of the instigators -
"What does every Tom, Dick or Harry
know what they want?"

This kind of arrogance - of people
who are prepared to handle public
money without a mandate - is abhorrent.
It is incumbent upon us - if we
profess to work for the community
to be followers - not self nominated
leaders - of the people - The people
do know what they want!

Ketan Hakkar
JULY 82

hosts

a DARE production

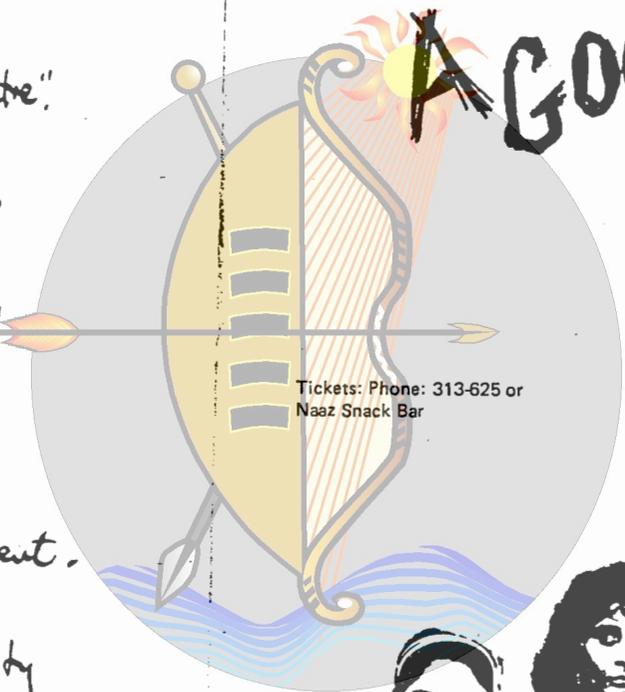
A GOODWILL- LOUNGE

at

communikon

Above Isfahan Cinema - Victoria Street

2-5 AUGUST - 8 p.m.
6-7 AUGUST - 6 & 9 p.m.



Tickets: Phone: 313-625 or
Naaz Snack Bar



DARE theatre Co. Programme July 1982
The Anti-Durban Arts Lobby

5.2
DARE theatre Co. Programme . Play : 'A Question of Time'
The Anti-Durban Arts Lobby.
March 1982

from the desk of the creative director.....

1982 begins with excitement - and a brand new play from a brand new voiceperhaps not so new as we have already had WILSON'S BUG at COMMUNIKON. Faruk is only one of the many new voices that come to us with ideas and plays and actors and often a production - as one other playwright told me, there seems to be no place in Durban that a new, untried playwright can present works without managerial interference. Even fringe companies seem to be afraid to take a risk.

We at COMMUNIKON have always maintained that it is the artists right to create - without interference and fear of failure -in fact I maintain that it is the artists absolute right to also fail - after all the theatre is a craft that has to be learned and there have to be many crooked tables before the craftsman can present a solid one. So if there is someone out there with a play or an idea why not risk yourself - and COMMUNIKON - and who knows

Looking at the list of credits brings very forcefully to mind the nature of our theatre-community oriented and involving the community - not in the way established theatre involves big business in terms of sponsorship but in human, personal involvement. There have been rumblings that this production should have been sponsored by the Durban Arts 82 festival fund - but the producer felt - and I endorse it - that the 'multi-racialism' of the festival (even the term is abhorrent) is a sham and a front. We cannot in conscience accept money allocated in ever increasing amounts to the arts when the disenfranchised peoples of Durban

are still starving and battling to pay their ever increasing rents. We also cannot accept the theory that monies allocated for one purpose cannot be diverted for more urgent needs - if Blacks had the franchise, this would happen far quicker than the fuss over the Villa sculpture. I speak from personal experience having been elected at a public meeting to serve on the drama sub-committee last year. I was able to see at first hand that there exist cultural power groups that are able to get disproportionate amounts for themselves and there exist organisations who have the power to circumvent official channels for funding. It is no coincidence that these organisations are white.

IT IS WITH THIS IN MIND THAT A RECENT MEETING OF BLACK THEATRE PEOPLE DECIDED NOT TO HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE DURBAN ARTS FESTIVAL UNTIL SUCH TIME THAT THE CITY COUNCIL SHOWS A SENSITIVITY TO THE NEEDS OF THE DISENFRANCHISED BEYOND MERE TOKENISM FOR PUBLIC WINDOW DRESSING. IT IS ONLY WHEN THE BASIC NEEDS OF THE MASS OF PEOPLE IN THE CITY OF DURBAN - AND INDEED , IN THIS COUNTRY - ARE FULFILLED CAN WE ALLOW OURSELVES THE LUXURY OF SPENDING PUBLIC MONEY ON IMPORTING CULTURE, PURCHASING COSTLY ART WORKS AND FUNDING CULTURAL EXTRAVAGANZAS AFFORDABLE BY A MINORITY.

Till then, theatres like COMMUNIKON will continue to present - with the help of the community, works that bear a relevance to the people of Durban - and we will do that independently, fearlessly and honestly.



Alfred Luthe



THE year began with a series of accidents for local theatre folk.

The Brewers, who presented their Letters of Love, Lust and Living at Durban's Our House Theatre (RIP), proved admirably that the show must go on. After a bad car accident they camouflaged the bruises and daughter Thandi made a neck brace look quite attractive.

A month later, Marloe Scott Wilson, live-wire star of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat, was thrown off her motorbike in a collision less than a week after announcing her engagement to Tony de Beer. She was badly hurt.

The next casualty on the drama scene was a theatre. The Our House, which last year won the Durban critics' award for its contribution to the arts, closed for financial reasons. One of its founders, Louise du Plessis, is now working as an estate agent. The other, Garth Anderson, is determined to emigrate to Australia, where he says fringe theatre receives handsome funding from state, civic and commercial sources.

The Durban Council has in recent years

realised the need for sponsorship of the arts and this year granted R200 000 for the annual celebration of the arts.

According to director Dennis Schaffer, this money was to provide impetus to anyone or anybody who asked for and deserved financial help.

This small step in the right direction received an unkind kick in return when various theatre groups decided to boycott the celebration and grants.

Communikon director Ketan Lakhani said his conscience would not allow him to accept arts subsidies when people were battling with increased rents. Farouk Hoossain, who agreed, said that begging was his most useful skill.

Opinions varied on the efficacy of the boycott, which, in my view, was a form of cosmetic oppression.

John Ledwaba, who performed his stirring Vuka here following its success abroad, offered a refreshingly levelheaded viewpoint.

"I cannot afford the luxury of turning away money because this is my living and I need every penny. I think only those

who have theatre as a hobby can take part in boycotts. If anybody offers me money without strings attached, I'll take it," he said.

Sydney Clothier was also pragmatic. "If we could solve the problems of Durban Arts '82, we could solve the problems of South Africa," he told me. Well, here's to Durban Arts '83...

Chris Lombard retired as director of Napac to be succeeded by Rodney Phillips, who is full of enthusiasm for the new Playhouse complex.

After a local competition, the names chosen for the opera house was Drakensberg, with Tugela and Strelitzia for the other halls. One theatre is still to be named. How about Flamingo, in honour of those elegant theatrical creatures which once frequented Durban Bay?

Napac's biggest successes this year were Pygmalion, La Fille Mal Gardée, Rosalinda and Rigoletta. The Wizard of Oz is at present playing to good houses. Worst responses were for Manon Lescaut which closed prematurely, Report to the Academy, Fugard's Mense Leef Nog Daar and Terra Nova.

Marilynne Holloway's Notebook



Up on the hill, Pieter Scholtz had the rare excitement of having to turn playgoers away at the box office. His Anne of Green Gables was a success, combining the talents of students from the University of Natal's Speech and Drama department with local professionals. Musicals are now set to become an annual tradition at the Elizabeth Sneddon.

Scholtz's production of Old World, starring visiting lecturer Ann Wakefield (on a brief visit from her quiet life at Reunion), was also delightful.

Segregation reared its head on the theatre scene again when Strini Moodley decided to ban whites at the Communikon for performances of Requiem for Malcolm X.

At the Hermit Theatre, by contrast, audiences and cast were mixed in a series of lively plays: A Chaucer romp, an historical revue, Sartre, and some well supported indigenous plays by prolific Muthal Naidoo.

Other highlights on the Durban theatre scene included the stately and moving Passion Play, produced by Shirley Bourke with a voluntary cast of 250 players. The

next production in five years' time will probably be at the Playhouse.

Pieter Toerien has kept a low profile in Durban this year. Apart from an Agatha Christie whodunnit his notable triumph was Follies Parisiennes, a very funny drag show.

The Brickhill Burkes revived their musical I Love My Wife in Durban before transferring it (with an Aussie cast) Down Under. At the time I thought the success of the show might be due to the local singers and not the songs, and so it proved in Australia.

Eddie Eksteen (the only South African allowed in), got raves, while the show itself got a lukewarm reaction, according to my Aussie informants.

The Little Abbey provided a steady stream of shows with a popular Oh What a Lovely War and towards the end of the year some well received double bills: A happy formula with short, funny one acts.

Yvonne Bryceland played to packed houses with her stunning performance in Dario Fo's One Woman Plays. She told me how impressed she had been with the sup-



YVONNE BRYCELAND: Stunning one-woman performances

port given to the arts by the council.

The actual theatre merry go round continues. The Alhambra is up for sale for a million rand and a church group is one of the potential buyers. The Lyric was a Durban theatre which became a church, while the Little Abbey was a

church which became a theatre. In Smith Street a church is about to become a motor showroom. Couldn't the town planners have arranged matters more neatly? Are there no by-laws which govern uses of buildings? We'll be using a station for a theatre next...

The Leader (Durban) 9 January 1981

Black Cultural Workers urged to claim funds from White City Council.

Page 2

THE LEADER, 9 JANUARY 1981

Arts '81: BLACKS MUST CLAIM FUNDS

'Leader' Reporter

BLACKS have been urged to stake their claims for grants which are being offered by the Durban City Council of the Arts '81 festival, by Mr Ketan Lakhani, director of Communikon.

"Arts '80 was justifiably criticised as being for White, Mr Lakhani, who is serving on the Arts '81 committee said.

"We have a great need for promoting the arts among the Black communities. My aim is to generate interest in theatre, especially among the children and preferably in the suburbs, where, because of the situation the people find themselves in and the lack of facilities there, theatre is at a low ebb.

"For this reason we must take advantage of the arts grant. This is all our hard-earned money that we pay to the City Council and we have a right to have access to it. We should not allow it to go to waste again," he said.

"We have a duty to take the festival to the people and not the people to the festival, and I would like to see projects in which children are involved. Workshops, one-act plays and other productions in the Black townships need to be organised," Mr Lakhani said.

The City Council has allocated R100,000 of Arts '81. Mr Lakhani said since Blacks comprised the majority in Durban, the major share of this allocation should go to them.

Arts '81 would allocate funds for productions, adjudicators and teachers for workshops, and would provide other help necessary for the launching of such projects.

Applications for financial assistance should reach the Town Clerk by 31 January.

Persons requiring further details may contact Mr Lakhani at telephone 281905 or 313625; Dr Muthal Naidoo at 283746 or Prof. Devi Bugwan at the University of Durban-Westville.



**Marilynne
Holloway's
notebook**



IN some respects the annual Durban celebration of the arts is less a celebration than a demonstration.

The original purpose of the festival was to provide impetus to anyone or anybody in the arts who asked for, and deserved, financial help.

But what should have been a breakthrough for common sense has turned into a nasty farce.

Earlier this year Ketan Lakhani of Communikon (who received a grant last year for the production of a successful locally written play) announced that he and "other worried black theatre people" were boycotting the Durban Arts Festival.

"We cannot in conscience accept money allocated in ever increasing amounts to the arts when the disenfranchised peoples of Durban are still starving and battling to pay their increasing rents," he declared.

Brave, noble and fearless, but actually this is a blow below the belt.

The housing problem for the vast majority is a national disgrace, agreed, but robbing the arts is not going to help.

There are times when I really sympathise with the Durban City Council.

Long castigated for its lack of

interest in the arts, it has finally taken positive steps to rectify the balance — and what a hullabaloo the innocent overtures have stirred up.

What many overlook is that in the annual city budget this year R9,2 million has been allocated to sporting ventures and societies, and this is accepted without murmur. Nobody is offering to give up soccer until the rents are lowered. Why should the measly R200 000 contribution to art and culture be regarded as the gross extravagance which is snatching bread from the mouths of the starving?

And the really pitiful aspect is that it is not the rigger buggers who are thumping the table about the pittances spent on the arts, but the culture vultures who are plunging the knives in suicidal gestures.

One expects theatrical behaviour from stage folk, granted, but at times their rhetoric seems disproportionately histrionic.

The black fringe companies are refusing money that has come from all ratepayers, black and white (so it's not white charity), "until the basic needs of the mass of people in Durban — and indeed in this country — are fulfilled".

"Only then can we allow ourselves the luxury of importing culture, purchasing costly art works and funding cultural extravaganzas," says Lakhani.

This martyrdom sounds heroic even if it is a way of making one feel guilty for enjoying opera — but what does it really mean? Can we really demand of Durban councillors that they concern themselves with the shanties of Krugersdorp?

I fear, with horrible pessimism, that the eventual outcome of all these protests will be that next year's score will be Durban sport: R9 000 000 and Durban arts: R0. Will that victory be worth robbing keen black artists, players, and musicians of the opportunity to use their talents?

Farouk Hoosain, a playwright who has joined in the boycott, told me once that the most useful skill a fringe theatre director could acquire was the ability to beg.

Can this really be preferable to accepting freely offered grants with good grace?

Lakhani demands of the City Council that it shows a sensitivity to the needs of the disenfranchised "beyond mere tokenism for public window dressing".

The plot thickens. Last week I received an invitation to see a local black production. On the telephone the producer/playwright was friendly and courteous and I was sorry I was unable to be there. In hindsight it was just as well.

A fellow critic who did attend was taken aback to find in the pro-

gramme notes the declaration that white critics were irrelevant anyway.

Gee, thanks, chaps.

The Director of Arts in Durban, Dr Dennis Schauffer, is concerned at the sad schism developing between white and black arts.

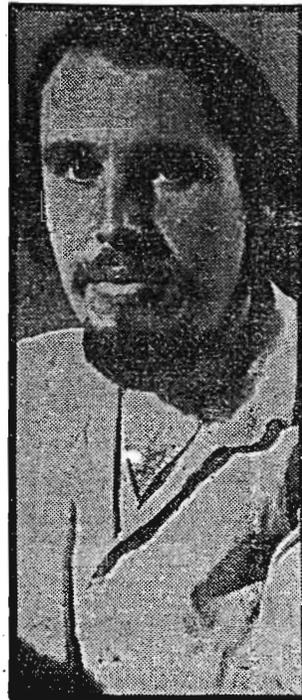
"It is easy for us who have been privileged to be part of an education system and socio-cultural process which has allowed us to see value in ballet, opera, symphony concerts and organ recitals, to misunderstand the real bewilderment of those who have been denied such a background," he says.

A festival should bridge the gap and he attributes any failure to do so to the fact that "not enough is done to foster grass roots development towards more sophisticated appreciation of the arts."

Dr Schauffer believes that an arts mobile unit, comprising a horse and trailer converted to provide a flexible performance teaching exhibition space, would do much to foster interest in the arts in all sections of the community.

The mobile unit could be enlarged with an adjoining canvas tent to accommodate teaching space for 20 children and would also have a projection screen for films.

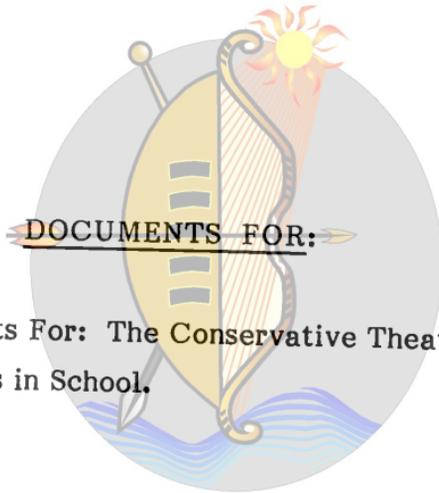
The estimated cost of the project is R110 000 and Dr Schauffer is hoping for business sponsors.



□ Dennis Schauffer . . . hoping businesses will come forward with sponsorship

Newspaper clipping: Sunday Tribune August 22 1982
The rumblings of the Anti-Durban Arts Sponsorship

APPENDIX 4



- (4) Documents For: The Conservative Theatre Traditions in School.

Newspaper clipping: The Leader (Durban)
7 October 1983

A new phase in School Theatre in so-called
Indian Schools.

THE LEADER, 7 OCTOBER 1983

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Theatre message for man in the street

STREET theatre or "guerilla theatre", a commonplac cultural event overseas, made its first appearance in Durban, when speech and drama pupils of Orient Secondary School, put on a playlet "in the street."

Mr K.T. Maistry, coordinator of the Durban Central Schools' Keep Durban Tidy Campaign stated: "We decided to contribute by way of a photographic exhibition and a playlet, by our first lot of speech and drama pupils."

The exhibition in Lockhat Arcade and the playlet aroused a favourable response from the public.

Local playwright Farouk Hoosain, creative director of the D.A.R.E. Theatre Company, and also a teacher on staff, commented: "Instead of letting the people come to the theatre to see the playlet, we decided to take theatre to the people."

"It's a fun play let with audience participation, jumping and prancing by the young actors, song and dance, the whole spectrum of theatre magic."

Hoosain's playlet focuses on the need to work in harmony with the physical environment. The setting is a courtroom where a concerned environmentalist is being tried for being too

civic and environment-conscious.

Judge Garbage presides, with Prosecutor Dustbin representing the State, and pro-litter Jury hearing the evidence. Defence counsel Anti-Litter S.A. bravely fights the case for John Cleanman Public.

Starting evidence is revealed by the defence. Whilst John Cleanman

Public has started his reusable milk bottle factory, Judge Garbage has a disposable milk bottle factory and the city councillors have private business interests in a city clean-up company.

Furthermore, the question is raised why more money is spent in the posh middle class areas for cleaning-up, et the poorer working class

areas created by Smelly State remain unclean?

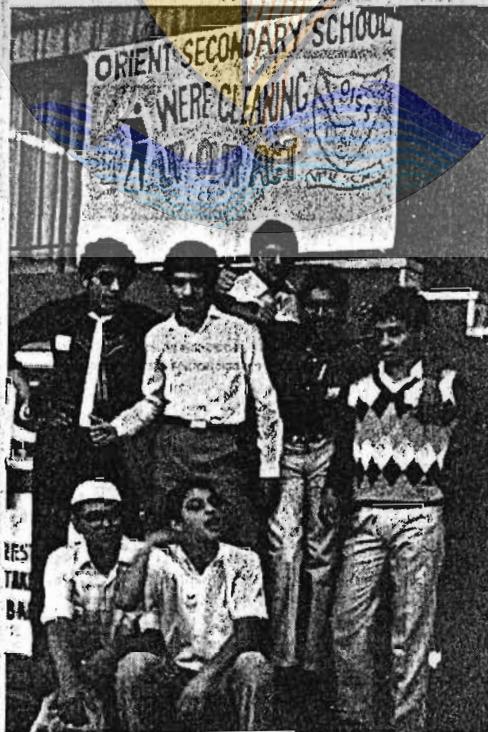
The Vigilante Press reports to a watchful world. An independent commission of inquiry finds John Cleanman Public not guilty and Smelly State changes hands with Good Government and everyone works towards a cleaner environment.

"The play would have been more muted; however, the boys insisted that if they were to do street theatre, they wanted to tell the truth. Many were angry that bins were provided on every pole in West Street yet Indian business men had to pay to install one outside their shops. Furthermore, many felt the slum problems were created by the City Fathers.

STATEMENT

So, faced with their arguments, the play was written to channel their passion into a socially acceptable forum where they could creatively find expression whilst focusing on the problem of litter," asserted Mr Hoosain.

Yusuf Darsot, who played the defence lawyer, mused: "We felt we were in the pickle when we had to perform the playlet after school assembly, but the onion-on-top was when we were requested to do it as street theatre. However, the exercise proved useful and the exposure has certainly boosted our confidence."



Speech and drama pupils of Orient Secondary take a breather during performances of their play focusing on anti-litter held in Durban's Lockat Arcade.

The School as microcosm of the State.

The Newcastle Advertiser, Thursday, February 17, 1966.

Local Indians plan Republic Festival

The Newcastle 1966 Republican Festival Committee was recently formed with Messrs. S. I. Vawda and D. S. Maharaj as Chairman and Organising Secretary respectively. The Committee is composed of 17 members and is fully representative of the Indian community of Newcastle.

The Committee has drawn up a tentative programme as follows:



MR. D. S. MAHARAJ
Organising Secretary of the Indian Republican Festival Committee.

Wednesday, 20th April, commencing at 7.30 p.m.

1. Prayer.
2. Welcome—His Worship, the Mayor.
3. Address—Chairman of the Committee.
4. Election of Festival Queen.
5. Concert items—songs, dances, sketches, band items, contributions by local school children.
6. Speech—Mr. N. K. Singh, Member of the South African Indian Council.
7. Guest speaker—The Hon. Mr. W. A. Marce, Minister of Indian Affairs, if available.
8. Vote of thanks—Organising Secretary.
9. Die Stem.

Sunday, 21st April, commencing at 9.30 a.m.

1. Procession of Schools.
2. Opening Ceremony by Dr. P. Viljoen, if available, and hoisting of the National Flag.
3. Athletic competitions.
4. Fancy dress parade.

5. Victory parade.
6. Presentation of prizes, by the Mayoress.
7. Retreat Ceremony.
8. Die Stem.

FESTIVAL QUEEN

The highlight of the programme is the election of the Festival Queen and those desirous of entering the competition may contact the Committee's organiser, Mr. K. C. Maharaj, Boundary Road, Lennoxton, for entry forms and details. Entry forms may also be obtained from Mr. Ranjith "Sunny" Singh of 34 Jeukyn Street, Newcastle, and Mr. A. O. Singh of the Commercial Hotel.

The concert items are being organised by Mr. G. R. Maharaj of St. Oswald's High School (Telephone 252). Those desirous of rendering songs, musical items, dances, etc., are requested to contact him.

The Festival that will be held at Newcastle will culminate in a Regional Festival to be held at Ladysmith on April 30th and May 1st, and thereafter at the National Festival to be held in Durban on May 28th which will start with a colourful procession of floats through the city ending at Old Kingsmead stadium. This procession will be headed by the floats carrying the National Festival Queen and the Queens of the different regions.

Further details of the programme may be obtained from the Organising Secretary, Mr. D. S. Maharaj, 57 Jenkyn Stret, Newcastle, Telephone 531.

ST. OSWALD'S DRAMATIC SOCIETY

As usual, the Society met to decide the programme for this year's show. There were four plays and the quality was of a high standard. The plays enacted were entitled :

- (1) The Princess and the Swineherd (Junior Play).
- (2) The Night.
- (3) It's dem Ghosts.
- (4) The Jewels of the Lotus.

The audience was a very appreciative one as it should be when such a fine performance was put up. The primary pupils, with their usual sweetness, nearly stole the show away from the secondary pupils. A good comedy was "It's dem Ghosts." It gave one a lot to laugh over and the cast put it over well. Congratulations to the actors. Then followed two plays much more weighty than the others. "The Night," a street scene, really made us suffer with the poor lady and feel the pains that she felt. The last play was entitled "Jewels of the Lotus," and was written and produced by Mr. A. C. Francis. The tense atmosphere in the hall showed the degree to which the crowd was affected. The play itself had its moments of high pitch and broken at intervals by sketches of light humour. A choir which rendered songs in between plays was trained by Mr. A. C. Francis. The people were supplied with some entertaining songs.

Lastly, it falls to my lot to thank the Sansar Dramatic Club of Ladysmith for costumes, and all members of the staff, particularly Messrs. L. S. Pillay and G. R. Maharaj, for the construction of the stage and the management of the lighting effects.

"The Princess and the Swineherd"

King Patrick Ince.
 Princess Withamee Naidoo.
 Swineherd Farouk Khan.
 Maidservants .. Saras Pillay, Hawa Patel, Joyce Ephraim,
 Shanti Ramlall.
 Servants Farida Khan, Ruthna Abboo.

Producers : Messrs. N. G. Naidoo and D. S. Maharaj.

"It's dem Ghosts"

Ghost Sathar A. Gaffoor.
 Butler Balwanth Bisham.
 Policeman Narainsamy Govindsamy.
 Maid Servant Amina van der Plank.
 Professor Bookworm Vawda M. Suliman.

Producers : Messrs. M. G. Gounden and Y. E. Seedat.

"The Night"

Thief Desmond Christopher.
 Drunkard Soobramoney Naicker.
 Outcast Jasomanie Koomkaran.
 Fool Karan Singh.
 Beggar Nazir Khan.
 Woman Amina Borhat.
 Unfortunate Child Manogaran Padayachee.

Producers : Messrs. A. E. Lockhat and G. R. Maharaj.

"Jewels of the Lotus"

Asoka Younus M. Ameen.
 Rajkumar Ishwarlal E. M. Moolla.
 Kumar Anand M. Ephraim.
 Mahil Lal Roy Naidu.
 Ranjith H. R. Maharaj.
 Sir Nellathumby Adam Ally.
 Ram Rajkumar S. Nowbath.
 Premlal Soobadhur Bhoodram.
 Inder Kitharnath Maharaj.
 Saghal Rammanurithie Naidoo.
 Padmini Fatima Khan.
 Major Gasbag Matthew Thompson.
 Little Noise Bala Naidoo.
 Village Women Eunice Muthoo, Angena Padayachee,
 Leela Pachai, Muriel Muthoo, Bhan-
 mathie Ramsaroop, Kamila Singh,
 Radamani Pachai, Shirley Ephraim.

Peasants M. Patel and J. Singh.
 Dancers Withamie Naidoo, Shanti Ramalal,
 Kamachie Maistry, Joyce Ephraim.

Producer : Mr. A. C. Francis.

S. MICHAEL, Secretary,
 Dramatic Committee.

The school as an agent for re-inforcing traditional mythological and ideological sub-texts in plays.

St. Oswald's Magazine Vol. 6 Dec. 1953.

The school as an agent for neo-colonial and Eurocentric values.

May 13th will forever stand out in the annals of the school, as the day when St. Oswald's produced its first Shakespearean Play, Hamlet, under the direction of Mr. D. S. Bhugwandeem. It was a memorable occasion for, in addition to the local scholars, others from the Newcastle High School, the Dundee Indian High School and the Windsor High School, Ladysmith, attended the show.

The sets and costumes were designed by the producer and the cast consisted of the members of the staff and the senior pupils. One might be forgiven for recalling that pleasant memory with justifiable pride. We pay tribute to the following who appeared in the cast :

Mr. D. S. Bhugwandeem as Hamlet.
Mr. A. Ramdass as Claudius.
Mrs. R. Purmasir as the Queen (Gertrude).
Miss B. R. Maharaj as Ophelia.
Mr. M. Patel as Horatio.
Mr. G. H. Sheik as Polonius.
Mr. D. I. Vawda as Laertes.
Yakub Hansa as Osric.
Player Queen : Presheila R. Singh.
Player King : Abdul Hak M. Ismail.
Player Princess : Amina M. Seedat.
Priest : I. Kasieepersadh.
Fortinbras : Salim Patel.
Voltimand : Dawood C. Moola.
Cornelius : Namasivayan Chetty.
Yousuf Kajeem and Ahmed Y. Vawda as Clowns and Gravediggers.
Farouk Khan, P. N. Singh as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.
Strinivasan Maistry as the Ghost.



HAMLET

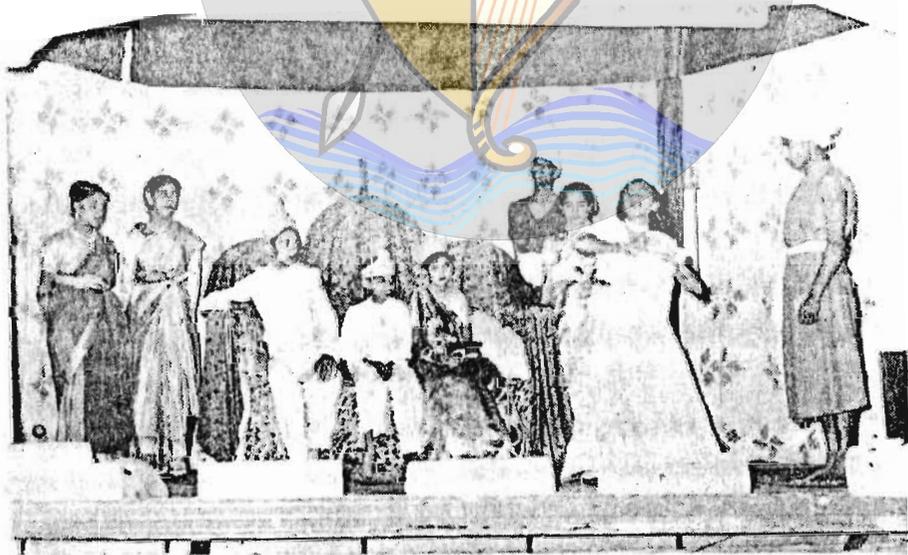
St. Oswald's Diamond Jubilee Brochure

1912 - 1972

A further example of traditional, conservative and reactionary plays, that add mystique to both the process and product of theatre.

SCENES FROM SCHOOL PLAYS

PERFECT ALIBI



HURRICHANDRA

SERVED INTELLIGENTLY (A Sketch)

Scene : At a private hotel in the evening.

Visitor (Entering and seating himself at the table) : Good evening waiter.

Waiter : Good evening sir. So what can I do for you sir?

Visitor : What's nice today?

Waiter (scratching his head) : All that's nice sir.

Visitor : Anyway, will you get me the Menu card please.

Waiter : The menu card. I see. (Takes a plate and goes out and returns immediately with a menu card). Is this the thing you asked for sir?

Visitor : That's right. Well, let me see what you have (reading out aloud). Cottage pie, fried sole, underdone eggs, tea, coffee and sausage roll. Well waiter will you get me some cottage pie.

Visitor : Sure sir, I will be back in a minute. (Exit and returns again) Excuse me sir, the chef says that the cottage is immovable and on the other hand I am foolish to take the cottage to the dining room.

Visitor : You make me laugh waiter. Where did you see a cottage being brought into the dining-room? I asked you for a COTTAGE PIE and not for the cottage. Anyway bring me a sausage roll.

Waiter : All right sir. (Leaves the room and comes back rolling a sausage on the floor). I see that this

sausage rolls well on the ground, perhaps it will roll well in your stomach.

Visitor : Waiter, waiter! Are you still all there?

Waiter : Boss, if I was not all there. I wouldn't have been all here.

Visitor : You seem clever, but what makes you roll the sausage on the floor?

Waiter : You told me to bring you a sausage roll, so I began rolling it on the ground.

Visitor : Anyway, I think you had better bring me a piece of freshly fried sole.

Waiter : Right you are sir. (Exit and comes back with a shoe sole on a tray). This is a brand new sole, just come out of the factory.

Visitor : Now, now! I am fed up with you waiter. What on earth are you bringing a sole for me for?

Waiter : You asked me for a sole that looks like fish, so here it is.

Visitor : Waiter, waiter.....!

Waiter : Yes sir?

Visitor : Please get me a cup of hot coffee with plenty of milk in it.

Waiter : With plenty of milk?

Visitor : Yes, hurry up and see that you use your head this time.

Waiter : O.K. sir. (Leaves and returns with a cup of coffee on his head. On reaching the table he drops the cup of coffee on the table, spilling the contents of the cup on him.)

Visitor : There, there! Look at the fool. What's the matter with you? Are you a lunatic.. I suppose you will have to visit the lunatic asylum soon.

Waiter : No sir. The farmers do not allow anybody to visit the silos. They use it for storing the food for the cattle.

Visitor : Well you should be stored in the silos. Good-bye and I must go.

Waiter : What about the tip, sir?

Visitor : Nothing for you today. Good-bye.

GARRIB KHADAROO Std. VIII)

An example of a schoolboys effort at writing a playlet. It shows the visitor (obviously economically better off, and presumably more advantaged) as more positive and worthy of emulation. The waiter is presented as a dim-wit; and as a symbol of the working class not worthy of emulation. Evidently these assumptions were never challenged.

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