

**AN ANALYSIS OF POLICIES, PRACTICES AND TRENDS IN NAMIBIAN THEATRE
IN THE LATE 20TH CENTURY, WITH SPECIFIC EMPHASIS ON THE WORK OF
BRICKS, FREDERICK PHILANDER AND ALDO BEHRENS**

A dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN PERFORMING ARTS

OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

BY

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all performers around the world, and particularly in Namibia, who hold up the mirror to society.

DECLARATION

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Abstract

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ABSTRACT

CANDIDATE'S DISSERTATION

AN ANALYSIS OF POLICIES, PRACTICES AND TRENDS IN NAMIBIAN THEATRE IN THE LATE 20TH CENTURY, WITH SPECIFIC EMPHASIS ON THE WORK OF BRICKS, FREDERICK PHILANDER AND ALDO BEHRENS

The study was carried out under the supervision of Prof. Christo Botha (Main Supervisor, UNAM) and Dr. Meredith Palumbo (Co-Supervisor, UNAM).

The study aimed to demonstrate the ways that theatre in Namibia was conceptualized, managed and performed from the mid-1980s to the turn of the century, a period spanning two distinct political dispensations: the pre-independence period of apartheid and foreign domination, and the post-independence era of democracy and a professed promotion of cultural diversity in unity.

The operating assumption is that theatre always reflects a specific structure of feeling because it operates in a particular socio-political context and historic moment. In Namibia theatre was influenced by bureaucratic policies, or as appears to be the case after independence, by an apparent lack of clarity as far as a policy for the arts, and theatre in particular, was concerned.

The researcher attempted to achieve the above aims by an analysis of the policies, practices and trends in Namibian theatre in the late 20th century, with specific emphasis on the work of Bricks, Frederick Philander and Aldo Behrens. The motivation for focusing on said theatre practitioners is that they were a constant presence in Namibian theatre throughout most of the period covered by the research and they represent both the formal and informal sectors.

The research design was situated within an interpretivist paradigm, and employed qualitative data collection methods of interviews, questionnaires and an intensive documents' search. This was in order to gather empirical evidence to establish the status and practice of theatre in the country; and to find out if the performances during the identified periods reflected the material reality of people in Namibia. The population was persons who, apart from those in institutionalized positions, influenced the development of theatre in Namibia during the periods that the research refers to.

The research concluded that theatre in pre-independent Namibia during the time covered by this research reflected two different structures of feeling namely that of oppressor and oppressed. Performances of the theatre makers under consideration had a common theme, that of rejecting occupation and anticipating liberty. Expectations of radical improvement in the lot of informal and grassroots performers after independence did not happen which led to gradual disillusionment in government's interest in the plight of artists. The lack of an official policy led to a lack of direction for the arts, planning seemed to lack continuity and forward thinking and the only discernible aim was the strengthening of traditional culture in an attempt at nation building.

The study also found that trends in Namibia were largely echoed in other postcolonial African countries.

TERMS EXPLAINED

SWA	-	South West Africa
RSA	-	Republic of South Africa
SA	-	South Africa
NTN	-	National Theatre of Namibia
SWAPO	-	South West Africa People's Organization
ANC	-	African National Congress
MEC	-	Ministry of Education and Culture
UNESCO	-	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
SIDA	-	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
Theatre	-	Multiple definitions exist. For the purpose of this research, it is understood to include both dramatic literature and dramatic performance.
Theatrical performance/event	-	Multiple definitions exist. For the purpose of this research, it refers to the performance of plays.
Dramatic art	-	The art of writing and producing plays
Cultural expression	-	Multiple definitions exist. In this context it refers to the works of similar interest peoples, language communities and traditional communities.
Grassroots	-	A movement driven by a community's politics as opposed to traditional power structures.

- Establishment - This refers to the existing power structure in society; the dominant groups and their customs or institutions; institutional authority.
- Mainstream - It is commonly perceived as the thought and practices of the dominant class. It includes all media culture and is typically disseminated by mass media. It is often seen as exclusive. An opposite may be counter culture.
- Community Theatre - Multiple definitions but here it refers to theatrical performances made in relation to particular communities. Its usage includes theatre made by, with, and for a community. It may refer to theatre that is made entirely by a community with no outside help, or to a collaboration between community members and professional theatre artists, or to performance made entirely by professionals that is addressed to a particular community.
- Protest Theatre - Often synonymous with political theatre, but has a wider field of reference. Socially concerned theatre may raise issues which are not the concern of the state directly and are thus not aimed at political authority. Sometimes it merely raises issues and explores problems, at other times it may seek to change a situation, beliefs or attitudes. However, in its essence it is directed towards the power of an authority.
- Popular Theatre - In differing contexts it may also be known as participatory theatre, community theatre, protest theatre, action theatre, theatre for social change, theatre for development, and theatre of the oppressed. The term Popular Theatre generally refers to theatre used as a tool for creating awareness and/or social transformation. It typically involves the “audience” as participants in some way, relies heavily on improvisation, explores attitudes and social problems and proposes a range of potential solutions. It often serves as the stepping stone into a larger conversation about justice by looking at life circumstances and injustice.
- Formal sector - Those institutions and individuals who enjoyed formal government sanction and funding. They were directly linked to a Ministry in government by means of regular funding.

Informal sector

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Those initiatives and individuals who did not receive government sanction and funding. Usually community endeavors.

CHAPTER I

1. INTRODUCTION

This introductory chapter will deal with the background to the study and give some insight into the areas under research. It will also address the purpose of the study, indicate the research assumption as well as indicate the limitations of the research. The research methodology concludes the chapter.

1.1 General Introduction/Background and orientation of the study

The study aims to illustrate the ways that theatre in Namibia was conceptualized, managed and performed from the mid-1980s to the turn of the century, a period spanning two distinct political dispensations: firstly the pre-independence period of apartheid and foreign domination and then the post-independence era of democracy. The operating assumption is that theatre always operates in a particular socio-historical and political context and that the dominant structure of feeling (Williams, 1977) will be discernable through a study of theatre. While theatre is used as the vehicle for exploring the research questions, this is an interdisciplinary study, particularly through the disciplines of history and sociology and it does not apply a theatre research paradigm.

While much had been written about theatre in Africa, a study of the literature to establish lacunae revealed that this area in Namibian history had never been subjected to academic scrutiny. It is true that over the years there have been articles in the newspapers and papers delivered at

conferences, but Namibian academics have not yet made a systematic study and analysed the role and function of theatre as reflecting the socio-historical and political milieu of the particular historic periods proposed in this research, namely 1985-1989 (final years of the liberation struggle) and 1990-1999 which represent the euphoria of independence and the birth of the new state, as well as the gradual emergence of disillusion linked with unfulfilled expectations.

During the first period (1985-1989), the struggle for the independence of Namibia was reaching a climax. The United Nations Resolution 435, preparing the way for South African withdrawal from Namibia, was in place and there was heightened pressure from within as well as outside the country for this to happen. This was a period of great activity on all fronts, not least the cultural front. However, some of the performance activities were not always that visible, due to the segregated nature of performance spaces and the, at times, *ad hoc* nature of the performances.

Cultural activists were often in the vizier of the State. Sometimes their work was considered subversive and many of them went into exile to join the armed struggle (Maseko, 1995). Thus, for a while, some of the work happened on the fringes of society, often cloaked in the garb of other social activities. This did not mean that what was generally not visible in the sanctioned arenas was not happening.

The period immediately following independence in 1990 opened up all facilities to all the people in the country. However, the long period of conditioning under Apartheid meant that these facilities were not immediately utilized by everybody.

The majority of Namibian marginalized artists had never been exposed to the rules and methods of acquiring funds and the subtleties of the process may have eluded many of them for some time. The research tried to establish if funding and procedural guidelines made it difficult for theatre makers to access the resources or whether a change in dispensation paved the way for easier access to the previously disenfranchised performers.

In developing and newly independent countries like Namibia, the arts seem to be marginalized in favour of science and technology. This was borne out by the keynote address delivered by the President and Chancellor of the University of Namibia at the 2001 graduation ceremony where this researcher was present. This message was repeated by the new president at the 2005 graduation ceremony of the same institution. The performing arts are often overlooked in favour of disciplines that are more directly seen as income generating. This direct focus on developing the sciences at the expense of the arts may have led to disillusionment within the arts fraternity and the latter part of the 1990s is looked at to see if, indeed, this disillusionment is reflected in theatre.

In 1979 Corrigan asked the question: "What are the impulses that lead to the creation of the theatrical event and what are the human needs that are fulfilled by that event?" A performance can produce a wide range of feelings and responses within each member of an audience. It can stimulate the mind and stir the emotions, "... it can be beautiful and shocking. Sometimes it provokes wonder and joy, sometimes sadness" (1979, p. 34). This research explored the question by Corrigan to try and understand the impulses that led to theatre making in Namibia during the said periods. It further explored whether the subject matter of the plays and the themes

addressed were geared towards stimulating the minds and stirring the emotions of audiences and whether those impulses were motivated and informed by prevailing socio-historical and political conditions and structures of feeling in the country at the time. There is an assumption, garnered from literature that the arts in general and performing arts in particular often serve to reflect prevailing attitudes and convictions. This research tried to establish if that was the case in Namibia during the periods indicated. The umbrella term of theatre includes many activities, but this research looks at plays. The research focuses specifically on the performed drama whether that text was scripted or not. Whenever the term 'theatre' appears in this document it is intended to refer to the performance of plays.

It is important for the reader to understand that the plays are not discussed from a dramaturgical perspective, but from the perspective of themes and content. The challenge to the researcher is not to fall into the trap that Raymond Williams identifies, namely to see the activities of real people and their lived existences from becoming, retrospectively, archetypal actions in a predetermined social situation (1977, p. 132). This researcher realizes that a scriptocentric approach or one grounded purely in the frame of the academic does not allow for knowledge that can be discovered through alternative methods to be fully explored (Lambert & Snyman, 2010). However, in the absence of other information and methods, what can be learnt from the scriptocentric approach is still considered of value in a field of Namibian history where no research had been done before. Where scripts were available they formed part of the primary source material.

Eldred Jones (2002, p. 295) argued that there was always a connection between literary production, both in terms of process and outcome, and the social and historic environment producing it. This statement by Jones, which was further expanded on by Beuke-Muir, Vale and Zappen-Thomson (2002, p. 295) when they said that: "... the intellectual product and its producer – i.e. cultural, socio-economic, social structural, political – framework are thus contributing to the sociology of literature", supports the premise of this investigation that the work of Namibian playwrights and theatre makers would have reflected the social and historic environment in which they operated. While published works seem to target a relatively affluent audience, the unpublished but performed plays usually reach out to a wider audience. In 2000 and 2002, which fall outside the parameters of this research, a number of plays were published that were never performed. While those works are important, the focus of this research is not so much on the drama script as literature, but on the play as performance.

Ngugi Wa Thiongo (2001, p. 15) noted that the African writer went through three stages: the stage of the anti-colonial struggle, the stage of independence and the stage of neo-colonialism. This research looked at Namibian theatre during three stages that correspond largely to those identified by Wa Thiongo to try and see if theatre reflected the prevailing structure of feeling (Williams, 1977) in Namibia during those times.

The literature review showed that, during the final stages of liberation struggles in Africa, there was an upswing in the frequency and intensity of grassroots and community theatre productions. Often these types of theatre co-existed with the conventional state-funded establishment theatres. The grassroots and community endeavours were an important vehicle for voicing community and

societal concerns and triumphs. The literature also revealed that periods of intense agitation, just before a country's independence, are followed by periods of euphoria at being independent. After that a period of reality or disillusion usually sets in and this is often reflected in the choice and method of performance (Huwiler, 1992; Wa Thiongo, 2001).

These periods were specifically selected because, historically, they represent periods of transition. Many examples may be cited to justify 1985 as the starting point of this research, but two will suffice. 1985 was the year when *Proclamation R101 of 1985* was enacted which provided for a bill of rights whose various articles aimed at undoing past social inequalities, amongst others,

protection against execution without due process (Article 1); equality before the law (Article 3); fair trials; freedom of expression (Article 5); peaceful assembly (Article 6); freedom of association (Article 7); participation in political activity (Article 8); freedom of movement and residence (Article 10), all of which had the possibility of emasculating the repressive legislation in force up till then (Amoo, 2008, p. 7).

1985 was also the year when the South African government established a Transitional Government of National Unity (TGNU) in Namibia. During this time greater pressure was placed on the South African government for the implementation of United Nations Resolution 435.

The largest percentage of the country's performance corpse was not professional in the sense that they could make a living from the arts. Grassroots and amateur productions, which are usually considered to be of lower value, have been in existence alongside the mainstream work. The difference is that practitioners of amateur theatre did not, as a matter of course, reflect about their work in published documents. It is, however, these performers who often voiced the problems

and issues of their communities in the choice of themes they presented and the method of presentation they chose. It is hypothesised that, by being part of a specific community they would have had the vocabulary to decode matters of concern and recode them for theatre in a mode that is easily understood by their target audience.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The study aimed to explore the impulses that led to theatre making in Namibia from the mid-1980s to the turn of the century; to establish whether, in some way, theatre was critical of the totality of the colonial dispensation and whether it succeeded in making people aware of the fact that Namibia was in transition to independence. It also examined whether post-independence euphoria was subjected to critical theatre that questioned certain received truths or whether it tended to avoid an overtly critical approach to the new dispensation. The role of the government in providing structures and guidelines against which development could take place was another area that was examined.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The objectives of this research were:

To explore Government policies on the arts and the underlying assumptions, visions and considerations that informed policies. Can it be said that government policy on the arts conformed to a pattern of tolerance for artistic diversity as a necessary accompaniment of the policy of national reconciliation and that it reflected the cultural diversity in Namibia, rather than

a deliberate attempt to foster cultural transformation in general to conform more closely to what is perceived to be traditional African customs and practices?;

To analyze the extent to which theatre was shaped and influenced by the socio-historical and political dispensation before and after independence;

To investigate the visions, concerns and obstacles theatre makers faced in achieving aims and objectives relating to the world of theatre;

To try and find correlations between Namibian theatre and that of other postcolonial African countries.

1.4 Research assumption

The study hypothesizes that, during the time before independence, two parallel streams of theatre existed; that one stream reflected the structure of feeling of the oppressed and the other that of the oppressor; that after independence there would be attempts at amalgamation/unification; that the theatre fraternity would look to government to level the playing field and that processes, policies and procedures would impact on theatre development in the country.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Academics have written and published works about genres such as the Namibian novel and poetry after independence, as well as Namibian history in general, but to date nobody has published studies based on, or consistent research into the role and function of theatre during said

periods. This research is therefore important in that it addresses a gap in the available knowledge about Namibian society.

The outcome of the research may be a catalyst in opening up new and fresh discourses on the role of arts in Namibian society;

It may also serve as a starting point for a wider canon of documented history and interpretation of theatre in Namibia;

It is hoped that those theatre makers whose work was not addressed and those who find their work inadequately addressed in this research will be moved to document their work in a systematic fashion and thereby add to the lexicon of available research material on Namibian theatre.

1.6 Limitations of the study

Since the major source of information for this research was archival, it could only respond to what had been documented over the years. Much of what happened in the informal sector was not recorded and for that reason justice could not be done to all individuals, groups and endeavours.

1.7 Delimitations of the study

Much has happened in Namibian theatre after 1999 when this research ends, but this research ends in 1999 and it is hoped that it may open research areas for subsequent researchers. The main focus of the research is Windhoek since that is primarily where theatre makers operated from.

While it is true that performances did take place in other towns, the bulk of theatre happened in the capital. The liberation struggle *per se* was not a focal point of the study.

1.8 Methodology

This subsection will deal with the methodology used to investigate the research question.

1.8.1 Research Design

The historical nature of this research made an extensive literature and archival study the most appropriate means of finding information on performances that were not previously described or discussed in a research context. Of particular importance here are newspapers. Archival materials offer access to both primary (for example the published/unpublished play scripts) and secondary sources (like newspaper and other articles about the play) and allowed the researcher to assess change over time.

The preliminary literature review showed that most of the work of the performers from the grassroots and informal sector, what Zeeman (2000) referred to as the counter culture, was not documented. In order to supplement the information gained through archival research or where no archival records were found, use was made of qualitative measures of interviews and questionnaires.

Kinds of questions used:

Exploratory- Because the research covers a relative new field in Namibia, the exploratory questions helped to generate more specific questions.

Descriptive – These questions required of respondents to describe the actual state of the situation as they experienced it.

Predictive – The questions that were used here required of a respondent to venture a prediction of what they thought might have been the outcome of their activities.

Evaluative – The respondents were requested to express themselves on the effectiveness of theatre as they used it, for the purpose that they intended.

1.8.2 Research Population

- The population for the interviews and questionnaires was considered to be all those who were actively involved in theatre, both formal and informal, during the periods under investigation;
- The population was persons who influenced the development of theatre in this country during the periods that the research refers to. This included, but was not restricted to, playwrights, directors, producers, actors, community activists, newspaper reviewers, instructors at institutions, government officials and policy makers.

1.8.3 Sample

Sampling was purposive in order to acquire in-depth understanding and constituted:

- Fifteen (15) playwrights, nine (9) directors, twenty (20) actors, six (6) community activists, three (3) reviewers, eight (8) instructors and five (5) government officials;
- The sample was primarily drawn from the capital but information-rich individuals, who were contactable electronically and telephonically, were included.

1.9 Research ethics

The overall design is considered to be Unobtrusive Research, particularly content analysis and historical analysis. Content analysis is particularly useful in this research as it poses no harm to the subjects and it allows for looking at processes over time. It also minimizes the possibility of ethical issues and violating privacy since most of what is used as references is already in the public domain.

Informed consent guided all interviews and questionnaires.

The following chapter deals with the literature studied to provide an understanding of the framework within which the research was situated.

CHAPTER 2

Establishing paradigms through Literature Review

This chapter focuses on a study of literature, both theoretical and empirical, through which an analysis of policies, practices and trends in Namibian theatre in the late 20th century may be explored. Not only did the literature study help to shape the research methodology and overall framework, it was crucial in helping to clarify the research objectives and questions of the study. The readings did not merely provide a backdrop to the research or a means to identify lacunae, but form important points of reference within the research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

An examination of existing literature revealed that the specific nature of the topic under investigation had not been addressed in published documents in Namibia in the past. It was therefore necessary to broaden the scope to investigate the situation in other African countries in similar situations.

The review also showed that Namibian plays performed during the periods under investigation, were not published.

This research is largely concerned with the a specific group of people (theatre makers and policy makers) in a definite place (Namibia) within a certain moment in history (dying years of oppression and early years of liberation) and factors that influenced that existence and the

creative expression of theatre makers. It is hypothesised that the socio-historical and political conditions within which people found themselves would influence their creative expression. Raymond Williams (1977) described people's response to those conditions as their structure of feelings.

2.1 **Structure of feeling**

The five years before independence were characterized by two discernable structures of feeling in the country. Raymond Williams (1977) stated that there are differentiated structures of feeling for different classes (p.134). He defined a structure of feeling as a hypothesis of culture that is concerned with "meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt, and the relations between these and formal or systematic beliefs" (p.132). For Williams, as for this research, a structure of feeling indicates "a particular quality of social experience and relationship, historically distinct from other particular qualities, which gives the sense of a generation or of a period" (p. 131).

Looking back over more than twenty years, the contemporary life of 1985-1989, with its institutions and relationships in which people were actively involved can seem like "fixed, explicit forms" (p. 127) with the living presence receding. The researcher can only make those experiences present by an "active reading" (p. 129) of artwork, in this case, plays produced at the time and commentary about the performances written at the time. Because art was made (plays written) as "a formative process, within a specific present" (p. 129) there is a need to try and understand how that specific present was. In Namibia the present, particularly the period of

1985-1989, cannot be divorced from the political situation in the country. The separation between social and personal is a very thin line. What is past now, was the living present at the time – a personal experience that is always “subjective, underscored by consciousness, experience, feeling” (p. 126). This research is concerned with practical consciousness, which is what was actually being lived.

While the research explores dominant structures of feeling, it is aware that “there are important mixed experiences, where the available meaning could convert part to all, or all to part” (p. 130) and that a dominant structure of feeling is experienced together with “connecting instances” (p. 134). Structure of feeling, which indicates the social experience, interacts with the “changing social and economic relations between and within classes (p. 132). Williams identifies the varying elements within which feeling is experienced as a structure.

For Williams “the hypothesis has a special relevance to art and literature, where the true social content is in a significant number of cases of this present and affective kind” (p. 133) as it also evidently includes elements of social and material experience which may lie beyond or “be uncovered or imperfectly covered by, the elsewhere recognizable systematic elements” (p. 133). A study of plays written and performed during the period under investigation is justified as a means to engender greater understanding of the time since “arts and literature are indicators of a new structure of feeling forming” (p.133). This research concurs with Williams that “art and literature are the articulation (often the only fully available articulation) of the structure of feeling, which as living processes, are much more widely experienced (p. 133). The works of

Dickens, for example, provide incisive insight into the prevailing structures of feeling during the times when his characters lived.

It is important to note that emergent formations, expressions and structure are not always new, but modifications or disturbance in older forms. Homi Bhabha (1994) referred to this as an element of hybridity.

2.2 Hybridity

All of reality is and has always been hybrid from the time when groups of people came into contact with each other. The notion of cultural hybridity has existed long before it was popularized in postcolonial theory as culture arising out of interactions between colonizers and the colonized. Hybridity has been a norm rather than an aberration in world cultures. It is only during the past two decades that hybridity as a term became problematized as a theoretical concept within postcolonial theory. Hybridity is defined as referring to the integration of cultural bodies, signs, and practices from the colonizing and the colonized cultures (Bhabha, 1994).

Hybridity, irrespective of the different interpretations of meaning, is used as a way to “combat the domination of one voice, one cannon, one mode of thought, singular identities and linear history” (Prabhu, 2007). Structure of feeling will influence what people in a particular historic moment consider to be hybrid. Hybridity provides the impulse to undo the authority of assimilation and thus the authority of the West. This research considers that an impossible aim. It may be more realistic to think of the hybridized postcolonial condition as the norm since

migrants and mixed raced people, together with perceived national culture and colonial influences have become the lived experience of large populations in the postcolonial metropolis.

Culture is dynamic and historical narratives that try and portray consistency are not to be trusted. “Unbound and fluid, culture is hybrid and interstitial, moving between spaces of meaning” (Yazdiha, 2010, p.32). Homi Bhabha argued that colonizers and the colonized are mutually dependent in constructing a shared culture. “In illuminating this mutual construction of culture, studies of hybridity can offer the opportunity for a counter-narrative, a means by which the dominated can reclaim shared ownership of a culture that relies upon them for meaning” (In Yazdiha, 2010, p. 32).

It is not unusual for the continuation of colonialism during a period considered postcolonial, by means of economic, cultural, linguistic or other forms. Postcolonial theorists recognise that many of the cultural, intellectual and other assumptions that underlie the logic of colonialism continue to exist in postcolonial societies. Homi Bhabha (1994, p. 113) felt that the postcolonial world should attach greater importance to the result of this continuation which he expressed as a ‘condition of hybridity’ and where ambiguity prevails. Hybridity is not necessarily a peaceful mixture, for it can be contentious and disruptive in its experience. There is always the claim as to who owned what first and who has the right to use certain signs.

Bhabha (1994, p. 113) claimed that the Western way of thinking usually reduced the decolonised people and their cultures to a homogenous entity without due thought to the heterogeneity that makes up societies. Lye (1998, p.2) commented that, in reality, colonized people are highly

diverse in their nature and their traditions, “and as beings in culture they are both constructed and changing”. This will become an important consideration when the study looks at attempts at establishing a Namibian national culture. The concept of creating a national culture is mostly a concept foreign to the traditions of the colonized people (Lye, 1998). That traditional culture usurped by the colonialist is often a romanticised and nostalgic dream sought by the colonised to (re)constitute and (re)present an identity. At best, it will be a hybrid, an integration of the colonizer’s cultural practices with those of the colonized. This hybridity underscores the fact that cultures are not static. Franz Fanon (1986) saw it differently. He contended that in the postcolonial period there had always been a passionate search, especially by what he called the native intellectual, for a national culture that existed before the colonial era. According to him, “these men, hot-headed and with anger in their hearts relentlessly determine to renew contact once more with the oldest and most pre-colonial springs of life of their people” (p. 168). Fanon justifies this search based on his identification of the colonized mind/person as filled with self-contempt, abjuration, resignation and misery and this search for a pre-colonial culture was necessary in the hope of finding “some very beautiful and splendid era whose existence rehabilitates us both in regards to ourselves and in regard to others” (1967, p. 169). It is this researcher’s considered opinion that such a search will be in vain.

The research will try to establish if policy makers were intent on going back or reviving “traditional culture” in what could be seen as a post-modernist reaction against existing or inherited modes by trying to reintroduce traditional elements (Lye, 1998, p. 13). If they did, they would have violated the post-modern belief that there is no one truth, that no-one has the authority to define truth or impose on others their ideal. The postmodernists’ view of capitalist

society and politics where democratic institutions seem flawed and economic systems favour the rich minority while the masses continue to be impoverished helps this researcher to understand reactions of the previously disadvantaged to government's impassivity to declare itself on the arts in a formal policy. The postcolonial playwright will often work in a language that was not his/her own and in genres that were introduced by the colonizer. By that time the hybrid form had been accepted as the norm and is used largely without question.

Some (Bhabha, 1994) argue that hybridity is everywhere and although it is not the prerogative of the subaltern, it represents the triumph of the subaltern over the hegemonic. The resistance of the oppressed always appropriates the cultural onslaught of the occupying power and modifies its products and processes for its own purpose. Then there are those, like Benita Parry (1997), who posit that hybridity is sited only with the metropolitan elite. This research accepts that hybridity reflects the history of interracial identity, of choosing affiliations or having affiliations thrust on you, that one's structure of feeling is formed around those affiliations, whether positive or negative and that creative work will reflect that hybridity. It reflects the actual relationship between society and culture rather than an imagined utopian collective image of culture.

Another factor which may explain why postcolonial writers continue in this hybridity is what Paulo Freire (1993) called cultural invasion.

2.3 Cultural invasion

An important concept raised by Freire is that of cultural invasion. This works on the basis of manipulation to serve the interests of conquest. He asserted that the invaders disrespect the potentialities of the invaded, they impose their own view of the world on the invaded and they inhibit the creativity of the invaded by curbing their expression. In this process the invaded always face the threat of losing their originality. Freire posited that in cultural invasion “the invaders are the authors of, the actors in the process; those they invade are the objects” (1993, p. 133). He reasoned that cultural invasion leads to the inauthenticity of those invaded; they begin to respond to the values, standards and goals of the invader. The irony of this is that the more the invaded mimics the invader, the stronger the position of the invader becomes. For cultural invasion to succeed, it is important for the invaded to become convinced of their inferiority which, of course, makes the invader superior.

The truth of what Freire said was brought home to this researcher when she started teaching at the University of Namibia in 1993. Any attempt to elicit from her students some form of expression that was not Western, particularly American, often met with little success. It was only much later that the shame they said that they felt at the ‘inferiority’ of their own cultural expressions, was replaced by a sense that they had something valid to offer. Aimé Cesaire (1955) felt that the brutality of oppression left the colonised societies “drained of their essence, with their cultures trampled underfoot, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, but above all, extraordinary “*possibilities* (Cesaire’s italics) wiped out” (p. 81).

During the Apartheid years, the autochthonous expression was deemed fit only for exhibition in the village set-up. H.D. Namalambo in *Kalabash* (1993, (2) 26) mentioned that culture as a Namibian experience – a way of life, a social order that transmits new behavioural patterns, beliefs – will undergo various transformations in the future. Namalambo is understood to have expressed the hope that traditional culture would receive more prominence in the future and that culture, as a non-static phenomenon, would invariably change as the society within which it manifests, also changes. Noting that indigenous cultures were repressed under Apartheid, it would seem reasonable to expect that the repression to be lifted after independence.

Du Pisani (2000) countered that it is not entirely correct to argue that colonialism introduced “modern values”. He considered the juxtaposition of “modern” and “traditional” highly problematic. For the colonial rulers to create and maintain their own hegemony and to exert the imperative of social control it was important that prevailing values and institutions should not be profoundly altered. Colonial rule thus introduced values selectively. The values introduced by colonial rule could not last unless they were “grafted onto pre-colonial narratives and institutions” (2000). He also proposed that “colonial rule did not represent as deep a rupture in the history and culture of former colonies as is often made out” (1990). For that reason he felt that, to talk of the erosion of traditional identities and the need to cope with the “irrevocable” conflict between ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ identities, is to misrepresent Namibian history. This created a difficult situation after independence. Du Pisani pointed out that colonisation was a multifarious process and yet the decolonisation process lacked “clear focus and is characterised by a depressing absence of public discourse” (2000). That is something to which this researcher can attest. If colonisation did not impose something entirely ‘new and foreign’, decolonisation could not consist in a wholesale discarding of what it deemed alien. Du Pisani argued that, if

colonisation “constructed a new consciousness and new images out of a subtle (and not so subtle) mixture of the old and the new, decolonisation has to follow the same logic” (2000). Therefore there could be no return to the supposed uncontaminated pre-colonial past and culture but an “imaginative creation of a new form of human consciousness and way of life embedded in a vibrant and diverse civil society” (2000).

It may be expected that postcolonial theatre would try to destabilize the creative, intellectual, social and economic theories that supported the coloniser’s way of thinking and his worldview. It may further be expected that an intellectual space would be created for the previously voiceless peoples to speak for themselves and to produce a discourse in which they dominate. However, a study of the literature revealed no discourse on the matter. A brief reflection on the Postcolonial theory may explain that.

2.4 Postcolonial theory

As an academic discipline postcolonial theory addresses, amongst others, matters of postcolonial identity and its interactions in the development of postcolonial society, and of a postcolonial national identity. Although postcolonial theories draw heavily on literature written and read in previously or currently colonised countries, the paradigm is considered valid for the study of theatre as it looks at how Third World cultures have responded to and resisted the encroachments of conqueror culture. Gilbert and Tompkins (1996) asserted that postcolonialism should be seen as “an engagement with, and a contestation of colonialism’s discourses, power structures and hierarchies.” Postcolonial theorists recognise that many of the cultural, intellectual and other

assumptions that underlie the logic of colonialism continue to exist in postcolonial societies and Bhabha (1994) expressed this continuation as a “condition of hybridity” (p. 113). Since, on the one hand theatre is a microcosm of society, it may be expected that this contestation should be reflected in theatre. On the other hand, the drama script is also a literary genre which lends itself to scrutiny under postcolonial studies.

A critical purpose of Postcolonial Studies is to explain and try to combat the lingering effects of colonialism on the cultures of the colonised. It is particularly interested in the voices that were silenced by the dominant ideology. The need to establish critical discourse that can undermine or destabilize the dominant discourses of the oppressor, usually the European West, is an important philosophical underpinning of the Postcolonial theory. This research was unable to locate serious and on-going critical discourse of that nature in Namibia. According to Ashcroft (1990), postcolonial studies concerns itself, amongst others, with cultural identity in a colonised society and the dilemmas inherent to developing a national identity after decolonization. These are issues that policy makers in particular grappled with during the period after independence.

Postcolonial theory challenges the power of the ruling class to convince other classes that their interests are the interests of all, sometimes through overt means of economic and political control, but also subtly through control of education and the media. The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1984) made the statement that although class rule is ultimately economic, the form it takes is cultural and that the production and reproduction of cultural space helps to produce and reproduce social space, social power and class difference. He further argued that social practices of cultural consumption, which involve the making, marking and maintaining of social

difference, help to secure and legitimate forms of power and domination which are rooted in economic inequality. Although culture does not produce or cause class or race division and inequalities, “cultural consumption is predisposed . . . to fulfil a social function of legitimating social difference” (1984, p. 7).

For Parry (1997) the post in postcolonial “signifies a site for the production of theoretical work which, although indelibly marked by colonialism, transcends its cognitive modes” (1997, p.4). For others it is the “implosion of Western culture under the impact of its inhabitation by other voices, histories and experiences” (1997, p.3). The social and/or psychological ways in which one group excludes or marginalizes another group gives rise to the sense of otherness. “Other” emphasizes what is dissimilar or opposite and it carries over into the way the ‘Other’ is represented, often through stereotypical images. Postcolonial theory tries to create an intellectual space for the subaltern peoples to speak for themselves and to produce a discourse in which they dominate.

The research investigated whether such a discourse existed in Namibian theatre during the periods covered by this research.

2.5 Play scripts

A primary source for Chapter 5 was the play scripts, published and unpublished, of the theatre makers active during the period of the research. Published commentaries on performances formed a secondary source.

In order to find a context for the discussion, it is necessary to look at the historical and political forces at play in Namibia during the time when this research pertains. The next chapter gives an overview.

CHAPTER 3

An outline of some of the main historical and political factors prevalent during the period covered by this research

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Adelugba & Obafemi (in Banham, 2004) stated that any understanding of theatre must begin with a concept of local histories. This research thus considers it important to sketch a brief background of the general history of the country up to 1990. Theatre, particularly Community Theatre, never exists in a vacuum and it usually responds to the social, historic, economic and political framework within which it happens. Events before 1990 greatly influenced the responses of the population to their socio-political reality and were directly responsible for the resistance movements that grew stronger since 1948. As explained elsewhere, 1985 saw that resistance beginning to show tangible results.

Horn (2008, p. 47) reported that, in 1985 the State President of South Africa, acting in terms of Section 38 of the South West Africa Constitution Act, 1968 (No. 39 of 1968), issued South West Africa Legislative and Executive Authority Establishment Proclamation R101 to establish a so-called Transitional Government of National Unity (TGNU). The Proclamation made provision for a Legislative Assembly and a Cabinet.

Proclamation R101 included a Bill of Fundamental Rights and Objectives in an annexure, as well as an article providing for the review of laws that contradicted the Bill of Rights. Horn (2008)

further explained that the Supreme Court of SWA approached the Bill of Rights in a liberal, purposive manner. “Despite the political pressure of the armed struggle and a transitional government which still operated in the spirit of its colonial masters, the court protected the rights of citizens in the spirit of a constitutional democracy in the making” 2008).

As the TGNU was a creation of the South African government, its aim was to work towards a negotiated settlement with the so-called internal parties – mostly those groups who were part of the Turnhalle negotiations. The liberation movements, South West Africa People’s Organization (SWAPO) and the South West Africa National Union (SWANU) were excluded. The TGNU operated in the country between June 1985 and March 1989 and during that time the real political power and sovereignty remained with South Africa through the Administrator-General who was the South African government’s representative in Windhoek.

Serious political violence was a prominent feature in neighbouring South Africa with whom Namibia shared an intimate history, from 1985 to 1989, as black townships became the focus of the struggle between anti-apartheid organisations and the government of P.W. Botha. By 1985, it had become the African National Congress’ (ANC) aim to make black townships ungovernable by means of rent boycotts and other militant action. According to Chidester (1992) this was a sacred time for those involved in resistance and they believed that a crucial moment in history had arrived.

In response to this escalating political violence, State President P.W. Botha declared a State of Emergency in 36 magisterial districts on 20 July 1985. An increasing number of organisations

were banned or listed (restricted in some way); many individuals had restrictions such as house arrest imposed on them. The Internal Security Act gave police and the military sweeping powers. The government could implement curfews controlling the movement of people. The president could rule by decree without referring to the constitution or to parliament.

It became a criminal offence to possess documents that the government perceived to be threatening. It was illegal to advise anyone to stay away from work or oppose the government. It was illegal, too, to disclose the name of anyone arrested under the State of Emergency until the government saw fit to release that name. People could face up to ten years' imprisonment for these offences. Detention without trial became a common feature of the government's reaction to growing civil unrest. The media was censored, thousands were arrested and many were interrogated and tortured. The reader is reminded that, at this stage, South West Africa/Namibia was still under South African administration and while this country never saw the bloody violence that erupted in South Africa, the philosophy of the State to any perceived or real threat to state security, applied in Namibia as well.

The state of emergency continued until 1990, when it was lifted by State President F.W. de Klerk. Having been instructed by the UN Security Council to end its long-standing involvement in South-West Africa/Namibia, and in the face of a military stalemate in Southern Angola, as well as an escalation in the size and cost of the combat with the Cubans, the Angolans, and SWAPO forces and the growing cost of the border war, South Africa negotiated a change of control of this territory. Namibia officially became an independent state on 21 March 1990.

The resistance activities have to be seen against the backdrop of a consistent and entrenched philosophy of oppression as practiced by the government of South Africa. At the beginning of the First World War, South Africa occupied the area known as South West Africa and in 1920 she was given the country by the League of Nations as a mandate. South West Africa (later to be renamed Namibia) was governed like a fifth province of South Africa. In 1949 the National Party in South Africa had amended the SWA constitution “by deleting references to the mandate” (Dierks, 2002, p. 95). The clause was published as South West African Amendment Act No 23 of 1949. This meant a *de facto* incorporation of SWA into SA because the whites in SWA were granted representation in the South African parliament. When the mandate was abolished in 1971 by the United Nations, South Africa rebelled and the result was many years of military struggle between South Africa and the Namibian people.

All the laws of South Africa were applicable to South West Africa, the most repressive of which being the policy of Apartheid which, literally translated means separateness. Between 1910 and 1940 the successive white governments of the Union of South Africa passed a series of laws which imposed a system of racial segregation in the country (Shillington, 1996, p. 360). When the Afrikaner Nationalist government came into power in 1948 the foundation had already been laid for the segregationist legislation of Apartheid that was to follow (1996, p. 361). According to Shillington (1996) the main aim of the segregation was to maintain white domination over two main sectors of the economy, namely mining and land. The Native Land Act of 1913 restricted black people to certain parts of the country and led to the subsequent promulgation of the pass laws. According to these laws Blacks could only be allowed in “white” areas on production of a valid pass (1996, p. 361).

When the Nationalist Party Government came into power in 1948 in a very closely contested election (Ross, 1999, p. 114) it introduced a series of laws to entrench the racist system and to guarantee white domination in South Africa. The Population Registration Act of 1950 classified people along racial lines, the most important being either white or non-white (1999, p. 403). The Group Areas Act of 1950 determined where the various races could live. These two laws formed the cornerstone of Apartheid but various other laws like the Mixed Marriages Act (1949) and Immorality Act (1950) succeeded in the State determining how and where people could live and who they may spend their lives with (Ross, 1999, p. 116). By enfranchising whites in the mandated territory of South West Africa, the Nationalist Party gained an additional six seats in parliament (1999, p. 115).

South West Africa, like South Africa, had an overwhelming black majority and this majority was at the receiving end of the repressive laws that governed every aspect of their lives. The segregationist policies of South Africa included the uneven allocation of funds between whites and blacks for all services. This included funds for education and culture. Thus, while the white population was well provided for in terms of facilities and opportunities under South African governance, the non-white population was excluded from these amenities and had to rely on separate, inferior amenities and services. Especially from 1985 onwards the black performers managed to use theatre widely to inform people about what was happening in the country as well as providing an outlet for people's frustrations.

The struggle of the South West African people against this policy, which culminated in Namibia's independence in 1990, started soon after 1948 when the Nationalist Party came to power in SA, but it does not fall within the scope of this research to go into depth with regard to that struggle. In the five years before independence, to which this research refers, the resistance within the country and from outside, was reaching a point where the independence of South West Africa/Namibia was imminent. The resistance was spearheaded by the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO). Although SWAPO was not the first to resist, it was recognised by the United Nations as the authentic voice of the Namibian people (Nujoma, 2001, p. 189).

During the five years before independence, SWAPO had managed to rally the support of the world in the struggle for independence. By that time, the South African government experienced problems at home because of the economic and human expense of keeping the war going. On the other hand, the Namibian population became increasingly mobilized and militant and with the help of Cuban fighters, the fight moved from the borders to the metropolitan areas. People became insistent that the United Nations Resolution 435, which stipulated the withdrawal of South African troops and the independence of Namibia, be implemented. South Africa tried to delay the process, but on March 21, 1990 the political independence of Namibia was finally granted and a democratic constitution drawn up. SWAPO won the first free elections. Its leader Dr. Sam Nujoma became the first Namibian President (Dierks, 2002, p. 132).

3.2 The Namibian student activity, grassroots performance and restrictive legislation

Zeeman (2000, p. v) put forward the idea that while the exclusion of the “black” performers in State subsidised programs and venues was secured by the state before independence, a flourishing counter-culture was developing in the city of Windhoek. These groups offered ‘alternative’ theatre. However, in response to popular resistance to the South African government of Namibia and the volatile situation in South Africa, various laws were passed that made it difficult for activists to practice theatre.

The theatre makers were at risk because the Protection of Fundamental Rights Act, No. 16, 1988 provided for the conviction of any person who “makes use or threatens to make use of any violence, force or restraint ... against any other person attending or having attended any class or lecture at any educational institution where he is admitted as pupil or student” (*Official Gazette Extraordinary*, 1988, August 3, p. 7). Against the background of the schools’ boycott in the north of the country, anybody who was seen to be supportive could have been convicted of a crime. This is pertinent since school drama and debating societies agitated against the actions of the security forces and in support of school and worker boycotts.

Visual arts were employed in the resistance as well in the form of posters, t-shirt decorations and murals, but again, artists ran the risk of confrontation with the police and defence forces. Chapter ix of the *Official Gazette Extraordinary*, (1988, October 13, p. 77) prohibited any person to “exhibit, circulate or distribute ... any placard or notice or other document or paper – (a) in furtherance or to prejudice any political party.” Since many of the slogans on walls and t-shirts

carried anti-government sentiments, artists could have been arrested for producing them. The government was not unaware of the progressive thinking of these artists who were also young activists. It considered the activities of these groups to be subversive, as is shown by the various laws that came into being to put curfews in place and restrict the size of gatherings (Maseko 1995).

The political upheaval in the country often led to police breaking up gatherings and performers had to be cautious where and when they performed. An article in *Bricks Community Newspaper* (September/October, 1986) entitled *Polisie Brutaliteit (Police Brutality)* sketched a picture of how random and violent the activities of the police and security forces were towards people in the townships, even those who were doing things as normal as sitting in a restaurant. The Proclamation by the State President of the Republic of South Africa in the *Government Gazette* (No. 10280, 1986, June 12, 5. 1) allowed members of the Force to enter any premise or building without a warrant, to search these places and arrest any person who, in their opinion, could be suspected of causing any kind of public disorder. People returning from functions at night often ran the risk of being treated like criminals by the police. Performers were no exception. They, in fact, ran a greater risk of becoming targets since their conscientising activities were more likely to have developed in them the reflex to resist.

The Criminal Law Amendment Act 8 of 1953, as amended in November 1979, provided specially increased penalties for the offences committed in the course of protests and campaigns against any law of the Republic (of South Africa) and applicable in South West Africa, with special instructions for the removal of “undesirable inhabitants” (1991) of the Territory of South

West Africa. “The administration of this Act was transferred to SWA by the Executive Powers (Justice) Transfer Proclamation (AG 33/1979, as amended), dated 12 November 1979” (*Criminal Law and Procedure*, 1991, p.2). If arrested in the course of theatre performances that carried anti-government messages, the performers were liable to be charged and sentenced in terms of this law.

Since most, if not all, of the performances in the townships included freedom songs, the performers were governed by the Riotous Assemblies Act 17 of 1956, as amended in November 1979. Most of this Act was repealed in 1982, but some sections remained which gave the State President power to regulate the transportation of explosives and deal with the criminal offences of incitement to public violence, attempted crimes and inducement to commit crimes (1991, p.3). This South African proclamation was also in force in Namibia (1991, p. 2). There was often arbitrariness in the way that law enforcers interpreted these laws and any gathering could have been interpreted as contravening the Riotous Assemblies Act. All that was needed for an arrest to be effected was for a “member of the security forces to be of the opinion that the presence of or conduct of any person or persons at any place endangered or may endanger the maintenance of public order” (Katjipuka-Sibolile, 2002).

The regulations in terms of the Public Safety Act of 1953, subsection 3 on the arrest and detention of persons, (*Government Gazette* No. 10280 of 12 June 1986) allowed for the arrest of any person “being outside the boundaries of his residential premises in any particular area, at any time” (7. (1) (b) (iii) 1986, p. 5). The same proclamation prohibited any person “(iv) putting in motion or driving or being driven in or upon any vehicle that is in motion in any particular area,

at any time; or (v) entering any particular area or part thereof if he is not normally resident in that area or part thereof ” (1986, p.5). Although this proclamation was superseded by the Bill of Human Rights that was promulgated by the interim authority in 1985, the same still applied to the State of Emergency proclaimed in the Caprivi in 1999 (Katjipuka-Sibolile, 2002). While there were no state controls that specifically targeted ‘informal’ artists, they were, as members of communities, subjected to all the restrictive legislations and orders like States of Emergency and restriction on their movement that determined the lives of black people under Apartheid. The laws cited above made it extremely difficult for performers to carry out their activities and to all intents and purposes banned them from performances outside the areas where they lived.

One of the main reasons for the absence of written drama texts from the period between 1985 and 1989 can be ascribed to The Proclamation by the State President of the Republic of South Africa in the *Government Gazette* No. 10280 of 12 June 1986 (11) on Regulations in terms of the Public Safety Act of 1953, subsection 5 on Power of entry, search and seizure, which authorized the Ministers of Safety and Security and Defence, or anyone operating under their orders, to seize all copies of any publication which, “in his opinion, may be of a subversive nature” (1989, p.7).

The first period under discussion falls within an historical time of turmoil in the country as the Namibian people’s struggle for independence from South Africa was reaching a crescendo. During the years when this research starts the political situation had reached a level where the state had become intolerant of dissenting voices.

CHAPTER 4

Discussion and Interpretations

4.1 Introduction

In the following three chapters the material will be discussed and interpretations thereof will be offered. It is important for the understanding of this research to know that the plays are not discussed from a dramaturgical but rather a literary/thematic perspective. The research therefore does not express itself on the artistic/aesthetic/theatrical value of the plays, but on their degree of social commentary. Working within the paradigm of Postcolonial theory this research hoped to find some of the following aspects, as proposed by Yazdih (2010), reflected in the plays:

- How do the plays represent various aspects of colonial oppression?
- Do the texts reveal anything about the problematics of postcolonial identity, including the relationship between personal and cultural identity and an issue such as hybridity?
- Are there any persons or groups that the work identifies as "other" or stranger? How are such persons/groups described and treated?
- What does the text reveal about the politics and/or psychology of anti-colonialist resistance?
- Do the texts reveal anything about the operations of cultural difference or ambiguity? Is there a sense of ambiguity or are meanings entrenched?
- Are there meaningful similarities in the approaches to cultural expression among different postcolonial populations?

- How does a literary text in the Western canon reinforce or undermine colonialist ideology through its representation of colonialization and/or its inappropriate silence about colonized peoples?

Raymond Williams' (1977) structure of feeling is applied to establish to what extent the plays reflected people's responses to prevailing material reality during the period under investigation and what some of the impulses were that led to theatre making. Williams believed that "to access a culture and those who live in it, one needs to analyse the everyday, and the ordinary" (1958). This ordinary may be found in the lives of those depicted in the plays of the theatre makers discussed in the next chapter.

During the five years preceding independence (1985–1989) Namibia had one national theatre which was subsidised by the state. The policies applicable to the running of this theatre were in line with the South African government's national legislation. This theatre was for whites only. This does not mean that performances did not take place in the disadvantaged areas. Black artists had joined the 'struggle' against the ruling Apartheid regime and a counter culture flourished in the capital city (Zeeman, 2000). The National Theatre of Namibia and the Warehouse Theatre were important performance venues but an in-depth analysis of their operations do not form part of this discussion since neither had a theatre company. They were venues for performance but not theatre makers. However, what was presented there is important to an understanding of the structure of feeling of the dominant class since these venues were

subsidised by the government and had to tow a certain official line. For that reason this research offers, in an addendum, a glimpse at work performed in the theatre.

The informal theatre makers who will be discussed are those who received no official sanction or state funding. Before independence their work was presented, not in the official spaces, but in alternative venues that ranged from churches, schools and the open air. Their loci and audience bases were in the townships and their work largely went unnoticed by the establishment. It is hypothesised that the themes of this work would have centred round matters that were of immediate relevance to the communities where these performances took place and that the political dispensation in the country would have had an influence on the subject matter. It is further hypothesised that theatre in the formal sector, those who enjoyed official sanction and funding, will reflect the structure of feeling of the dominant, ruling class.

The first five years (approximately) after independence were found to be governed by a feeling of post-independence euphoria while gradually a feeling of disillusionment began to creep in. Broadly stated, it appears that the following three expectations may be identified as being the core concerns for art and culture after 1990: firstly, a concern with reviving traditional culture; a second stream was the concern of the previously disadvantaged artists to have greater access to the means to produce their work and lastly, the expectation of skills training and empowering people. There was also the hope of establishing a unique African/Namibian cultural identity at the same time as there was an attempt at the maintenance of the formal theatre elements which operated largely with private sector financing and shorn of discriminatory tendencies in subject matter, while perhaps not in the provision of support.

The three main streams of this investigation were as follows:

1. Government legislation and policies on the arts with special emphasis on the extent to which theatre was shaped and influenced by the socio-political dispensation before independence;
2. Theatre practitioners: visions, concerns and obstacles in achieving aims and objectives relating to the world of theatre. This section will focus on an analysis of plays as reflecting structures of feeling and attempts to engage with the socio-political and material reality of the situation in the country;
3. An overview of developments abroad: Are there meaningful similarities among the theatre practices of different postcolonial populations?

The work of Bricks, Frederick Philander and Aldo Behrens serves as the springboard for an attempt to answer the questions of this research. The role of the Windhoek Theatre/National Theatre of Namibia is explored as representing the official position.

4.2 Government policies and legislation

This section will explore government policies on the arts with special emphasis on the extent to which theatre was shaped and influenced by the socio-historical and political dispensation before independence. For the post-independence era the issue under consideration is whether government policy on the arts is informed by a clear vision of what constitutes the arts, or

whether government deliberately attempted to foster cultural transformation in order to conform more closely to what is perceived to be traditional African customs and traditions. Government's role in arts development may be a topic of less concern in other newly independent states, but in Namibia it was identified as a major concern with the arts fraternity during the time that this research applies. Since this study concerns itself with theatre as reflecting structures of feeling in Namibia during particular historic moments, it is considered important to explore how the relationship between policy provision and theatre making influenced creative work since the state's involvement is one of the structural elements within which feelings developed.

4.2.1 Overview

The Windhoek Theatre was, until shortly before independence, the exclusive preserve of white Windhoek,

with a full compliment of European music, heavily subsidised European opera, ballet, European and Afrikaans drama, the theatre was sustained by that classic colonial collusion of state arts provision and autochthonous alienation (Zeeman, 2000, p. v).

Non-white Namibian performers had no access to this theatre, its programming, its funding, or any subsidised training in the theatre, just as they had no access to any institutional cultural controls. Not surprisingly, the culture underlying theatre performances reflected the structure of feeling of the ruling class and dominant culture. As Zeeman (2000, p. v) further stated:

‘Kultuur’ that was not of the oppressor's or colonialist's official mould was not patronised. Radio, television, theatre and the local conservatoire did not permit entry of any subversive elements into the official, mainstream and Government-sponsored culture.

Zeeman (2000, p. v) proposed the idea that, while the exclusion of the “black” performers in State-subsidised programs and venues was secured by the state before independence, a flourishing counter culture was developing in the city of Windhoek. This was largely led by the

Bricks Theatre Collective, the Windhoek Players and to a certain degree the School of the Arts at the Academy, which later became the University of Namibia. These groups offered ‘alternative’ theatre. For many of the performers, a scripted play was of secondary importance and much of what was performed during that time, is not available as literature.

It is in the nature of early resistance theatre that records are hard to trace. These performances dealt with day to day political issues and “were by their very nature ephemeral – long forgotten notes on bits of paper, if written down at all” (Goorney & Macolly 1986, p. vii). These, often *ad hoc*, performances were to lay the foundation for the scripted work that came much later. Pieters Mosalele noted that: “Although not well documented, Community Drama has been practised in Namibia for many ages” (2002, p. v). This type of theatre was used to entertain and educate. It also transmitted cultural values from adult to child, from generation to generation.

The lack of archival resources for this period has already been indicated. Another possible reason for this lack was put forward by Brigitte Lau (1986). In an article on the absence of women as significant players in history books, she argued that history is written by the dominant class in society in such a way that their own achievements become the most significant. She stated that silence was a powerful way of excluding the lives and achievements of others. Lau started her article on the lives of Johanna Uerieta and Emma Hahn by saying:

I wish to demonstrate briefly how men ‘write’ their history and how they make sure that, centuries after them, ‘their’ history is still written. One of the most important methods used is silence. The eradication, trivialization or exclusion of women’s experience and achievement may be observed in all our existing historical records (1986, p. 62).

If the word 'women' were to be replaced by 'oppressed', her sentiments would be equally valid. During the period before independence, the written history of the oppressed classes largely suffered from this silencing effect. It is part of postcolonial theory to try and unveil how the literary texts in the Western canon reinforce or undermine colonialist ideology through its representation of colonialization and/or its inappropriate silence about colonized peoples. Many arguments may be advanced for why the oppressed did not write their own history at the time. It was only during the postcolonial period that the hegemony and metanarrative of the dominant class was challenged when a new dispensation allowed for other narratives to be heard.

The performing of plays in schools is an age-old practice in Namibia. Many of the current acting corps in the country started their acting activities in school dramatic societies. Lucky Pieters Mosalele told of such a society at his school which serves as an illustration of how these Drama groups operated. He explained that:

In 1985 a group of students and progressive teachers at Jan Jonker Afrikaner High School started a community group called the Jan Jonker Students' Brigade (JJSB). The group's slogan was 'for the community, in the community, with the community' (2002, p. v).

This, and similar groups, would meet to discuss issues of importance to the group members and then workshop these into plays which were performed in the community and at other schools. Since many of the issues that concerned the group members resulted from the unequal treatment of the races in the country, it was inevitable that these groups became 'reactionary' in the work that they did. There was much education and mobilization inherent in the activities of these groups. The state, on the other hand, was to clamp down on what it considered dissidents by passing various laws to curtail the movement of people.

In 1966 SWAPO's military wing, the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), fired its first shots at Omgulumbashe, marking the start of the war of liberation. The South African government responded in a heavy-handed manner in order to crush the liberation movement. Detained PLAN fighters and SWAPO leaders like Andimba Toivo Ya Toivo were charged under the newly passed Terrorism Act of 1966. According to Maseko (1995) the implications of these events frequently featured in students' discussions within debating societies and the Students' Christian Movement at various schools. Many of these groups made use of theatre in their awareness campaigns and political rallies. The singing of freedom songs (and sometimes short skits and dancing) was an integral part of the political meetings.

The South African government's policy of Apartheid ensured that, during this time, black communities did not attend plays in the National Theatre and white communities did not attend plays in the townships. There may have been exceptions to the second, but these would be negligible.

4.2.2 The ethos of pre-independence community theatre

Leon Beukes (1991) proposed that it was difficult to look at any aspect of Namibian social or economic life without reflecting on the socio-political conditions that shaped the situation. He observed that:

theatre has always been a part of the cultural life of many Namibians, from the passion plays that most grew up with through the turbulent seventies and eighties where different community groups increasingly used theatre as a means to mobilise and conscientize an oppressed nation (1991, p. 68).

The mid 1980s saw an escalation of civil resistance in Namibia. Socio-economic conditions deteriorated and a mass upsurge resulted in a broad anti-Apartheid front (Strauss, 1999, p. 93). This upsurge was accompanied by an increase in theatrical activity in the non-formal sector.

Beukes (1991) stated further that theatre had been used for decades as a means to strengthen the collective memory of a nation and this theatre is often rich in symbolism, dance, music and drama. He noted that, when Namibians put up their bitter resistance to oppression, many performers used different traditional artistic ways to strengthen and broaden such resistance. According to Beukes, ‘traditional songs and dances became weapons of resistance as new stories of heroism became present folklore’ (1991, p. 69). It was in these newly created heroic stories that the theatre succeeded in representing the prevailing structure of feeling because these stories reflected the current struggles and introduced new heroes to the populace.

Besides reflecting prevailing concerns, the theatre that Beukes described, functioned effectively in keeping the populace informed of important news as well as heroic acts performed by members of the resistance movement. This was especially important in a county with a high rate of illiteracy and a press that would downplay resistance triumphs. Although most of the performance activity took place in the capital, the need to involve communities in rural areas was recognised. This need was addressed by Bricks Theatre Collective.

Beukes raised an important point which is underscored by the work of Augusto Boal. He claimed that people were educated through a process of participatory research and analysis which helped

them to understand the underlying reasons for their material conditions. This understanding placed a degree of compulsion on them to develop and utilize their artistic skills in order to effectively, and in an entertaining way, portray these conditions and the possible solutions to problems (1991, p. 69).

Beukes suggested that progressive content was more valued than highly polished artistic skills and “Art for Art’s sake”. However, even during this period, there was already an attempt to balance ‘good’ artistic presentations with progressive content. As the audience was an integral part of the process, they were not slow in indicating to performers what they thought the critical and aesthetic values and shortcomings of the plays were. As mentioned before, the written script as literature is largely absent during this period, thus Beukes’s claims cannot be evaluated against written documents.

Danny Tjongarero, then national chairman of SWAPO, said in 1986 at the official opening of the fifth annual play festival of the Windhoek Players Youth Theatre, that “present day theatre and art in general, should be a mirror through which Namibians are able to recognise themselves” (1986, p. 7). He wanted theatre to reflect the socio-political conditions in the country and to “cry out against the tragedies of our country and question the stereotypes created through years of prejudice, hatred, privilege and oppression” (1986). For Tjongarero art should be in the service of the community because it should reflect the soul of a nation, its structure of feeling. In Namibia in particular, he felt that art could not merely exist for art’s sake, or be an end unto itself. For him art in general and theatre in particular should inform, entertain and educate. It should impart values and teach universal lessons. He believed that the best theatre was that

which was situation-bound. Most importantly, for Tjongarero, Namibian artists should strive to let art rise above the elitist status with which, he said, it was then associated. He noted that art in Namibia had been characterised by elitism for too long.

Tjongarero's call for Namibian theatre to reflect the socio-political realities of the day was echoed in the work of the grassroots performers. At the time the South African policy of apartheid ensured that Windhoek Theatre continued to stage works which, in the words of the Administrator of South West Africa, Mr. B.J. van der Walt, reflected the refinement and art consciousness of the white South West African language groups (1973, p. 2) which was then also the structure of feeling of the ruling powers. There was thus a wide divide between what Tjongarero was calling for and what actually happened in the establishment theatre in Windhoek. Examples of the plays performed during this time will be explored when the theatre makers are discussed.

Immediately after independence the performance fraternity looked to government to express itself on the arts and clarify its position with regards to development of arts and culture in the country. Many informal utterances by the liberation movement spokespersons indicated a very favourable disposition towards the arts. The next section of this chapter explores to what extent those utterances developed into policy and/or to what extent they were empty promises.

4.2.3 Government aims, policy and utterances

During the period 1985 until independence the only government spending on theatre, as part of the South African government's policy of support for the Arts councils, was the Windhoek Theatre which later became the National Theatre of Namibia. This support did not extend to grassroots programmes and any independent or community based initiatives had to find funding themselves. While the National Theatre made attempts to operate profitably, it was not imperative that it did so since it received a grant-in-aid from the government.

It is not possible at the outset to make clear what the underlying philosophy was that informed the post-independence government's policy on culture in general and theatre in particular. At this stage, during the early years after independence, there was no clear policy but the discussion will look at 'informal' statements and utterances by government officials both before and after independence. A draft policy was only presented to Cabinet in 2001. The ministry responsible for arts and culture also underwent a number of name, and one would suspect, mandate changes during the period after independence. It was called variously Ministry of Basic Education, Ministry of Basic Education and Sports, Ministry of Basic Education, Sports and Culture, Ministry of Education and Culture.

In 1992 the Minister of Education and Culture (MEC), Nahas Angula, responded to some questions with regards to the Ministry's stance in terms of cultural policies in a free Namibia (*Kalabash*, 1992, p. 3). Since government was expected to be the major funder of arts and culture development in the country, it was important for the arts fraternity to know the vision of the

government. The institutions and individuals involved in the arts were likely to take their cue from government. Minister Angula pointed out that the mission of the MEC was to promote the culture of all the people in Namibia. He regarded the delineation between the culture of people from European descent and other Namibians as a “ridiculous proposition” (p. 3). For Minister Angula the arts and culture were intricately interwoven with other aspects of Namibian life such as education, national monuments, literacy, library services and others. Culture was seen as the practices of daily living of the people while the arts, although part of culture, were more specialised. For that reason, the two were dealt with as separate entities within the Ministry. The minister did not give any clear indications of exactly what the policy was at the time. Whether this was an indication that government was taking the long view which indicated that no distinction was to be made between European and African art/culture and that a ‘Namibian’ culture should grow organically rather than to be forced into existence; or whether, at that stage the government had genuinely not worked out how to formulate the policy, is not clear. It may have been a reasonable approach to take so soon after independence to be seen to promote culture in all its diversity.

In a slightly different tone to that of Minister Angula, Buddy Wentworth, Deputy Minister of Education and Culture, asserted in 1992 that the emphasis of the Ministry was on encouraging unity in diversity. In 1993 Namalambo cautioned that it was unrealistic to label the various cultural practices of the different ethnic groups a Namibian culture. Wentworth felt that out of such diversity, a rich unity could be developed. The only obstacle that he saw to reaching that goal was if people did not support the government in its endeavours. This was said with little thought to the fact that people did not know exactly what the government endeavoured. The

position of the government, through Wentworth as spokesperson, is not strange. In postcolonial societies there is generally a striving towards undoing the hegemony of the ousted oppressor and giving voice to the subaltern. As Prabhu (2007) indicated, there is the feeling that, instead of living within the bounds of a linear view of history and society, people feel that they have become free to interact on an equal footing with all the traditions that determine their present situation. Wentworth also hinted at those whom he felt would like to maintain a certain *status quo* in the arts (the previously advantaged) as well as those who were not prepared to do anything for themselves but expected government to do everything for them (the previously disadvantaged). Many years later Strauss also alluded to people's dependency on government and a lack of entrepreneurial spirit among the artists. In 2012 Strauss echoed Wentworth's concerns that a national, and not a state culture should flourish in the country and that the state did not want to promote a dependency syndrome. Wentworth pointed out strongly that the government did not want to "nourish a cultural community of dependents" (1992, p. 70). This researcher suspects, but has found no proof, that these utterances about dependency syndromes and discouraging a state culture were smokescreens behind which the Ministry hid its own insecurities about how to meet the demands of the artists and how to fulfil promises made to the arts fraternity during the struggle and campaign periods.

Strauss (1993) felt positive that rapid progress had been made on policy development. At that stage the "broad policy was to strive towards the advancement of the various facets of culture, realizing fully that these were interrelated and should not be seen in isolation" (p. 40). Although Strauss spoke of a policy, it is clear from the literature that, at the time, the utterances pointed more to policy guidelines than actual policies. For example, a statement such as the following by

Strauss is clearly not a policy point: “In the past, culture was used to divide people. Even worse, some cultures were considered to be intrinsically more advanced than others” (p. 40). While such a statement may inform policy formation it was not in itself specific enough to guide the artists. Neither is a confirmation that “the Ministry of Education and Culture is committed to a policy cultivating culture as a unifying and nation building force” (1993, p. 41). The artists needed to know how those sentiments would be applied in practice. They needed to understand what the practical steps would be to be followed by all concerned to reach such objectives. The mere idea that a government could cultivate a culture flies in the face of cultural studies worldwide. The most that government could do would be to select a particular form of cultural expression and support it through financial and infrastructural assistance. This had, in fact, been done by the pre-independence government with work in the National Theatre and by the postcolonial government with its support of traditional troupes. Strauss reiterated that they were committed to a practical translation of the Government’s policy on the freedom of cultural and artistic expression and that they sought to create an awareness of, and a revival of national heritage among all Namibians. This stance of the Ministry informed much of the work of the NTN during that time. As an institution receiving a large grand-in-aid from the government they were tasked with carrying out the aim of reviving the national traditions.

Under their specific objectives the Ministry of Education and Culture was committed to, *inter alia*, promote the vocational and employable qualities of the arts and to create opportunities for such employment for Namibians. They were also said to emphasize the educational and spiritual values of the arts for the entire population of Namibia (1992, p. 42). How this was done is not clear. While these may be noble objectives, the artists at large, especially those who did not

practice the traditional performance modes, were no closer to an understanding of how to access the means of production previously denied to them and felt that they were drifting around in limbo. Performers interpreted the promise of creating employment as an indication that a permanent acting troupe would be established by the National Theatre. Although such a promise was never made to them directly, they kept waiting until hope turned to disillusionment.

The Department of Culture in the MEC comprised two directorates, namely the Directorate of Culture and the Directorate of Arts. At that time the objectives of the Department were to:

Develop Namibian material and spiritual culture; to foster the participation in cultural activities through a variety of media; to enhance Namibian identity through cultural expression; to preserve national cultural treasures and to enhance learning and information through library services
(*Kalabash*, 1992, p. 6).

Such a statement in itself is fraught with ambiguity. Terminology such as spiritual culture, Namibian identity and cultural expression carry within themselves the possibility of widely differing interpretations. For example, to foster a Namibian identity when the nature of that identity is in question, would surely lead to resistance rather than cooperation. Homogeneity is not a characteristic of the lived experience of people residing in Namibia.

It appears that the Directorate of Culture had as its responsibility mainly to work with grassroots and community endeavours while the Directorate of Arts inherited what used to be considered Euro-centric institutions like the National Art Gallery, the National Theatre and the Conservatoire. However, the Directorate of Arts was expected to change its approach to accommodate the ethos of Namibia post-independence. This ethos of freedom and equality, with equal opportunities for all, was a respected essence of the new Namibian constitution, but

economic disenfranchisement continued to mitigate against national well-being. It would be fair to say that by the time this research ends all discriminatory elements had been removed, but that a large part of the population still battled to achieve economic emancipation.

This Directorate considered it important to develop relevant educational materials to be used in schools since it considered the material then in use did not reflect the “rich artistic heritage of Namibia” (p. 10). The aim was to develop general arts appreciation at school level in order to encourage people to participate in the arts. It is unfortunate that the Ministry’s attempts at developing the arts in schools did not yield the desired results. In 1996 the performing arts were all but removed from the school curriculum.

During the period just after independence the Directorate of Culture concentrated on two main areas of activities. The first involved settling into the running of the section. This meant taking stock of national institutions like museums and libraries, training of staff and deciding on the work of the Language Services. The second focus was on new areas of cultural activity. The main aim here was to “get the majority of Namibians involved in establishing a national identity and to increase nation building potential through cultural practice” (1992, p. 7). For this reason the head office staff did extensive visits to regional centres to identify culturally active people and to assist these financially “to encourage the new momentum” (1992, p 8). With the assistance of UNESCO and SIDA a Cultural Development Trust fund was to be established to assist and develop the best local and international initiatives. This researcher finds it curious that the country’s leaders could have been so naïve as to believe that a national identity could be

‘established’ by effort on their part. Culture and identity as the social experiences of a particular historic moment (Williams, 1954), can hardly be induced by government prescription.

In their draft 2 for discussion (September 1992) entitled *Towards Education For All: A Development Brief for Education, Culture and Training* the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) gave an overview of its plans for education and culture in the country. Section B of the Introduction was discussed under the heading: *A development brief for education, culture and training*. However, nowhere in that discussion is there any mention of the arts. The section of the document which dealt with arts and culture consisted of unnumbered, loose pages.

According to these pages that were tabled separately the donor community was interested in “what cultural development policies the Government of Namibia has outlined, what particular needs should be targeted, and how competency and accountability can be built up within the country” (1992). In response to this the Ministry informed the gathering that it had devised a policy for the promotion and development of a “culture in Namibia which aims to redress imbalances at the same time as maintaining institutions of national importance” (1992). When that policy was to be made official and public was not indicated. They also promised that the effectiveness of the policy would be evaluated on a continuous basis. There was no indication of who would be responsible for such evaluations and what criteria would be used in the evaluation. The development of that policy seemed to have been primarily geared towards getting systems in place to handle donor money because the heading of the (loose page) document was: *Allocation of donor funding for cultural activities in Namibia*.

This researcher finds it interesting and significant that, two years after independence, the MEC had a working document, which was discussed with the Minister, on how donor money for the arts should be handled when, in fact, there was no official arts policy to guide the actual development of arts inside the country. There is an assumption that, if money was received for a purpose, namely, the development of postcolonial culture in Namibia, that the practitioners of that stated purpose should have had an input in how that purpose was to be defined and achieved. However, the practitioners did not know what the official government policy on the arts was. It creates the impression that the zeal with which documents were prepared for donor agencies was mere window dressing.

At a theatre laboratory that was presented in 1993 by Global Posse/Wake up Productions Andre Strauss spelt out what the government policy for the arts was at the time. According to him (1993) the cultural policy could be summarised as follows:

- To build unity in diversity;
- To develop a strong and vibrant national Namibian culture, not based on race, gender or language discrimination;
- To allow all Namibians to develop, practise and profess their own culture, as long as it is not in conflict with the interests of peace and harmony of the majority of Namibians;
- To promote and develop African culture in our African country while at the same time maintaining mutually beneficial relations on cultural level with all other nations who wish to maintain such relations with us;
- To use culture to build the new Namibian nation by taking cognizance of the fact that no meaningful development is possible without taking this dimension into account (pp. 7-8).

However, this research could not establish beyond doubt that these sentiments were ever formulated into an official policy on the arts that became effective during that period. As a matter of interest, this researcher was approached at the end of 2014 to assist in the process of drafting a national arts policy. The process had been dormant since 2001 when a draft was presented to Cabinet.

4.2.4 Government and traditional culture

Immediately after independence the Directorate of Culture in the Ministry of Education and Culture set about arranging regional cultural festivals and together with the NTN, resources were directed towards groups doing traditional performances. This was done as part of the program outlined by the Deputy Minister of Education and Culture, Buddy Wentworth, when he gave an indication of the government's views on post-Apartheid cultural activity in Namibia. This view was explained as follows:

We promise that an independent Namibia under a SWAPO government would promote the revival and development of our nation's cultural expression and creativity and would launch a comprehensive cultural programme entailing the establishment of national museums and monuments and galleries, theatres for art and drama, literacy associations, a foundation for arts and crafts as well as institutes of music and dance, films and language (Global Posse, 1993, p. 6).

The national cultural festivals that were introduced by the Directorate of Culture after independence with the intention of enhancing unity in diversity and nation building, had been an ongoing initiative throughout the period covered by this research and, in fact, continue up to the present (2015). So many years after independence there appears to exist a general dissatisfaction with the organization and outcomes of the annual festival. There is no evidence that this initiative contributed in any way to nation building or to uniting the diverse elements in Namibian society. The possible reasons for the failure of the initiative were discussed by Michael Uusiku Akuupa, an intern in the Directorate of National Heritage and Culture Programmes (NHCP) in the

Ministry of Youth and Culture (*The Namibian*, 2013, May 24). Akuupa asked the following questions:

“Has the State achieved the goal for which the festival was created? Has the annual national festival become redundant? Why is there no political interest or will from national leaders? Has the nationhood and pride project by the Ministry of Information hijacked the social space of the festival? Have the personnel lost courage and drive to deliver festivals that citizens can look forward to? Has the directorate lost direction?”

Some may argue that the original goal could scarcely be met by festivals that highlighted the differences of the various language groups in the country, and that there is no evidence that the organizational structure within which the Directorate operated these festivals in any way facilitated the development of a feeling of ‘oneness’. The cultural groups are made up of people of specific ethnic groupings and rather than bring about unity, the festival may have highlighted the diversity. However, the efficacy of the national festivals as an instrument of nation building is a topic for another study. Suffice it to say that the dissatisfaction that is expressed in 2013 was not evident during the period covered by this research. Wallace (2011) made the observation that: “many ‘traditional’ forms of authority, custom, culture and practice – however changed and reinvented – is a defining feature of the postcolonial Namibia” (p. 315).

Despite their views during the liberation struggle, the SWAPO government bought into the idea of reviving pre-colonial culture. In fact, one of the first activities of the Directorate of Culture was to try and strengthen traditional performance troupes. Of the theatres for arts and drama that Wentworth spoke, nothing was visible by the time this research ends. Except for the Boilerhouse Theatre attached to the College of the Arts, the venues that were available were those that existed before independence.

One of the characters in Vickson Hangula's play *The show isn't over until ...* voiced the difficulties of theatre makers when he said:

I have gone asking for funds from probably all potential funding bodies you can think of. They will all tell you, yes, it is a very good initiative that also looks good on paper. They will promise to refer your project to their board and come back to you. They never will. When you call after two weeks, they will tell you that, 'Sorry, we do not fund in the theatre category'. Or 'This year's funding has been depleted, we wish you all the luck with the other organizations', then you wonder why they asked you to bring your proposal in the first place. Two weeks later you will read in the newspaper that the *Russian Army Band* or *Opera That Name* is coming to perform at the National Theatre. And courtesy of whom? All the Companies, Foreign Missions and Banking Institutions that have just turned down your proposal (2000, p.25).

In contrast to their utterances in exile it would appear that part of the problem was that the new government's ideas for cultural renewal may have suffered from what had been called "the invention of tradition", an attempt to retrospectively create cultural tradition (Botha, 2011) or more precisely in this case, to reinvent what was perceived to be the authentic indigenous culture. When the Namibian Cultural Troupe (NANACUT) was launched in April 1993 by government involvement, the then Minister of Education and Culture, Nahas Angula, asserted that "NANACUT'S mission was to foster unity of the diverse Namibian cultures and to promote Namibian cultural awareness" (1994, p. 55).

When asked (2012) if this focus of the government on promoting traditional forms of expression was not like being stuck in a time warp, Strauss responded that the primary aim of his Ministry was to counter the effects of the church and Apartheid which together made people feel inferior about their culture. The aim was to help people regain their personal pride and dignity through

their cultural expression. These statements seem to indicate that what government envisaged was to destroy the negative features of the past and to allow for all Namibians to be able to openly express the diversity of cultural manifestations evident in the country.

Storey (2003) claimed that the idea of this pure pre-colonial culture was a creation of intellectuals. The people and culture so admired were in the past and this culture was to be reinvented for the people of the “urban” present. He felt that those people who still “sang the songs and told the tales” (p. 4) should not be seen as the embodiment of both the nature and character of the nation. It is usually the peasantry and labouring classes who were associated with the folk culture. Storey believed that the old songs and dances remained, in whichever form, because of the middle-class collector. In a very tongue-in-cheek way he described the process as follows:

Whether or not folk culture had been produced by the peasantry, it was an inheritance which they had already begun to neglect. Increasingly, the peasantry, like the urban rabble, could not be trusted with the nation’s heritage. Fortunately, the middle-class collector was at hand. It was imperative that middle-class intellectuals assume control of folk culture on behalf of the nation (p. 5).

There possibly are those who would not agree with Storey, but there may be some merit in what he said. The producers of traditional cultural expression in the form of music, dance, theatre, etcetera, are members of living and changing societies. As such these forms are bound to change even if the changes are subtle. As the means allow, costumes may be embellished more, drums may be bought rather than made and changes in the sequence of steps of performers may be introduced.

The point that Storey tried to make was that academics, in recording, analysing and explaining these traditional expressions look for pure forms which do not exist. Pure elements may be present, but not absolutely pure sequence and expression. It is unlikely that the 'pure' forms still exist in living memory, if they ever existed at all. The Namibian dance, known as the 'Nama stap' may serve as an example. The basic two-person combination is still used where the female shuffles along as guided by the male partner, while the latter performs fairly elaborate movements with intricate footwork and jumps. However, the personality and skill of the male dancer will determine his repertoire. This, in turn, is determined by what he had been exposed to and influenced by. So, while the performance is readily identifiable as a Nama stap, the details may differ from one pair of dancers to the next and from one region to another.

Kinahan (2011) remarked that it is commonplace in contemporary "African historiography that ethnic groupings and affiliations do not necessarily have a deep past, and that many are recent constructs" (p. 10). He further argued that modern ethnic identities in Namibia were created, "if not exclusively by European travellers and colonial governments, then with a great deal of help from them" (p. 12). So the field of traditional and pre-colonial culture becomes an even more contested terrain. For Kinahan, although ethnic identities were constructed through historical processes which were not always uncontested, all Namibians today have negotiated their ethnic origin and belonging. History has been written in such a way as to project modern ethnic identities into the past where they may not have existed, and it is unlikely that contemporary belonging to an ethnic identity, which is accepted to have existed for ever, will be questioned by members of that identity.

The generally accepted forms of indigenous or autochthonous culture which people usually refer to when they speak of 'traditional' culture, has been found to be the traditional forms of specific culture or language groupings and not necessarily that of a country. And even then, uniformity is not guaranteed. Namibia is no exception. Nyathi (2003) made a valid observation in this regard about culture and heritage when he argued that:

Within a given nation, definition of what is authentic heritage would also vary from province to province, or district to district, which in turn would vary from village to village, or hamlet to hamlet. The definition of the phenomenon is so complex that even at the human level the ambiguity of the definition becomes a contentious issue (p. 105).

Storey maintained that the only reason why the production or preservation of folk culture was at all possible was because the 'folk' had survived in primitive rural isolation. However, what the 'going back to our roots' arts promoters lost sight of was that it was increasingly difficult to sustain the idea of an isolated folk living in conditions of primitive pastoralism beyond the reach of the modern world. In many ways the idea of folk culture was a romantic fantasy, constructed through denial and distortion intended to heal the wounds of the present and safeguard the future by promoting a memory of a past that had little existence outside of intellectual debates.

According to Storey the songs and dances of the folk allowed middle-class intellectuals to imagine a lost national and natural identity and to dream of the possibility of a new 'authentic' national unity of a people bound together once again by the 'organic ties of land and language' (p. 14). In this sense popular culture becomes for these intellectuals the opposite of high culture (differentiated on the basis of aesthetic evaluations and origin). High culture is usually associated with Western-centric productions.

Davis (1990) supported the premise that pre-colonial culture could not be revived in its old form.

He asserted that:

In the colonial setting, the idea of cultural revolution becomes doubly complex, because there are three cultures to deal with: the colonizer's culture, the original culture of the colonized, and the weird amalgam of cultures that we call colonialism. It is important to get rid of the internalized oppression which comes together with the colonial culture. ...It is, however, impossible to return to the pre-colonial culture and remain in the modern world. The image of the pre-colonial culture is usually a fictional product of the colonial culture anyway (p. 335).

Even in countries where the colonizer was ousted, locals retained some of the aspects of the colonizer's culture. One merely has to look at the architecture in many ex-colonies and Namibia is no exception. Hybridity and what Freire (1993) referred to as cultural invasion is a very potent force. It is insidious and people absorb new ideas gradually. By the time it is pointed out to them that they are promoting the cultural values, in whatever form, of the coloniser, they have already taken ownership of some aspects of that culture.

Kashoki (1994) had ideas similar to Storey. He argued that:

Since culture by nature is always a dynamic and not static condition it would be myopic and misconceived for countries to fall back on some kind of pure or fossilized cultural heritage which is then in an idolised fashion, exploited for sustainable national development (p. 24).

He considered that it was no longer tenable to be "obsessively nostalgic about one's bygone culture" (1994) however glorious it may have been in the past. He thought it more apt to create a "modern and future Africa" (1994) that incorporates the best of all cultures. Despite all the arguments against the existence of a pure pre-colonial culture and the strength of the argument about hybridity, Namibian policy makers had to go through the period as described by Fanon. He

spoke about a passionate search that is embarked on in the postcolonial period for a national culture that existed before the colonial era.

Government's support of a revival of traditional culture, while flying in the face of all reasoning against it, may be viewed as a postcolonial reflex of making subaltern voices heard. It may be argued that the Namibian rural population was the most oppressed during Apartheid. Northern Namibia in particular suffered inordinately at the hands of South African defence forces. It is also the most densely populated area in the country and, after independence, the area where displays of traditional cultural practices were most visible. It may merely be that the lifestyles of those people in rural isolation had never really changed much and that independence brought greater visibility of all people in the country. News about what people in outlying areas did then started to be written about in newspapers whereas, in the past, it was of little concern. Be that as it may, subaltern voices became audible and traditional cultural activities moved out of the shadows of irrelevance. However, while the Ministry was spending energy and funds on those activities, the urban theatre makers started to feel neglected.

4.2.5 Growing discontent

A major stumbling block to development in the arts was the fact that, years after independence, political freedom did not translate into economic emancipation and a better life for people in general. Volker Winterfeldt noted that "Namibian postcolonial society transcended its colonial origin yet bore its marks" (2010, p. 139). Winterfeldt argued that in defiance of whatever dynamic was used to deal with Namibia's troubled past, two decades after independence

Namibian society “betrays indubitable signs of failure: the extreme social divide between haves and have-nots has few equals on the globe” (p. 140). His view was that social closure and social exclusion seem to have become the trademark of postcolonial Namibian society. The social structure in Namibia is one of an amalgamation of the social groups of white and African business people and office bearers in state and politics at the top end of society in what Winterfeldt called ‘a new bureaucratic bourgeoisie’ (p. 150).

The new underclass is the consolidation of unemployed and underemployed migrants. In this dispensation class prevails over race as the formative force. Winterfeldt stated that political analysts agreed that the parasitic character of the dominant class, combined with the pervasive culture of entitlement, greed and graft, and the SWAPO government’s policies of Affirmative Action and Black Economic Empowerment were the driving forces behind postcolonial elitism in Namibia. He concluded that two decades after independence, signs faded away that the state’s concerted efforts could in actual fact contribute to building a sustainable national economy and mitigating the social divide. It was inevitable that theatre, as a microcosm of the social macrocosm, would reflect some of this disappointment.

It was the realization by Namibian artists of the situation that Winterfeldt described, that led to the intensified feelings of disillusionment. Newspaper headlines during this time, quoted by Zeeman (2004) indicated the deepening disillusionment of the arts fraternity:

Artists on Zero Tolerance; Namibia lacks Arts, Culture Coordination;
 Artists Urged to Get Their Act together; Artists Union Holds Meeting;
 Rights of Performers Take Centre Stage; Playwrights throw down The
 Gauntlet; Do Not Forget The Artists; Show Us The Money, Say Artists;
 Calling All Artists to Action; Youth Speak Out On Arts And
 Culture Development; The Arts Get A Raw Deal; Call to Cultural

Officers To Step Down; Artists Not Second-Class Citizens; Working Artists' Woes; Own Ministry of Arts the Solution; Bureaucracy Frustrates Arts Efforts; Stand Up for Your Rights, Shekupe Urges.

These sentiments were echoed by one of the characters in Hangula's play, *The show isn't over until ...* when he told the other characters that:

The very same comrades who used to pray to great prophets like Karl Marx, Engels and Lenin to give them power to lead the masses to glorious lands of Socialism/Communism, have all forgotten those prayers. The times have really changed, isn't it? (sic) Their daily prayers are all reserved for the dollar today. Lord, give me more dollars to make me more dollars. And lead me not into temptation to think about those lazy bones in the streets and villages. But hey, the show must go on (2000, p.17).

An even more cynical view was expressed by the anonymous writer in an opinion piece in *Kalabash* (1993). The writer posed the question as to what happened in culture during the years since independence. S/he claimed that, at independence, Namibians were armed with a lot of theory and dreams about how to build a new nation and a national culture. However, three years after independence the only culture that the writer could identify was one of: "poverty and despondency pervading the land" (p. 44). The acceptance of the idea of a national culture was unquestioning and administrators relied on the ignorance of the largest part of the population to peddle their theories. However, the "things" that give culture meaning are unfixed and variable, negating essentialist arguments about inherent meanings of culture and the possibility of a uniform national culture (Yazdiha, 2010).

After the initial post-independence euphoria, a period of reality was ushered in. The National Theatre of Namibia was open to all who could find the funding to use it, and it was claimed by the director at the time, to have had a remarkable track record of:

financing, utilizing, presenting and promoting indigenous art, is still unable to satisfy the demand for patronage from the local playwrights and practitioners because the bulk of its moderate state subsidy services the bricks and mortar of the state's physical plant (Zeeman; 2000, p. vi).

This researcher is not convinced that the artists themselves would agree with Zeeman's claim of a remarkable track record. While the interest of the theatre management developed towards greater diversity in fare, the cost of maintaining the actual physical structure of the theatre took a large percentage of the annual subsidy and insufficient funds remained for training the artists or funding their productions. However, his claim is stated here in an attempt at fairness and this researcher harbours the hope that future researchers and the theatre makers themselves may further interrogate such a claim by the NTN management and that the NTN may be in a position to substantiate such a claim.

Problems encountered in staging plays did not deter all playwrights. More and more people now felt that they could share their writings with peers and the public. Community oriented themes were still evident in some of the work of playwrights. These works:

continue to take care that marginalised voices are heard. But after years of independence this scrutiny has shifted from a united (and unifying) attack on a remote, all powerful, oppressive *'them'* to a more problematic and ambivalent *'us'*. The overtly violent resistance dramas of the pre-independence era, secure in stereotypical characterisation and melodramatic display of the Apartheid colonial oppressor (the white brutish policeman beating the innocent black victim), have now been replaced with the dramas with more complicated circumstances (Zeeman, 2000, p. x).

Previously theatre thrived on overt conflict caused by issues of "black and white" and Apartheid. However, the parameters of conflict in Namibia at that time were not so clear-cut. With the oppressor disposed of, the liberator's (no longer new) government came under scrutiny.

Seemingly familiar power relations were once more entrenched in recognizable ways. The divide between haves and have not's was as obvious in post-independence Namibia as it was before.

Frederick Philander wrote in *The Namibian* newspaper (1998, December 11, p. 17) that, although strides were made in the right direction for Namibian theatre, that there was still much room for improvement. Some of the main concerns were a continuation of problems that Namibian directors had experienced since independence. These were that most of the theatre projects in the country were initiated by local groups without the assistance of, or with limited back-up from the public and private sectors. These local groups still suffered the non-availability of suitable and affordable venues to put on “innovative, relevant and enterprising original productions” (Philander, 1998, p. 17). The only inner city venues were still the expensive National Theatre of Namibia and the Warehouse Theatre. Without material support, most directors found it difficult, if not impossible, to showcase their work. What was particularly distressing to these practitioners was the fact that they believed their work to be relevant to the existing social order but that economic restraints prevented them from reflecting that reality to a theatre audience.

The above comments by Philander helped this researcher to understand why there was so little information about locally produced plays during this time. Newspaper reviews largely dealt only with performances at the inner city venues; the NTN, The Warehouse and the Space Theatre at the University of Namibia. This, and the fact that locally written plays were not published, greatly hampered this researcher's ability to answer the questions posed at the start of Chapter 4 namely: How the plays represented various aspects of colonial oppression; to what extent the texts revealed anything about the problematics of postcolonial identity and an issue such as

hybridity; whether a new “Other” had been identified and importantly, whether there were meaningful similarities in the approaches to cultural expression among different postcolonial populations.

By 1997 the earlier murmurings of disillusionment of the former grassroots artists with the post-independent situation were openly discussed. Vickson Hangula’s play *The show isn’t over until ...* was restaged a number of times after its initial run in 1998. In this play within a play, the actors voiced the concerns of the artists. In a satirical manner the play illustrated what really happened in the lives of struggling actors who had to stage a play without funds. It dealt with the unsympathetic approach of theatre operators, lack of support from banks, the private sector and foreign missions, even though these same institutions were prepared to continue financing Eurocentric productions. This play, more than any other, reflected the feelings of grassroots performers eight years after independence. It was seen as a play that did not pull punches in exposing the deteriorating situation of theatre makers, the politics and the many problems that Namibian theatre makers still faced almost a decade after independence (*The Namibian*, 1999, March 19).

Mpho Molepo (1999), executive secretary of the Southern African Theatre Initiative (SATI), claimed that post-independent governments in Africa paid lip service to the arts. Quoted by Philander in an article entitled *African Theatre Comes under the Microscope*, Molepo argued that artists were used by governments to celebrate important days but the artist never became a stakeholder. Ten years after independence that statement had more than a ring of truth for Namibian theatre makers.

In an opinion piece that Lazarus Jacobs wrote in *The Namibian* (1997, April 25, p. 4), he challenged the Department of Culture to stand up and define their priorities, to come up with concrete examples of what had been done with taxpayers' money to make Namibians proud of their "yet to be defined culture". He could not quite understand what was meant by a Namibian culture. When he looked at family photographs of a time before independence, he saw that their dress was the same as that worn by people around the world, namely bell bottom trousers and afro hairstyles. The music they listened to was the same as people in America or elsewhere and the dance moves that young people tried were those of Michael Jackson. So the question that he raised was whether those things were part of Namibian culture. No answers to this question were offered. However, this observation by Jacobs supported the argument by Junge (1993) that American cultural expression had become an accepted standard in some parts of the world, this country included. Namibia, as part of the global village, was not immune to outside influences. Hybridity was a reality and more than anything else defined cultural expression in the country.

He ended his article by warning that: "If we don't look into all these matters I believe we will remain the parents and children of an unfinished revolution" (p. 4). In a Boalian sense Jacobs was correct. For Boal and for Freire liberation from political oppression is not sufficient. The individual has to be released from shackles that bind him or her to ignorance and personal feelings of inferiority and oppression or in the words of Du Pisani (2000, p. 8): "Political liberation, while of primal importance, is not complete without cultural emancipation". For Freire there should be liberation of mind and imagination in order to start a process of individual and social transformation. If people like Jacobs expected to see an emancipated culture free of

foreign influences, it stands to reason that they would remain disappointed. The reality was more a case of hybridity becoming the norm and artists experiencing a structure of feeling where they felt free enough to engage with whatever forms they wished and to discard those that did not suit them. If, like in the case of Philander, he continued to use the signifiers of the oppressor, it is because he had taken ownership thereof. A play with a linear development, using lighting and sound effects and elaborate costumes was not foreign. Assimilation and hybridity shifted co-ownership to the postcolonial theatre maker.

The lack of a strong and official policy from the government for the promotion of the arts was seen as the reason for why the state of art and culture was still static so many years after independence. This was the opinion of Philander (1999). He noted that the scenario did not change significantly since independence although great things were expected “from many active promoters of arts and culture. This has already become a bone of contention and a great source of frustration for the artists” (p. 17). For him things were changing far too slowly to satisfy the real needs of the nation. In Vickson Hangula’s play *The show isn’t over until ...* published in *New Namibia Plays Volume 1* in 2000 the character Steve voiced the feeling of artists in general when he said:

We don’t even have a written culture policy document in this country. That is why our culture is left to the mercy of the rich and powerful to be destroyed and replaced with Euro-centric culture. They must stop calling that ministry ‘Ministry of Basic Education and Culture’ and just call it ‘Basic Education Ministry’. They can sack all the culture components for all I care. They are useless! (p. 26).

Philander saw it as a positive step when representative groups of people were brought together under the auspices of the government to discuss strategies for the future. However, according to

Philander “the important document that resulted from these many hours of deliberation is either gathering dust somewhere in the corridors of power or it has been forgotten” (1999).

Some of the deliberations that Philander referred to centred round the establishment of a National Arts Council that could handle many of the smaller concerns and problems that artists had to deal with. He reiterated that people in top positions in the arts were appointed on the basis of academic qualifications with nothing to offer to the arts practically. In fact, he considered them a hindrance more than a help in the promotion of arts in the country. He also felt that no real change had happened in the structures of the National Theatre and the College of the Arts. As far as he was concerned tokenism was rife and the few blacks at these institutions represented window dressing more than it did genuine change because management structures had not changed because there was no policy to guide transformation.

Another problem that theatre practitioners from the townships continued to face was the perception by Theatre Managers that their work was of an inferior or lesser quality. This was so because most actors were considered to be amateurs and because the Community Theatre tradition from which they came, had always been considered to be inferior in quality by mainstream theatre managers and audiences. Philander pointed out that these same theatre managers made use of the “amateur” performers when they themselves staged productions which they termed professional. These same performers were also called upon when the country had to be represented at some international forum. For the rest, the authorities and theatre management did nothing to develop these actors who had practiced their craft within the confines of their own communities for years. Responses from performers showed that there were deeply divided

opinions on what should be done to improve this state of affairs which was seen not to satisfy the needs and aspirations of theatre practitioners in general. What was obvious, however, is that ten years after independence some Namibian theatre makers had not reached the point where they could strike out independently and that they were blaming the NTN and empty promises by government for this.

4.3 Postcolonial Namibian theatre and the effects of cultural invasion

Paolo Freire (1993, p. 133) spoke about cultural invasion. He explained that it worked on the basis of manipulation in order to serve the interests of conquest. He cautioned that cultural invasion leads to the ‘inauthenticity’ of those invaded; they begin to respond to the values, standards and goals of the invader. The more the invaded mimics the invader, the stronger the position of the invader becomes. For cultural invasion to succeed, it is important for the invaded to become convinced of their inferiority. The resultant hybridity became an important point for postcolonial theorists like Homi Bhabha, Edward Said and others.

4.3.1 Euro-Namibians and the effects of cultural invasion

As was the case in other postcolonial African countries, the voice of the subaltern was not to emerge quite as speedily after independence as people might have wanted. During the period shortly after independence two dominant cultural forms of expression seem to have emerged in Namibia. Andre Strauss from the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (MBEC) and Leo Kenny (UNESCO) termed these “Euro-Namibian and African-Namibian” (*Kalabash*, 1992, p.

24). The Euro-Namibian expression had resulted from the predominant colonial European cultural forms which had the full backing of the South African administration before Namibia attained independence. Before independence the main promotional agent of these forms of cultural expression was the mass media, particularly radio, because the programmes were still based on the South African cultural standard. This would also be true for television in that it imported programs from South Africa and abroad as well as magazines with their decidedly Western content and values. Two years after independence this form of cultural expression still dominated in the majority of the newspapers and the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC). Strauss & Kenny proposed that many reasons could be put forward for this state of affairs still prevailing in 1992, inter alia:

- The fact that Namibians from European descent still dominated economic life and could therefore put money into those cultural endeavours they preferred;
- Many Euro-centred Namibians still believed in the superiority of European culture over African culture which suggested that, if Africans assimilated European cultural norms, values, practices and beliefs, they would become 'civilized, productive and would develop'. This patronizing attitude had become much stronger after independence (1992).

It would appear that Namibians, both black and white, who had internalized exclusively European cultural values, found it difficult to see, appreciate and participate in other cultural forms. Here one is reminded of Fanon's *Black Skin, White Mask* (1986). According to Fanon the native intellectual goes through a period of absolute assimilation. He or she feels the imperative to show evidence that they have absolutely assimilated the culture of the occupying power. One of the aims of colonial education was for the colonizing power to assimilate either a subaltern

native elite or larger population to its way of thinking and seeing the world. These elites are usually urban and this can explain why large swathes of a rural population can practice their lifestyles almost as if the colonizer were not there.

The critical stance that Namibian performers and critics, like Strauss and Kenny, took is based on the unrealistic expectation that a change of government would immediately lead to the disappearance of undesirable elements in institutions in a society. Structures of feeling are deep-seated and develop over time and because of many factors. Disassembling those would, of necessity, also take time. Namibians had been under foreign occupation so long that it was inevitable that assimilation of foreign elements would form part of their lived experiences. This is the cultural invasion that Paulo Freire (1993, p. 133) spoke of. The invaders' disrespect of the potentialities of the invaded cause them to impose their own view of the world on the invaded and they inhibit the creativity of the invaded by curbing their expression. In this process the invaded always face the threat of losing their originality. After independence there is an attempt at reclaiming that originality, but by then only fragments remain. As Freire indicated, the success of cultural invasion rests on the acceptance, by the invaded, of their position of inferiority and the superiority of the invader. This is made possible because, as Fanon (1986) argued, the colonised mind is one that has been convinced of its own inferiority and who seeks to be like the invader. Word of mouth 'evidence' and empty seats in the theatre in Windhoek commonly showed that the Euro-Namibians were quite convinced of the inferiority of locally produced works and in that sense the cultural invasion of the Apartheid regime was very successful.

Academics and administrators expressed the desire to develop a Namibian mode of expression but they did not keep in mind the pervasiveness of global culture, especially American. Hergen Junge (*Kalabash* 1993, (2), 28) pointed out that the dominance of American culture was not accidental. The US has the most sophisticated entertainment and info-tainment systems (programs that inform through highly entertaining media) and the most advanced distribution system worldwide. Namibians were exposed to those through the media. According to him many young people in Namibian towns were far more likely to emulate their international, especially American, idols than their rural relations.

However, not everybody was happy with this glut of American-made or American-themed fare that continued to be presented on public media after independence. In a letter to the editor published in *The Namibian* (1990, July 27) one T.J. Ramphaga expressed dissatisfaction with the programming on the national television broadcaster. S/he wrote that “we have had enough of American films and I know that I am not the only person who feels this” (p. 30). Ramphaga’s opinion was shared by David Lush. He noted that Namibia might be free but that Namibians were still being subjected to a form of colonialism “which some argue is more powerful than the SADF, PW Botha and Louis Pienaar combined” (*The Namibian*, 1990, July 27, p. 32), and that was cultural colonialism especially in the form of Western-made films on television and in film theatres. Steve Felton (1990) supported this view. He argued that since the independence process had been completed, Namibian people wanted to see films about Namibia (*The Namibian*, 1990, August 17, p. 8). Kees Epskamp (1989) made the observation that the influence of big media like television and the press was perceived as an increasing threat to the cultural identity of large parts of the Third world population, “partly because the form and content of the programmes

were imported from other more dominant cultures” (p.161). In Namibia this continued exposure to Western programs could be explained by the fact that the media were still controlled by the so-called Euro-Namibians. Television, which reached a smaller proportion of the nation, primarily used imported material in 1993. Funding that could have gone to local artists to produce indigenous material, went towards paying for foreign products. It would appear that media houses had no faith that Namibian-produced programs would be of broadcast standard. In 1993 they may have been right. The limiting education that was foisted on the majority in the country would have left them ill-prepared for such work.

According to Junge (1993, p. 29) township culture had often been in the forefront of the liberation struggle and national development by producing militant and unified forms of cultural self-expression and this township culture deserved enthusiastic support. The reality, however, was quite different. In the new dispensation those community cultural activists were the ones who found it most difficult to access the means to make their work possible. The NTN, like the media, continued to import and local theatre makers worked on projects with NGO's and other donor bodies while they waited for the theatre to form a resident company. The autochthonous Namibian expression remained part of the rural situation and event-specific practices like weddings, baptisms, harvest festivals and the like and practitioners of traditional culture continued as they did before. They were perhaps least subjected to cultural invasion.

City dwellers were considered the ruling elite and the decision-makers who desired to be modern and who enjoyed the amenities of modernization and who thus became wrapped up in the global society (Junge, 1993). For this reason, Swartz (1993) contended that they saw locally produced

culture as inferior and nationalistic attempt to promote it, tedious. This all translated into less money available for local productions. Audiences became smaller because those who could afford ticket prices stayed away from local productions and flocked to imported performances.

4.3.2 The African-Namibian position

The second dominant cultural form that Strauss & Kenny (1992, p. 25) identified was what they called African-Namibian culture. Although this was a very common cultural manifestation, it was much less visible and underdeveloped by Western standards. This underdevelopment was the result of erstwhile deliberate social engineering which manifested itself on the level of serious lack of physical infrastructure and a low level of human resources, especially skills development. It is important to keep in mind that African-Namibian and Euro-Namibian as concepts did not refer to black and white but to a world view and socialization.

The most visible part of the African-Namibian cultural expression was embodied, especially during the years leading up to independence, in the culture of resistance. In popular parlance, this had been referred to as ‘popular’, ‘people’s’, ‘grassroots’ or anti-colonial culture (1992, p. 25). This culture had become part of the daily lives of the majority of people living in the impoverished locations all over Namibia. Because of the deliberate dismissal of the largest part of African-Namibian culture by the Euro-Namibians, some cultural practitioners later started to call it the ‘unknown *status quo*’ (Behrens, 1991, p. 59).

A major contributory factor to the dismissal of the work of African-Namibians was a conviction of the superiority of Western culture over African culture. Power positions in the Euro-Namibian cultural institutions like theatre directors, gallery owners and media houses were still predominantly filled with Euro-Namibians, irrespective of colour. In 1992 when Strauss made these comments, he was already employed by the new government as Deputy Director of Culture and as such may have been in a position of power, with government money at his disposal, to make a difference to the situation of the African-Namibians. However, Zeeman remarked as late as 2000 (p. vi) that the artists found that they could not automatically access the structures as easily as they thought they could and that people in government positions did not significantly facilitate such access.

In an interview in Windhoek on the 2nd of July 2012, Strauss reacted that the government could indeed have made a difference but in line with the policy of national reconciliation, it was not prepared to “replace one racism with another” (sic). They were also not prepared to repeat the racist practices of Apartheid by automatically appointing ‘black’ people into managerial positions when they lacked competence and skills or favouring them in a monetary way. Another factor that had to be kept in mind was the shortage of skills at that point. It would be counter-productive to replace managers purely on the basis that they were white. After all, they were Namibian citizens too. But, according to Strauss, the main reason for government non-intervention was that the Namibian government particularly did not want to encourage a state controlled culture. The government wanted to create a “conducive environment” for artists to flourish in. When asked why artists did not flourish, he commented that it was because they lacked an entrepreneurial spirit; that they suffered from a dependency syndrome. This researcher

was unable to get Strauss to elaborate on what this “conducive environment” was. He did, however, indicate that 90% of all funds for culture was spent in Windhoek but he was not prepared to commit himself on what the monetary value of the 90% was or what it was used for.

It was the general consensus that, without the Euro-Namibian institutions (like theatres, arts galleries, sports clubs, the media, etcetera) transforming themselves in a meaningful way to serve the Africans, they would continue to function on the basis of empty promises of more possibilities when the African-Namibians insisted on a meaningful share of the cake. The artists’ response to comments like these by Strauss was that, as a government official he was shifting responsibility. It was acknowledged that theatre structures had to be transformed but the relevant Ministry had to be involved in that transformation. The College of the Arts is a government institution, therefore the government should have taken the lead in any restructuring process and Strauss, as a Deputy Director in the ministry concerned with the culture, should have been in the forefront of such restructuring. Although the National Theatre was an Article 21 company and semi-autonomous, it received a sizable grant-in-aid from the government and as such the Ministry had a right and an obligation to lead the transformation process. To this researcher it appears that the inaction on the side of government could, once again, be linked to the absence of a policy on the arts. During the years after independence the government just did not have concrete plans for restructuring. It is natural that there would be a period of stocktaking to work out the way forward, but the artists were impatient.

The urban theatre makers were of the opinion that Strauss, as an activist during the Apartheid era, should have been well aware of the difficulties that grassroots performers faced. He came

from the same structure of feeling that motivated the work in the townships. When he entered the government of Namibia he was in a good position to help promote policies and structures that could have assisted these performers to integrate into the mainstream. However, for reasons explained above namely, that the government did not wish to encourage a state-controlled culture and dependency syndrome, this did not happen. It therefore seems strange that he should be so outspoken about the influence and dominance of the 'Euro-Namibians' when, in his capacity as Deputy Director of Culture, he could have curtailed that dominance or at the least have provided the grassroots performers with the means to resist or overcome such dominance.

Julius Eichbaum (1993) argued that the term Euro-centric was often used to make white southern Africans feel uncomfortable, but in effect it meant the arts of the rest of the Western world. He also noted that those people who complained about Euro-centric art were "not exactly dressed in tribal cloth, nor do they live in mud huts or ride around in donkey carts" (p. 1). It seemed that Western culture was embraced in all other spheres of life except the arts. Postcolonial studies place great emphasis on text and discourses, but it neglected the more material aspects of lived experiences such as food and clothing. Intercultural communication and learning are also later aspects of discussion in the theory. This refers back to Eichbaum's comment about the selective application of postcolonial criticisms. By the time a country becomes independent, the hybridity and cultural invasion are so complete that discussions thereof happen only amongst academics. Not one of the urban theatre makers spoken to by this researcher reflected on the influence of the colonizer's culture on their own work. For them Eurocentric meant that which was performed in the National Theatre and for them to use the signs, conventions and methods of the coloniser was

not classed under the same criticism. They used Western scriptwriting conventions, without thought of how they came by them because those were the only ones that they knew.

4.3.3 **Retaining the pre-independence *status quo* or moving forward**

The productions in the NTN after independence in 1990 still largely reflected the realities as they existed before independence. During 1992 the NTN presented Soli Philander, an imported South African production, as well as Mees Xteen's production of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, amongst others, while the work of Frederick Philander was shown at the Warehouse Theatre. The implication being that the productions that drew larger audiences were housed at the theatre while those that were expected not to interest the traditional NTN audience base, were relegated to the more informal Warehouse Theatre.

Andre Strauss (*Kalabash* 1993, (2) 2) felt that, for some, the policy of Reconciliation meant the retention of the *status quo*. During this period, especially the first three years after independence, the community of artists in Namibia would find themselves constantly frustrated because of the sentiment expressed by Strauss. In the same publication Edward Ndopu explained that "despite the government's ceaseless efforts at 'affirmative action' aimed at redressing the disadvantaged lot of African-Namibians by giving them equal opportunity, Namibian society essentially remains unequal and unintegrated (sic)" (1993, p. 21). He further argued that for most African-Namibians life remained a daunting challenge. Many of them had become dangerously disillusioned. This disillusionment would grow stronger in the years to come. Ndopu felt that the "colonial hang-over" and the continuing reluctance to integrate at a deeper level, also dictated

that events in post-independent Namibia were still regarded from what was the view of the economically dominant Euro-Namibian minority community (1993, p. 25).

This perceived retention of the *status quo* was highlighted during a court case between the State and Cultura 2000. The latter was a group set up by the pre-independence Administration for Whites to promote European culture in Namibia (*The Namibian*, 1992, June 11, p. 1). Three weeks before the declaration of independence the South African administrator in Namibia, Louis Pienaar, converted a R 4 million loan that Cultura 2000 had with the government into a donation. This was in excess of a previous R 4 million that Cultura 2000 had already received from the government. In December 1991 the new government passed the State Repudiation (Cultura 2000) Act in an attempt to reclaim the money, other immovable property and all assets from Cultura 2000 without any compensation, because Cultura 2000 was described as an Apartheid organization that promoted the concerns of one group only, namely the whites (1992). In a judgement delivered on the 10th of June 1992, the High Court ruled that the State Repudiation (Cultura 2000) Act was unconstitutional and Cultura 2000 was allowed to keep the money given to it by the former Administration for Whites. In 1993 the Namibian government launched an appeal against this verdict, and in his submission Sydney Kentridge, QC, expressed concern because “Cultura 2000’s affidavits were ‘curiously’ silent over what had become of the major part of the R8 million” (*The Namibian*, 1993, April 6, p. 1). This is one incident that demonstrates how people’s expectations and due process were often at odds after independence. Some interpreted the court ruling as a retention of pre-independence *status quo* where whites were seen to ‘get away with things.’ There was the general expectation that Cultura 2000 would be instructed to hand over all their assets to the new government. However, due process in law

ruled otherwise. While there was outrage that they could keep the money, the court ruling was reassuring to many Namibians who were concerned that the structures in society should not crumble after the new government took over. The independence of the judiciary is an important cornerstone of a stable society.

In an opinion piece published in *The Namibian* (1990, July 27) Frederick Philander voiced what he considered to be another stumbling block for the erstwhile informal artists and a reason why the *status quo* remained. He expressed the concern that academic qualifications kept a number of worthy candidates out of decision-making positions in the cultural field. He was particularly concerned that academics were the ones promoting arts and culture when they were not actively involved in the production side of performances. His opinion was that:

Many of those (academics) who are promoting arts and culture had theoretical knowledge but no real artistic inclination or practical experience for such jobs, with the result that no really progressive or innovative programmes could be launched on a consistent basis (1990, p. 32).

What compounded the situation for him was that, as he said, “many of those so-called ‘qualified’ culture experts were in many ways out of touch with the cultural aspirations of the REAL people” (1990, p. 32). He felt that these same people acted as “agents in the previous era” (1990) in the fields of theatre and culture. According to him they represented an evil system and that they still manifested the same attitudes in a different way in the post-independence environment. Philander did not elaborate on who these people were, but intimated that they knew who they were. Zeeman supported the concern by Philander when, in 1992, he contended that: “the debate about culture (was) still largely confined to those art-ists whose full-time occupation (was) to comment on the arts, not generate the arts” (p. 35). Other than his concern about academics usurping the grassroots

theatre, Philander felt that 'people's theatre' was on a sound footing and with the proper support, could take its rightful place in the promotion of a genuine national culture. As time passed, this euphoric edge would wear off and Philander would revise this sentiment.

In 1993 Global Posse and Wake Up Productions, with the aid of NORAD, presented what they called a Theatre Laboratory under the title *Towards Professional Theatre in Namibia*. The aim of the meeting was, amongst others, to reflect on what had been achieved in the arts since independence and to try and map out the future. All the major role players in the arts fields were represented. Many of these people indicated, on behalf of their institutions, what should be done to develop professional theatre in Namibia.

It was agreed at the meeting that the Apartheid era succeeded in altering and suppressing traditional forms of art and culture in Namibia while highlighting the art and culture of a minority and "an alien culture" (Global Posse, 1993, p. 3). The task following colonialism was then to redefine art and culture in terms of the majority of Namibians, "to create challenging initiatives that will involve rural and urban communities, and encourage the development of methods that will promote the expression in Namibia" (p. 3).

It was also acknowledged that the development of arts and culture had not kept pace with other sectors of development and that the National Arts Initiative should support a development programme which integrates economic, political, social, cultural and educational growth. The meeting accepted that three years after independence art and culture policies in Namibia still had not been developed and that pre-colonial structures and resources remained at the disposal of "a

few privileged without clear direction on reaching the majority, and ideal and sufficient conditions have yet to be articulated by a broad base of artists” (p. 3).

Although it was accepted that theatre as a tool is diverse and can be applied to a variety of contexts and that it had been used extensively as a vehicle during the liberation struggle, theatre in Namibia at the time faced many challenges to promote itself. The consensus seems to have been that for theatre in Namibia to grow strong, it had to become a tool for development and a vehicle to promote ways of community empowerment and social change. What these theorizers lost sight of was that theatre in the townships had been used for that purpose for years before independence and that theatre makers were looking for development and not retrogression.

Theatre was also singled out as having to play a key role in the development of culture within the country, as though there was no culture or culture was underdeveloped. The fact is that the rural areas had a long history of cultural expression and there were performances in the townships but, like the oppressor before them, the participants in this meeting gave the impression that those did not count. The contributors to these discussions were primarily from government, tertiary institutions, national television and a few township theatre makers. In retrospect, and with a better understanding of postcolonial theories, one realizes how most of these participants still spoke from a position of power as representatives of organizations that were strong under Apartheid and continued to be so. The idealistic and “what should be” approaches had no basis in the reality on the ground. What was discussed fairly extensively were visions of what had to be done, strategies that theatre groups could employ to best prepare them for their development role, but hardly anything was said about how theatre was to be assisted materially or otherwise.

What was clear from the outcomes of the discussions was that the onus was largely on the drama practitioners to find the means by which to make their work possible. Strauss, as representative of the Ministry of Education and Culture, stressed that money available to government for arts and culture was very limited and that performers had to explore other ways of raising performance capital. How the artists were to acquire the necessary skills to do what Strauss proposed was not explained. What was particularly disappointing for the artists was the fact that only 8% of the government grant-in-aid, in excess of R900 000.00, paid to the National Theatre at the time was used for productions. 70% went to salaries and 22% to maintenance which left 8% for the core function of the theatre. It dawned on them that the NTN did not have money to sustain a resident company and this realization was very demoralizing. Hybridity and cultural invasion left theatre makers at that point with the desire to do the kind of work that the NTN presented, the same kind of work that had been criticized as Euro-centric because they knew what filled the theatre.

Ted Scott (1993) from the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) reinforced what Strauss said about finances. He argued that the number of people in Namibia, who had money to sponsor things, was in the minority and he urged local drama groups to negotiate and build trust with private people and organizations, even if it meant applying for bank loans. The reader is here reminded of what Zeeman said in 2000 (p. vi) that the artists who were now radically relocated to the centre of cultural reform – the previously disenfranchised, marginalised and oppressed – must witness that relocation without being given the tools to negotiate terms themselves. These artists never had access to the funding or the funding mechanisms, yet it was now required of them to build a theatre culture in the country, using their wits to fund their activities. This was

not new to the artists as it had been that way during the liberation struggle, but they had been promised a more generous funding approach by the then incumbent government. It perhaps also did not occur to Scott that these artists did not have any collateral to offer a financial institution in order to obtain a loan. If they did, they may have applied for loans to acquire housing or to help support their families and themselves. Under these conditions it was difficult for them to move forward.

In the meantime, no steps had been taken to educate artists in the intricacies of funding application but it was expected of them to find their way in the donor body/private sector/government funding maze. Many of them could not master the bureaucracy. It was stated by Scott and Strauss that the creation of a theatre culture by artists was needed in order to promote theatre in the country. Artists were urged to present “a clearly thought out agenda regarding direction, alleviating obstacles, and creating input to develop and sustain itself” (p. 28). They were also strongly advised to make concerted efforts to consider fundamental issues before producing a play and to explore alternative and innovative ways of making theatre work in the country despite all the obstacles. This was expected of the artists at a time when government itself had not managed to present the artists with a clearly thought out agenda, there was no direction from government, no plans were presented as to alleviating obstacles or of creating input to develop and sustain the arts in the country. The artists were asked to, and they were prepared to work at strengthening the performance culture in the country. However, the assistance that they needed to do that was not forthcoming.

It has to be remembered that the amateur/grassroots performance corps in the country before and just after independence came from disenfranchised communities. Many did not have the educational background and certainly not the social connections to facilitate access to funds. As Wabei Siyolwe pointed out at the same forum:

There are no professional actors in Namibia because no unions or constitutions exist for performing arts. Actors usually have other day jobs (if they are lucky) that provide their income and just ‘moonlight’ when it comes to acting (p. 22).

The matter of setting up a theatre in Katutura, the major township in the capital, was discussed during the meeting. A large percentage of Windhoek actors lived in Katutura but they had to come into town to try and find rehearsal venues, equipment and other infrastructure to stage their plays. In the end these plays were not seen by their intended audience living in the townships, once again denying a majority of people access to theatre because of the distances they had to travel to get to performance venues.

In 2004 Zeeman observed that:

As independence approached, disadvantaged black artists expected the state-sponsored arts institutions to be transformed radically by refocusing their Eurocentric pedagogical and production biases. They expected the post-independence reparation to take the form of continued, generous state subsidies, redirected in transparent and accessible ways to the constituency that had contributed to the struggle most vigorously (p. 24).

Literature shows that this was not an unrealistic expectation given the utterances by a SWAPO spokesperson. In 1989 Nguno Wakolele, a member of the returning Ndilimani troupe and cultural adviser to Hage Geingob, SWAPO’s election director, was quoted in *The Namibian* (1989, August, 4) as follows:

The Namibian people have a golden opportunity to form a national culture . . . once SWAPO is in power, the government will continue to allocate resources to arts and culture. There will be a fair distribution of resources (p. 6).

Theatre makers discovered soon enough that these intentions would not be realized and that led to a sense of disillusionment and discontent.

4.4 Chapter summary

During the period 1985 to independence there were at least two perceptible structures of feeling in Namibia: one informed by the culture of the oppressor and the other informed by the oppressed population's response to that. From the side of the MEC the period immediately after independence seems to have been a time of planning and brainstorming of what should be done. Many of the ideas that germinated during this period would only bear fruit much later.

The years immediately after independence saw Namibian performers looking to government to pronounce itself on the arts and to get policies in place. This did not happen. As far as policy formation is concerned, most of the proclamations appear to have been more of a framework than a concrete plan of action. There were definite objectives, some of which had been carried out especially in the fields of literacy, copyright matters and reaching out to the regions for cultural activities. What is advertised as a policy was the Ministry's aim of building unity in diversity and embarking on a true Namibian national culture. The Ministry admitted (1994) that the transitional phase had been a challenging one. In the meantime the artists were becoming impatient at what they perceived to be a slow progress towards the formulation of a policy. The theatre makers were growing increasingly impatient with the NTN whom they saw as the

institution responsible for theatre development in the country. At the same time, the NTN continued to experience its own problems in its relationship with the government.

The result of the fact that there was no policy document was that there could not then be systematic planning and development of the arts until the government clarified for itself its philosophy to arts expression and the development of the arts in Namibia. It was important for the artists to know what the parameters were within which they could possibly and reasonably hope for assistance and how they may have communicated and interacted with government on a consistent and sustainable manner to build the arts in Namibia. As mentioned before, there have been many improvements since that time.

In 2001 Cabinet was presented with a draft policy. The research did not show that this draft was ever approved. It did, however reveal that in 2014 there was an urgent attempt to get a policy in place. While the Directorate of Arts claimed that the 2001 draft was a policy all the theatre makers that this researcher spoke to right up to the present were under the impression that the policy in existence was a draft and, as it turned out, they were right. It is therefore clear that the channels of communication between the artists and the Ministry need urgent attention. As the major role player in arts development funding, the government had the task of informing the nation's artists about its stance with respect to arts development. That would have gone a long way towards clearing up wrong impressions and perceptions about what the government is or is not doing to strengthen arts development in the country. The establishment of the Namibian Arts Council has already alleviated some of the problems that artists grappled with during the period of this research.

The South African Commission of Inquiry (1984, p. 55) acknowledged that Government assistance for the arts is an accomplished fact throughout the Western world. It also pointed out that appreciation of the arts will never become part of the general societal pattern of life if it does not become part of the general pattern of schooling in the country. In the same way knowledge of the arts will never really become part of the daily life of the public if the government, at all levels, does not effectively create the right climate for this. This researcher is therefore very grateful that, at the present (2015), government is working towards the reintroduction of the arts into the school curricula in Namibian schools.

This researcher trusts that the reintroduction will be accompanied by a sincere and in-depth study of what is really needed in the country rather than try to perpetuate preconceived ideas of creating a national culture unless the discourse around what a national culture is, is revisited. Achebe (1990) described a national culture as: “the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify, and praise the action by which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence” (p. 9). He felt that the only place where culture was static was in a museum and “the museum is not an African institution” (2000). Du Pisani (2000) cautioned that war is the enemy of humankind. He contended that: “Collective violence transforms the perceptions, the victims and the societies in which it occurs. It reconfigures the body, the psyche, and the cultural landscape” (p. 12). Many Namibians experienced the bitter results of the border war and the effect on the collective psyche is an important consideration. As Du Pisani stated: “The psychological impact of war, too, is being reflected in the narrative and images of artists” (2000). It would therefore be unrealistic to pursue a ‘national culture’ that did not take

cognisance of the lived experiences, past and present, of individuals within the national body. It is not too late for all role players to take heed of Du Pisani's point that colonisation was a multifarious process and that the decolonisation process should be marked by clear focus and vigorous public discourse (2000).

Naturally government is not the sole responsible body for the growth and development of arts in the country, but as in all spheres of governance, it has a responsibility to create an environment that is conducive to growth. Strauss claimed that such a conducive environment had been created yet the artists disagreed with him. Even in instances where finances are available, many artists from the growing informal sectors still do not have the tools and do not understand the intricacies of accessing funds.

The Directorates of Arts and Culture, in line with the Government policy of reconciliation, tried to revive autochthonous Namibian culture while, at the same time, give continued support to forms of theatre that proved popular before independence and continued to do so after. The concern of the previously disadvantaged artists to have greater access to the means to produce their work and the expectation of skills training and empowering people all seem to have met with limited or no success. Unsurprisingly the hope of establishing a unique African/Namibian cultural identity did not materialize while the formal theatre elements continued to operate largely with private sector and foreign financing as well as some government support.

The opinions of performers in the capital is that it is important for the Directorate of Culture officials to transcend their colonial hang-overs and to acknowledge that Namibia is part of a

global community where many different strands influence the creative output of Namibian artists. There is a place for the artists who wish to practice traditional forms just as there is a place for those who wish to explore new and different ways of creativity. It would help if policymakers acknowledged the role of the artists as chroniclers of the development or lack thereof, of Namibian society. The image of the struggling artist has become almost endemic in this country, largely based on the fact that before independence there was hardly any assistance for grassroots performers and that, unfortunately, that situation did not change significantly in the ten years after independence.

In the years immediately after independence, and continuing to the end of the decade, artists from the previously disadvantaged sector had to face new demands, such as how to access the means to make their art; whether elements of protest theatre should continue to feature in performances and, with the breakdown of groups like Bricks, where to align themselves in order to find work. Likewise, institutions from the previously advantaged sector also had to face new demands, such as how to make the arts, theatre in particular, more accessible to a wider audience; to produce work that is relevant to a wider audience; how to integrate performers from the 'informal' sector and how to position their work with minimal funding and without clear policy directives from the government who was its main sponsor.

Neither the government, nor its institutions or individuals have managed to establish any trend that could be considered a national cultural expression. Artistic work during this time was marked by diversity and the continuation of the struggles of the artists to survive and make a meaningful contribution to the growth of theatre in the country. This should, however, not be

seen as a period of stasis. The artists remained vocal in their calls for government to show leadership and some projects that were initiated during this time, only came to fruition after 2000.

In newly independent states the governments usually seek, against all rational thought, a clear cultural image or national cultural identity. What is propagated by a government as a national cultural heritage does not always resonate as such with the broader society, especially in countries like Namibia with many language groupings. In Namibia the response from government largely revolved around a 'going back to our roots' approach. Michael Etherton (1975) talked about an urban pop culture which has developed in cities, often a mixture of traditional and new elements. Unfortunately, in most independent African countries the perceived authenticity of an ancient culture, and not a Western-influenced approach, is considered the norm for artistic value, particularly by those in officialdom. Woyle Soyinka, for example, did not allow this idealization of pre-independence in his work. It was understood that no miracles could be expected from independence, just as the past had been no paradise (Schipper, (1982).

However, the National Theatre of Namibia and the Ministry of Education and Culture made concerted efforts to strengthen traditional performance modes. Johannes Tjito (1992), the MEC cultural officer in charge of the Namibian National Cultural Troupe (NANACUT), cautioned that Namibia, as a young developing nation, should learn from the mistakes of other African countries, "so that, instead of being hypnotised by the glittering civilization, must embark on a journey back to its roots" (p. 28). For this to happen he believed that government should

formulate policies to guide the process of decolonising the minds of Namibians. He believed that being in touch with its roots, the nation could throw off the yoke of mental oppression. That those roots have receded so far into the mists of the past as to be mostly invisible was never considered.

While in exile SWAPO expressed itself on the role of arts and the artist. It was felt that the arts had an ideological function and that was why Ndilimani was such a valued entity during the liberation struggle. Their repertoire showed how the cultural activist could successfully transmit the ideology of the resistance movement while, at the same time, ensure the continuation of a Namibian cultural expression for those in exile. The liberation movement believed that “political independence and economic freedom are the indispensable prerequisites for fecund cultural development” (p. 9). While political independence had been attained, economic freedom was still a distant mirage for many Namibians. Thus the second “indispensable prerequisite(s)” for “fecund cultural development” had not been attained which may explain the many problems which artists still experienced in the country by 1999. The uniquely Namibian mode of expression that was sought by people like Behrens after independence did not materialize. Theatre may have retrograded to some extent in the sense that communities that were exposed to the work of grassroots activists before independence, no longer had these performances in their communities as most of the active performance fraternity tried to show their work in mainstream venues. Many years later, by 2010, Philander once again showed his work in a school hall in Khomasdal.

The following chapter attempts to trace the unfolding of theatre in the country by looking specifically at the work of theatre practitioners: Bricks, Frederick Philander and Aldo Behrens.

CHAPTER 5

Theatre makers

5.1 Introduction

At the time when this research applies, the Namibian population totaled just over 1 million, most of who lived in the rural areas. For those who lived in the rural areas performance in the form of storytelling, song and dance was a natural part of their lived experience and life rhythms. The concept of theatre, however, was still a foreign concept. People in urban areas, on the other hand, were exposed to performances of drama in church or school halls and in the theatre. It is natural that, of such a small population, many of whom were illiterate, only a very small percentage would be involved in the theatre making process. Namibia did not experience the scale of theatre making experienced in South Africa, for example. Therefore, the canon to draw from for research is small. While the research is centred in the capital and focuses on the work of Bricks, Philander and Behrens, they were not the only ones producing theatre. However, they operated long enough to leave a legacy that can be researched. Behrens could be seen as representative of the formal side, those who received funds and support from government; Bricks represents donor supported collective community efforts generally and Philander represents a private initiative with a communal consciousness. These theatre makers also challenged the inappropriate silence about the colonized people in the Western canon by writing plays about the subaltern even though, as in Philander's work, the protagonists are more anti-hero than hero. This may have been a commentary about how independence did not really change the material conditions of the population at large.

The majority, if not all, the performers who worked in informal theatre were active in community drama in their schools or with groups before independence. They thus came from a tradition of Protest and Community Theatre. These were people who were involved with groups like Bricks and Committed Artists of Namibia (CAN). CAN did not then, and still does not have a permanent acting company in which these actors could find permanent employment. After independence Bricks aligned itself with the Namibian Non-Governmental Organizations' Federation (NANGOF) and largely focused on their other community empowerment projects. Those performers who used to find work with Bricks also now had to look elsewhere or slot in with new programs. The performers, however, wanted to continue acting. They were hoping that the NTN might establish a resident company. It did not happen. They started playing amongst themselves. Those who could write, penned some plays and friends came together to perform them. These productions are important because they provided the continuity in the Namibian theatre culture that would otherwise be lacking.

This research found that the structures of feeling that underpinned the work in the townships was different from that governing the work of the National Theatre and to some degree that of the Academy. Holdsworth (2010) noted that the vast majority of theatre practices that engage with the nation, "directly or obliquely, respond to moments of rupture, crisis or conflict" (p. 6). At these transitional moments in the history of Namibia, especially before independence, the lived experience of the quality of life in a township was not the same as an inner city suburb although life happened at the same time in the same country. The divisions caused by political influences in Namibia were so great at the time that the two groups may well have been in different places and this is most clearly articulated, particularly in artistic forms and conventions used by

Behrens on the one side and Bricks on the other. As Holdsworth observed, theatre opens up a creative space for “exploring paradoxes, ambiguities and complexities around issues of tradition, identity, authenticity and belonging associated with the nation” (p. 7). Before independence the nation was fractured due the South African policy of divide and rule. If one of the descriptors of nation is as a marker of identity and belonging, that identity and belonging in Namibia were linked closer with tribe and ethnicity than with nation.

Raymond Williams (1981) contended that cultural forms have to be seen as “disguised” (p. 126) social processes. Everything is to be gained by their “serious recognition as social processes; moreover as social processes of a highly significant and valuable kind” (p. 126). There is therefor much to be gained in a study of the plays written and performed during the period as a way of understanding broader social processes affecting specific groups within that specific period and place. The personal, individual experiences are informed by collective, historical modalities of the social, therefor the practical experiences of the playwrights would inform on society’s response to historic forces. Neither history, nor one’s response to it is ever complete, creating meaning is a continuous process. Williams (1969) believed that society is not complete until the literature of that society has been written. This research is in agreement with Holdsworth (2010) that theatre has the potential for universal resonance across time, but that it speaks most potently to the historical moment of its inception.

In discussing the selected theatre makers the emphasis will be on the extent to which plays reflected the structures of feeling and attempts to engage with the socio-political reality of the situation in the country. What were the visions, concerns and motivations behind theatre-making? What were the impulses that led to theatre making? Except for one example, play scripts for Bricks could not be located. The research thus analysed published records of the productions and statements by Bricks members. This resulted in a discussion more of what Bricks stood for rather than an analysis of all the plays they performed. Schipper (1982) observed that the distinction between literary theatre and popular theatre was becoming more marked. On the one hand there were plays being published that were never performed while on the other hand many productions have never been offered to a publisher. An important question to ask is at whom the theatre is aimed and that may explain why performance texts do not reach a publisher.

5.2 Windhoek Players/Committed Artists of Namibia

The group, the Windhoek Players, was established by Frederick Philander in 1979. The word 'players' is a bit of a misnomer because the only permanent and constant member of the group was Philander himself. Different people joined him for differing periods of time and some were co-opted for specific productions. Philander claimed (2002) that most Namibian actors, playwrights and directors had their debut through the activities of this organization which was later renamed Committed Artists of Namibia. In later years Felicity Celento became the other permanent member of the group. The group performed fairly regularly although they had no venue of their own and no definite financial backing for a long time. Their only income was

through ticket sales. Philander had full-time employment outside the theatre and did not rely on his performance activity for a livelihood.

In his publication *The Namibian Theatre Movement* (2002) Frederick Philander dealt exclusively with his own work. An uninformed reader may well reach the conclusion, given the title of the publication, that his was the only theatrical activity in Namibia. Philander claimed that the Community Theatre Movement in Namibia started in 1979 when he arrived in Namibia from Beaufort West in the Cape, with the main aim being to “activate, conscientise, inform and enlighten people on the multiple socio-political problems of the then ethnic-devided (sic) society by means of theatre” (2002, p. 2). He concluded that “with the exception of the conventional colonial theatre practiced by the then South-West African Arts Council, theatre was non existing (sic)” (2002, p. 2). This is a statement which was disputed by Andre Strauss, Deputy Director of culture in the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (2009). As Leon Beukes (1991) claimed, theatre had always been part of the Namibian fabric, be it schools’ performances or the plays staged by church communities. Strauss explained that a distinction should be made between three types of theatre namely: commercial theatre, conventional theatre forms using community themes and community theatre which works directly with communities and voice the current concerns of the communities. He felt that Philander’s work resorted under the second category.

During his early years in theatre Philander staged the work of South African playwright Adam Small and later the work of Athol Fugard. When he wrote his own plays, he made use of the same format, with actors on one side delivering their performance and the audience on the other side, receiving the message. The way Strauss understood community theatre to be, the

community should be actively involved in all stages of the production and in the end, become what Augusto Boal (1979) referred to as spect-actors. Matusse (1999) described this format used by Philander as a legacy of the colonial rule. He asserted that “the curtain rose on Western theatre (in Africa) with the arrival of colonial rule” and it did not leave at the end of the occupation (p. 7). Characteristic of this form of theatre was the use of halls, scripts, directors and an array of effects of which the monetary was an important one. This type of theatre had to be purchased by the audience in contrast to pre-colonial forms that had no purpose-built venues and were offered to the community for free.

Philander found that a lot of preparatory work had to be done to get ‘Black people’ interested and involved in something that was relatively new to the local indigenous culture. What Philander failed to point out was that it was the Western approach to theatre that may have been new, as well as the concept of theatre *per se*. Performance was not new and the ‘Black people’ referred to by Philander had a long and rich history of performance.

However, he claimed that, once the ground work had been done, positive reaction followed from individuals who showed passion, flair and determination to expose the ‘Black man’s’ plight through theatre under Apartheid rule. For Philander his characters had to tell the story of what it was like to be the subject of colonialism. He asserted that “in essence it was a creative move to counter the colonial-political influence” (2002, p. 2). Philander echoed, perhaps not by choice, the sentiment of the SWAPO cultural office when he said that “theatre was used as a tool for political emancipation (sic) of the hearts and minds of the people, particularly whites who were ignorant of the hopes, dreams and aspirations of Blacks” (2002, p. 3). How this was to be

achieved is not explained since the plays were performed away from white audiences and those who came, by Philander's own admission, were a few "white liberals" (2009). According to Philander his performances were 'issue related' expressions by the underprivileged section of the Black community. Although Philander echoed SWAPO's views on culture, he was not affiliated to SWAPO.

Philander felt strongly that the impact and influence of Community Theatre on education, culture and economics had for too long been underestimated by those in power, both in the past and the present. The present here refers to 2002 when his book was published. In his experience many groups and individuals suffered under the oppressive system due to their steadfast adherence to their principles and this was to a large extent reflected in the unwillingness of the private sector to assist initiatives by 'Blacks'. What this implied was that the artists would not compromise their beliefs to meet the prescriptions of the donor bodies. Behrens' play dealing with the same issue is titled *Affirmations/Get the donors on your side* (unpublished). This perceived lack of support is a matter that continues to recur throughout the period covered by this research.

As far as this research could establish Philander often approached the private sector for funding, with little success. Documentation of these exchanges was not preserved and the researcher has to rely on verbal testimony. Good governance of the groups did not seem to be a criterion for funding or support. The mere fact that the political and social dispensation at the time did not favour the oppressed was reason enough not to support 'black' cultural activities. Added to this was the fact that these grassroots groups did not conform to what Strauss & Kenny (1992) described as Euro-Namibian perceptions of 'high art'. The quality of their work was always

suspect. During this period Philander did not seek government financial support. Schauffer commented (2009) that: “undoubtedly the most remarkable feature of Philander’s enterprise is his fierce sense of artistic and financial independence. His approach remains never to accept government arts grants” (p. 2). He also did not want donor money because as far as he was concerned:

These foreigners came with their donor money and they selected and divided us. We refused that money from the outset. We want our dignity. We don’t want to be kept hostage, culturally, for the rest of our lives. Being independent, if we want to criticise the government in a play, we do so. We owe them nothing because they give us nothing (Schauffer, 2009, p. 2).

Much later, in 2004 Philander, however, did accept foreign money because, as he said: “There are no conditions attached to the funding from the American Cultural Centre and the Franco-Namibian Cultural Centre” (2009, p. 9). Philander (2012) gave as an example the sponsorship that he received from Pescanova Fishing Company to illustrate this point. According to him Pescanova funded some of his work unconditionally in 1992. He also told of an instance where he declined a very sizable sponsorship because the sponsor wanted him to include content that he was not willing to add. Philander was determined to remain true to his convictions in the work that he produced and the manner in which he produced it. During the time when he did not accept donor funding, Philander relied on door takings.

Philander summed up the contribution of Community Theatre, in this case referring to his own work, as follows:

over the years community theatre uncompromisingly exposed, poked fun at, informed, educated and enlightened the Namibian people on different levels and through many forms of theatre; grass roots, community, etc. In this regard many practitioners were seen as cultural activists with a mission. Some were politically vulnerable and were taken advantage of.

Others stood firm, maintained their independence, integrity and are still pursuing their theatrical hopes and dreams as cultural combatants (2002, p. 2).

Philander did in fact make history when, in 1979, he performed, by special concession, Adam Small's *Joanie Galant-hulle* with two black performers as the Windhoek Drama Association in the Windhoek Theatre, which up to that time, had never allowed a non-white over the threshold, other than as a general worker. He said that "it was the first time that Blacks acted for Blacks on a White theatre stage in South-West Africa" (2002, p. 4). When asked about how he succeeded in this venture he responded as follows: "I simply confronted the NTN (sic) and booked the venue. The first black who had the guts and who still has it" (Interview, 2012, May, 29). Philander recalled that he was banned from the premises of the Windhoek Theatre in 1989 through what he blamed on the "confrontational attitude and the fear of impending political change" (2002, p. 4) by the director of the theatre, Hannes Horne.

Philander is the one Namibian playwright, actor, director and producer who remained active in Namibian theatre throughout all the periods of this research. He also established a youth theatre group, Serpent Players.

5.2.1 Serpent Players

In 1982 the Windhoek Players established a youth wing called Serpent Players at the Jan Jonker Afrikaner High School in Katutura. Part of the mandate of the group was to build cultural awareness in the community (*Bricks Newspaper*, March 1985, 1, (3)). According to Philander

(2002, p. 4) this was the first Black youth group to have taken part in the ATKV (Afrikaanse Taal en Kultuurvereniging, a body in South Africa promoting Afrikaans culture and language) Tienertoneel (Youth theatre), both locally and in South Africa. This youth wing of the Windhoek Players seems to have been driven by the same philosophies as the mother company.

Always a pragmatist, Philander applied for financial assistance wherever he could in the private sector. However, his acceptance of any funding was subject to his terms. He did not accept any money which required of him to subject his work or his points of view to ‘interference’ from the donor body. He said that during the period of second tier government in Namibia during the 1980s, the group was forced to cast actors along ethnic lines in order to qualify for “bits and pieces of government funding” (2002, p. 4). The National Youth Theatre festival started by Philander in 1982 was to continue up to the present (2015).

No information about the financial records of the youth festivals could be traced in the public domain. In 1989 Bricks accused Philander of being driven by money and made a public request for the organizers of the Youth Festival to make the income from the festival and distribution of funds public (*Bricks Community Newspaper*, July 1989, 5 (4), 7). They noted that the theatre was filled to capacity for the four performances and felt that the income from the festival should have been distributed amongst all the drama groups with the express purpose to grow and develop these groups. No printed response from Philander could be found.

When presented with these comments by Bricks, Philander responded that the criticism did not surprise him (2012). He claimed that, at the time, there were consistent efforts to discredit him,

and some of the leadership in Bricks were instrumental in that. He felt that the reason why they attempted to discredit him was that he developed theatre in this country while other people merely spoke and did nothing. This is one example reflecting the connecting instances in a structure of feeling. Both Philander and Bricks came from the same dominant structure of feeling of rejecting oppression and using theatre to inform. However, Bricks received donor funding while Philander did not and on that point the connecting instances diverged. This also reflects the parochial mind-set then in operation in the small circle of Namibian theatre where everybody knew everybody else and getting involved in each other's affairs was not uncommon.

Philander also made the point that some of the people (whom he mentioned by name) were aspiring to positions in SWAPO and, "as SWAPO had no intention to develop the arts across a broad front, and theatre in particular" (2012) they felt the need to break down anyone else who was consistent in promoting theatre and was known by the community to do so. Philander contextualized the criticism as follows:

When the article in question appeared Strauss (the director of Bricks) and his clique were trying hard to get noticed ideologically and culturally by the liberation movement. They were desperately trying to curry favor with the political entity that later became the ruling party. There was a desperate clamoring and scampering for art and culture positions, something the liberation movement then and never could offer (sic) (2012).

With reference to him being driven by money, he felt that he had no responsibility to anyone outside his organization to account for how monies were spent. The monies that were raised came from pre-paid tickets, door takings and competition entry fees. He had taken it for granted that everybody knew that whatever monies were raised, were used to assist outside groups

attending the youth festival with travel and accommodation costs. The rest was used as prize money. Philander claimed that he never made money for himself out of the youth festivals.

We never received any money from donors, refused money from the government and the liberation movement to pay the price (sic) monies, theatre rentals, transport fees for rural groups that took part and fees to the judges. This is how Strauss and his clique operated in dividing the arts fraternity so that today we still have tendencies of professional jealousy, envy and mudslinging among all artists in the country (2012).

Strauss was presented with a copy of Philander's remarks and asked for his comments. Despite repeated follow-ups, no response had been received by the time this document had been completed.

This may appear to an outsider as petty bickering amongst theatre practitioners, but in the context of this research those feelings are important. It is included here to, once again, demonstrate Raymond Williams' contention that a dominant structure of feeling is experienced together with "connecting instances" (p. 134). While Philander and Strauss came from the same racial backgrounds and shared dominant structures of feeling, there were connecting instances that illustrated how they differed. Strauss was actively involved in the resistance movement while Philander was not. The latter gave vent to his rejection of the social structures through his creative work.

Bricks also criticised Philander for choosing the Windhoek Theatre as the venue for the festival because they felt that the peoples' freedoms should be complete. The small concessions, like the use of the Windhoek Theatre for special occasions like the festival, should have been boycotted until the battle for total liberation was won. Bricks commented that the long history of

exclusivity of the theatre meant that “gewone werkers” or ordinary workers did not patronize the venue. The intimation was there that the festival organizer put his personal interests before the more inclusive ideals of the liberation struggle. They used the image of a cream cake (Windhoek Theatre) to illustrate this instant gratification of the festival organizer satisfying his own agenda by offering the young participants a fleeting taste of something which, in reality, they could not enjoy freely. An exercise like that was considered as culture vultures feeding while the masses were not yet free, something which was considered a death knell to the culture of liberation (1989, p.7). Philander, however, in his total rejection of the segregationist policies of the government used whatever means he could find to subvert the system.

Secondly, the removal of the performances from the townships where the performers lived meant that very few parents and other supporters were able to attend. The performers were bussed into town and away from their familiar support bases. Bricks always performed their plays in the townships because they greatly valued the participation of the community. Bricks considered Philander’s handling of the arrangements as counter-revolutionary. Philander shrugged off all these criticisms by noting that his motto at the time was: “if we cannot beat the colonialists in the bush war, beat them from the stage” (2012).

While looking at the documentation and listening to the comments by Philander and members of Bricks, it is clear to this researcher that both sides felt that they were doing valuable work in the community. It is also clear that, while both sides claimed to have fought for the well-being of their communities, personal and perhaps ideological differences mostly prevented the parties

from close cooperation. Philander still believes that the divisions existing in the arts fraternity have their roots during this time. He told this researcher that:

Today, 22 years after Independence, the arts fraternity is still deeply divided and the Namibian government still operates illegally with a draft art and culture policy, thanks to Strauss and his clique, a first and the only African country (sic) (2012).

Although the Director of Arts claimed (2012) that this sentiment by Philander was unfounded since the policy had already been approved in 2001, it has since come to light that, in 2014, no such policy existed.

5.2.2 Committed Artists of Namibia (CAN)

The work of Committed Artists of Namibia continued during the period after independence. Throughout the 90s the same plays were performed repeatedly. What made these plays relevant was the fact that, for most people, a change of government did not bring a change to their material existence. So the structure of feeling based on the social conditions of poverty, marginalization and dejection which many people felt, was reflected in his plays.

Philander was the first Namibian playwright to have his plays published. He had always been, and still is, very outspoken against the government of the day. While generally not overtly political in nature, his plays have always reflected the plight of the poor and the marginalized. His way of social commentary is by inserting comments about current events into the existing dialogue and in that way his plays remain topical.

The work of Committed Artists of Namibia continued throughout the period covered by this research. Philander explained his continued staging of the same canon after independence as the fact that, while the political foe might have changed the social foe remained in the form of poverty and unemployment. Without fail the works of Philander reflected prevailing socio-political conditions and he used his plays to deliver commentary on and critique of the government.

Their annual play festival, which in 1992 was presented as the Pescanova Play Festival, showcased the work of their director and resident playwright, Frederick Philander. That was the year in which CAN received sponsorship from Pescanova, a fishing company in Walvis Bay. The sponsorship was for the first phase in CAN's declared policy of Educational Theatre (*The Namibian*, 1992, April 27, p. 4). On reading what Philander said during the handing over ceremony, it becomes clear to this researcher that what he meant by Educational Theatre was performing his existing repertoire, which reflected political and social defects, in schools. The fact that the genre of Educational Theatre is something entirely different seems not to have been a concern for Philander. He continued to stage the same canon after independence and extended it as he wrote new plays. While the political foe might have changed, the social foe remained in the form of poverty and unemployment. As he always did, he continued to take his plays to festivals and venues in South Africa. The same plays are being restaged up to the present (2015).

In 1993 Jean Fischer commented in *Flamingo*, the in-flight magazine of Air Namibia that, although Philander did not write "pretty plays", but dwelt on the seamier, more tragic side of life, he saw both the beauty and ugliness of the Namibian nation. The main objective in his plays was

to express his concern for the imbalances that still existed in the society. He felt that the rich were getting richer and that the poor were still poor. Philander felt that, as a Namibian artist, he had to be the eyes and the ears of the community. He had to make people on both sides of the spectrum aware of these imbalances. For this reason his plays had to be contemporary. It is ironic that the same subject matter that was dealt with in his various plays before the country's independence remained contemporary so many years after independence. As Fischer noted, his plays depicted the grittiness of the human condition in an earthy way which sometimes "causes Establishment theatre personalities to draw their skirts aside like Victorian ladies confronted by a cow-pat in a country lane" (p. 17).

A.W. Oliphant (2005, p.4) in the foreword to the collected plays by Philander said that "to read the plays of Philander is to be confronted with that genre of playwriting, which engages social and political issues." He noted that this kind of writing, wherever it was practised, was part of a broader political and cultural resistance to colonial, economic and political crises specific to each society. After a liberating event, such as independence, this form of theatre assumed a new postcolonial orientation. According to Oliphant "it engaged the new social conditions, or to use Chinua Achebe's phrases, it examined the 'hopes and impediments' which came to bear on independent states" (2005, p. 4).

All of Philander's plays dealt with protest against social injustices and the abuse of power. To quote Oliphant (2005):

In the anti-colonial social articulation, where the axiology of power runs along the divide of a subjected indigenous population excluded from the state on the one hand and a supremacist settler community with exclusive access to state power, on the other, these (Philander's) plays address and

expose the untenable nature of colonial power (p. 4).

During the latter part of the 90s, the supremacist power was no longer that of a foreign colonial regime, but the new elite under an independent government. Political emancipation did not significantly change the day-to-day existence of large parts of the indigenous population. For that reason Philander's plays still found resonance with audiences.

After independence in African states, the racist order of minority domination was replaced by non-racial democracies, governed by the majority but more often than not the 'supremacist settler community with excess state power' was merely replaced with another group from within, with the same monopoly on political and economic power. Then the postcolonial playwright had to reposition him or herself. In the Namibian context, Philander's plays soon indicated that the power shift was merely one of colour and that the basic oppression continued, albeit now in the form of economic disempowerment. His protagonists continued to be marginalized and freedom became a theory, rather than a lived experience. As Oliphant continued, in Philander's plays, most notably *The Porridge Queen* and *The Teacher*, there were direct allusions to the historical moments in which the plays were set.

This is done by way of parodying the nationalist mantra of political leaders who constantly remind the population of sacrifices which were made for the attainment of political independence as a way of urging them to make further sacrifices under new conditions (2005, p. 5).

The problem with that was that the populace associated independence with utopia and this utopia had not materialized for the majority. The national sense of expectation was gradually being replaced by a sense of defeat and dejection. In all of Philander's plays there were characters who had nothing positive to say about life in a postcolonial Namibia. Oliphant noted that:

In play after play we have characters articulating dismay as a litany of problems ranging from corruption, nepotism, abuse of power, bureaucratic incompetence, ethnic prejudices, poverty, unemployment, economic exploitation, child abuse, disease, sexual exploitation, illiteracy and a number of social ills that could be found only in the most degraded and clapped-out societies imaginable, is presented (2005, p. 5).

As such, Philander's plays voiced the concerns of certain sectors of Namibian society at various stages after independence. The message that came across was that these societies had gone beyond the celebratory moments to the realization that they were no better off, that suffering did not end with the hoisting of a new flag. Oliphant felt that postcolonial history in Africa had, without exception, followed a trajectory of freedom, hope and disillusionment and this was reflected in the work of Philander.

While in Namibia there is no evidence that Philander came under any censure of his work or that he was victimised in any way by the ruling class or the government, this kind of writing, according to Oliphant, was generally not very popular with the ruling elite. However, it was a vital element in any national discourse. These were the kinds of plays that reflected the socio-political atmosphere as experienced by a large part of society, the plays that reflected the structure of feeling of many. For example *King of the Dump* is a play about those who make their living from the refuse of others. The play is set on a garbage dump and tells the story of those who are so poor that they have to make a living from what other people discard. Latterly, during a period that falls outside the scope of this research, the exposure of the pitiful lives of those who make their living from the rubbish dumps has been a source of great embarrassment for the Windhoek municipality.

An important point made by Oliphant is that anti-colonial literature was dismissed as artless propaganda and that postcolonial governments used the same tactic. Philander commented to this researcher (1998) that the NTN as a semi- autonomous, government sponsored institution, seemed reluctant to support his efforts and that he had to make use of school halls in the townships to perform his plays. By denying the artistic merits of such works, the playwrights were being discredited and hopefully silenced. This is a tactic that did not work with Philander. He continued to write and produce his plays. While the NTN was then a venue that Philander could have used, it was still out of his reach due to the high rental charged by the theatre.

For Oliphant this style of writing was “symptomatically and diagnostically oriented. The symptomatic modes are to be found in the social problems and ills ... and the diagnostic mode resides in the explanation offered by the plays with regard to these problems” (2005, p. 7). Even if the artistic value of the plays were negated, they still served a function. As Prentki & Selman (2000) showed, the content and method of presentation was recognized by and accessible to the audience. Oliphant contended that all theatre was socially grounded in so far as all forms of theatrical writing depended on a set of codes and conventions shared by a particular society. This was the society represented in the works and whose members were also the primary audience of the drama. He believed that “all theatre, no matter how abstract, is irreducibly social” (2005, p. 6) and Philander’s plays reflected that social reality.

Philander’s work accentuated social problems and positioned itself critically to those problems. These plays sought to actualize the economic, ethical, social, cultural and political changes promised by liberation and decolonization. The disappointment expressed by a number of his

characters echoed the disappointment felt by many in the society since the characters in his plays were mostly from the lower ranks of society. Oliphant argued that these characters represented the suffering population shut out from the comforts and privileges of the affluent and powerful classes and individuals in society (2005, p. 7). These characters were his protagonists and the antagonists were from the elite groups or their behavior represented elements associated with those groups. Many of the settings in his plays were representative of the comfortless world inhabited by his marginalized protagonists. Oliphant reasoned that “Philander’s work is concerned with the prevailing social order and its human ramifications” (2005, p. 8). This sentiment supports the hypothesis of this research that Namibian theatre reflected the structure of feeling caused by the socio-political and historical milieu of the time.

Philander has published a number of plays and therefore serves as a good source to the student of Namibian theatre history. In 1991 he caused considerable controversy in Windhoek by presenting full nudity on stage in his play *The Beauty Contest* (*The Times of Namibia*, 1991, October 23, pp. 2-4). The roles were enacted by Felicity Celento (Philander’s girlfriend at the time) and by Philander himself. The play was subsequently taken to Grahamstown where the criticism centred more on the quality of the play than the nudity. In Windhoek there were two camps, those who were highly critical of Philander and those who staunchly supported him (*The Times of Namibia*, 1991, October 23, p. 2). Philander responded in a vitriolic manner in the press to those who gave what he thought were negative opinions.

The Beauty Contest touched on the themes of deception and sexual exploitation. As was explained earlier, the play caused controversy in Windhoek when it was first performed because

of the bare-breasted nudity of the character of Saartjie Sieberhagen, played by Felicity Celento and the full nudity of the character of Klaas Geswind, played by Philander himself. By the time the play was performed in the Space Theatre at the University of Namibia in 1999, the character of Saartjie was costumed in a one-piece swimsuit. Whether or not the nudity was cheap sensationalism or not (at the Grahamstown Festival the nudity was considered a ‘dramatic necessity’) (Schauffer, 2009) is of no consequence to this research. What is important is that Philander, once again, addressed a relevant social problem. Lack of education or inadequate education often leads to girls and women having to accept menial jobs and the possibility of making it big provides fertile ground for exploitation. The character of Klaas played on the ignorance and innocence of Saartjie. He enticed her with flattery to shed her clothes by telling her that: “Other women would greatly admire you for them” (her breasts) and “you want to. I can see it in your eyes. You are like a caged animal that wants to break free and out of this town, like myself. We are both claustrophobic” (2005, p.67). In a broadly humorous way Philander addressed the very serious theme of the exploitation of women in beauty pageants.

Nceba Kulati (1993) thought that the technical presentation of the play was not very good, but he still lauded the performance of the *Beauty Contest* at the Grahamstown festival because he thought that the themes addressed in the play were very relevant. The play used the world of the modelling studio and beauty pageants to illustrate how women were seen as objects in society. The play also revealed the evil of racial discrimination.

Robert Housley (1993) felt that the social and political content was tagged on, or as he put it, “the issues of politics, religion, racism and women’s rights were ‘soapboxed’” (p. 26). For

Housley the references to social issues detracted from the enjoyment of the play. For the purpose of this research it is important to note that Philander addressed issues that were topical and important to society in Namibia, especially those who still felt themselves marginalised.

Stephen Garratt (1993) supported this when he said in his review that neither the script nor the performance came close to the contemporary, conventional understanding of theatre, but that the play was very accessible to the audience it was intended for. He noted that it was the kind of theatre for people who were not specifically interested in the ethos of theatre, but rather the power of theatre to address issues in the community. He thought that, while experienced city theatre-goers might find the methodology of the play didactic and outmoded, “it is easy to imagine that this approach may well appeal to inexperienced, possibly rural, audiences to whom it will be immediately accessible and relevant” (p. 4). The problem with this comment was that Philander did not see himself as a playwright for rural audiences, but for an urban audience that included role players that should make a difference to the situation.

As part of what they described as their social and ‘cultural upliftment’ program, Committed Artists staged the play at the Thuringerhof Hotel in the city centre in order to raise money for the SOS Children’s Village. In fact this play, like all of Philander’s other plays, was staged repeatedly over the years. The point is made again that the critique of the play’s aesthetic merits is of little consequence to this research. On the other hand, the comments that the play addressed issues which were pertinent to people’s lives in a way that was readily accessible to the target audience are important in that they support the premise of this research that the plays would reflect a prevailing structure of feeling.

In 1998 Philander took his play, *The Railwayman*, to South Africa and received good reviews for his show (Jean Fischer, 2002, p. 35). The play was described as Protest Theatre by Melvin Whitebooi from *Rapport* (1998, April 14, p. 17). The character in this one-man play reminisced about what it was like growing up in Beaufort West under Apartheid and Whitebooi described the play as being simultaneously full of pathos and humour. However, Gabriel Botma of *Die Burger* (1998, April 14, p. 18) thought that the sentiments in the play were outdated although the new dispensations in Namibia and South Africa had not brought immediate utopia for railway workers like the one in Philander's play. All the critics felt that the writing and acting styles needed polish, but they found the play on the whole touching. According to Philander the play was about poverty, irrespective of what colour you were. It just so happened that he, as a non-white man, experienced poverty under Apartheid. Thus, for him, there is a link between poverty and Apartheid. The play elaborated on the restrictions of Apartheid when certain positions were reserved for whites only and how the economic depression in the town was a direct result of Apartheid policies. Reference had been made before to Philander's use of 'crude language' (Schauffer, 2009) and this particular play is no exception.

Philander's play *Papland* (this translates as weak land with a play on the word pap which means both weak and porridge. His protagonist is a porridge seller) debuted at the National Theatre of Namibia in October of 1994. The play is described as political satire (*The Namibian*, 1994, October 7, p. 5). *Papland* was the third play in a trilogy. The first being *The Curse*, later renamed *Katutura '59* which dealt with the history of the Namibian liberation struggle up to independence. That play was based on the forced removal of residents from the Old Location in

the capital which led to the Windhoek Massacre in which “innocent Namibians were slaughtered by the colonial police” (*The Namibian*, 1990, November 30, p. 41). It is public knowledge in Namibia that the massacre was a turning point in the Namibian liberation struggle and that it led to the flight into exile of many of the prominent liberation politicians of the time. The novel by Dennis Mercer which contains eye-witness accounts of the same event is entitled *Breaking Contract: The Story of Vinnia Ndadi* (1974). The second play, which had as its theme the first democratic elections in Namibia, was entitled *Election Fever*.

Papland (also known as *Porridge Queen*), looked at the post-independent situation in Namibia in a comic and critical way. The main character, Handjievool, was forced to continue her economic struggle for survival by selling porridge in Independence Avenue, which is the main street running through the centre of the capital city. In her dealings with her customers they touched on a variety of topics such as nepotism in the government, the high crime rate, old age pensions, the plight of teachers and many more. In 1996 the play was performed at Kampustoneel in South Africa with students from the University of the Witwatersrand under the directorship of Francois Venter. Felicity Celento from CAN told *The Namibian* (1995, March 15, p. 5) that *Papland* and five other plays were offered to the Drama department at the University of Namibia but that they declined the offer. That was why the play was offered to the University of the Witwatersrand. When asked about the reason for the refusal by the University of Namibia, Behrens could not recall ever having received an offer for the plays.

Papland is the story of a street vendor who serves as a mouthpiece on current events. This play is updated every time it is performed to comment on issues prevalent at the time. In *The Curse*,

which was one of Philander's earliest plays written before independence, Sam Nujoma was referred to as "... a born leader of the nation" (2005, p. 30) but by the time *The Porridge Queen* spoke again in 1998, the disillusion was reflected in the way he was portrayed. Then he became a finger wagging person speaking in what Philander often terms Namlish. Following is one example of how the porridge queen caricatured the president:

We the coulageous poepols of Namibia, hava-won the ribelation
struggle with our brood. Now we hava-to work-a hard to
achieve economic indapendance (2005, p. 55).

While Philander often made derogatory remarks about the government and public figures in his plays, *The Porridge Queen*, together with *The Teacher* contained perhaps his most comprehensive criticism of government. The protagonist spoke about one of her regular customers, "... a dear friend and former liberation struggle fighter, now desperately fighting for economic survival" (2005, p. 49). Then there was the taxi driver who had to compete "at high speed with the ever present Presidential motorcade with all its usual fanfare: ten expensive cars, lead (sic) by a dozen of Hell's angels like small baboons on motor bikes" (2005, p. 48). The man who was previously referred to as a "born leader of the nation" had become "Life-long President Sam Nujoma was probably once again on an official trip somewhere, either to go and beg ... attend a children's party in Zimbabwe or on an intercontinental business trip as part of his alleged impulsive BUY NOW, THINK LATER schemes" (2005, p. 48). The desperate ex-PLAN fighter and struggling pensioners were juxtaposed against members of parliament who were "earning buckets full of money to live like kings while others are dying of hunger" (2005, p. 50).

The play touched on a number of social issues, from men urinating on the side of the road: "But how can anyone blame them for daily pissing out their many frustrations in public?" to

unemployment: “half the population in this city and the country is still unemployed. And it is getting worse by the day” and empty promises by the government: “It is now ... years ago when we were told to be patient and promised jobs after voting THEM into power. Where are those promised jobs, I ask you?” (2005, p. 55). The disillusion is portrayed clearly when the character said that: “My patience ran out and I knew my children could not eat democracy nor (sic) independence” (2005, p. 55).

King of the Dump (also known as *Tarzan*, *Koning van die Rubbish Dumb* and *Koning van die Ashoop*), is a play about those who make their living from what others throw away. According to Schauffer (2009) church leaders in Windhoek objected to the crude language in this play. This researcher is unable to explain why that play was singled out for objection since most of Philander’s plays use ‘crude language’ to a greater or lesser extent. When Philander performs in his own plays, the incidence of ‘crude language’ often escalates. The play won first prize at the Kellerprinz Theatre festival in Cape Town in 1985 (*Die Republikein*, 1986, May 30, p. 2). It was later developed into a radio drama for which Philander won a gold medal in the International Radio Drama Awards in New York in 1996. While Namibian published theatrical output has not yet reached the heights of works by Achebe or Wa Thiongo, Philander has received international recognition for his work. Joy Sassman reported in *The Namibian* (1995, December 21, p. 4) that *King of the Rubbish Dumb*, as a radio drama was broadcast by the BBC from London to an estimated 120 million listeners in 37 sub-Saharan countries. For three years *Die Railwayman* and *Koning van die Ashoop* were prescribed as set works for first year students at the University of Pretoria (2009, p. 3). *Koning van die Ashoop* was also presented as a radio drama on NBC and was awarded a Bertram’s VO Literature of Africa Award (Schauffer, 2009, p. 3).

The play, *The Teacher*, was about how the system manipulates those in its employ to spread its message while at the same time parodying the less than ideal education system. The play continued the criticism of government in general and government officials in particular. The teacher advised his class to vote in the upcoming elections “for a more responsible and effective political party ... that can get rid of the present incompetent government that cannot stop the crime wave ... let alone govern the country” (2005, p. 98). While the setting for this one-man play is a night school for adults where they are taught literacy, Philander once again wove in many social concerns like the poor old age pension, nepotism and incompetence in government. The ‘Teacher’ explained to the class that the reason why they could not get textbooks with bigger print, like they asked, was because those were: “exclusively reserved for State House where official speech-reading had been a constant problem and an embarrassment to many people locally and elsewhere for donkey’s years” (2005, p. 96). Like in many of his plays, *The Teacher* was also used as a vehicle to lampoon the speech of many of the members of parliament. The teacher read out a letter to the class from a very satisfied former student and this was how Philander put it:

Since I have learnt to rlead, wlite and speak-a Engalish werr in the government’s classes for illiterates, I-a have-a been promoted at my-a workaplace, Katutula Whole Sale shoes outa da door by my wambo boss. But-a don’t-a wallie, I have-a now appried for-a betta job as-a interpreta at the courts where-a magistrates of late more and more appear on drunken charges before-a themselves (2005, p.96).

As in some of his other plays Philander did not shy away from using words like ‘Kaffir, Hotnot, Boer, Wambo’ (2005, p. 99). When asked about this (2008) Philander responded that he merely said out in the open what others say behind their hands. He noted that independence did not

necessarily change years of socialisation and that racism and ethnicity were still rife in the country.

Will of a die-Hard Soldier, about the reminiscence of a 'coloured' soldier who fought in World War 2 was based on the life of Philander's father. This play opened to mixed reviews about the artistic integrity of the play, but it does not fall within the ambit of this research to comment on the aesthetic merits of any performance. Like his other plays *Will of a die-Hard Soldier* had as its subject matter the human condition within a particular social setting at a particular time.

In 1996 Philander and actor David Ndjavera took that play and *The Railwayman* on a six-week tour of Belgium and the UK. Schaffer (2009) reported that, after seeing one of the performances, the Head of Drama at the University of Glamorgan in Wales invited Philander to an International Drama and Education Conference in Kenya. Philander had difficulties in having his leave of absence from the school where he taught, approved to attend the conference, but he went anyway. This was to cost him his teaching job at the school. Like other Philander plays, this one was converted into a radio drama which, according to Schaffer (2009), was very well received in Germany.

The Blood Brother addressed prostitution and the spread of HIV and AIDS. Graham Hopwood (1987) commented that the play failed to tackle the complexities surrounding the disease opting instead for a farcical humour and superficial glance at some of the real issues. Some of the criticism was centred round the fact that the AIDS sufferers were all prostitutes. Philander may have given a skewed impression of the spread of the virus at the time. Be that as it may,

Philander once again addressed the person within his or her social reality. It is one of the first Namibian plays that addressed the issue of HIV and AIDS. Philander commented that the play was a response to the “alarming rate at which AIDS was mowing down young people in Namibia in 1987” (2005, p. 160). Amagulu (2010) remarked that the play “showed the human side, the emotions, the dreams and reasons for ending up in such a situation” (p. 6). The play also touched on the topic of death and how terminally ill people were sometimes paralyzed by the realisation that death was close. This play, like all Philander’s plays, had been performed repeatedly but the message is still as valid as it was when the play was first staged.

Victim of Love dealt with racism, intolerance and HIV AIDS. The theme that was started in *The Blood Brother* was further developed in *Victim of Love*. Graham Hopwood’s sentiment (1987) about *The Blood Brother* may well be applicable to this play as well. In all of Philander’s plays there is an element of comedy which, for an unsophisticated audience, may well mask the serious message. The character of the young male lover in this play was American and the mother of the girlfriend likened him to the members of UNTAG who “had one eye on the elections and unofficially they were monitoring the bedrooms of women, old and young, in villages, cities and towns, everywhere in the country with a more penetrating eye” (2005, p.107). Personal observation has shown that Philander has a loyal following and that they expect the humour. Audience members often get carried away by the humorous moments in the plays.

Another relevant theme that the play addressed was that many young people, who grow up in single family situations, do not always know the identity of the absent parent. The play suggested that this was particularly so when conception happened in a relationship across the colour line.

The message that the audience was left with was that “true love does not know any boundaries” (2005, p. 110). This play was made into a film for television.

Election Fever (1990) celebrated the euphoria of people who may then vote in an independent country while at the same time taking a dig at the manifestoes of political parties. One gets the impression that at that stage (1990) Philander himself may have been a bit ambivalent with regard to his political persuasion. One character, Chico, said of Nujoma: “Wel, ek dink dis ‘n uitgemaakte saak dat Sam ons eerste democratic elected president sal wees. He deserves that after what he has gone through on behalf of the people of this country”, while Hessie had the following opinion:

I agree, SWAPO het ‘n weghol oorwinning behaal, deurdat hy vir dertig jaar lank aanmekaar lafhartig in die bos van die Boere af weggehol het sonder om een krieseltjie grondgebiet deur sy geweld te gewen het. Vandag praat hy breedspakig wyd en syd oor sy oorlog heldedade in boeke en allerhande kak, veral NBC. Dit is wensdenkery daai. Nee, ou maat, myns insiens het SWAPO ‘n besliste kaffer-pak in die oorlog gekry (2005, pp. 188-190).

(I agree, SWAPO had a run- away victory in that, for thirty years it cowardly ran away from the Boers in the bush without gaining one grain of advantage through its violence. Today it speaks widely about its war heroics in books and all kinds of shit, especially NBC. That is wishful thinking. No, my friend, in my opinion SWAPO received a definite hiding in the war.)

This ambivalence is reflected again in the following piece of dialogue from page 199:

Man 1: Viva, Sam.
 Woman 3: Wambo.
 Man 2: Hero of the Nation.
 Woman 1: Murderer of innocent women and children.
 Man 5: Terrorist.
 Man 4: Up you, Sam.
 Woman 4: Communist.

Schauffer (2009) made the observation that Philander was not a polite writer. His opinion of the person of Philander was that he was:

a larger-than-life figure that is the sort of person who delights in calling a spade a shovel. He is big man who speaks his mind. He is humorous, incorrigible, incisive, loud, keenly sensitive to the suffering of the common man in society, and boldly, honestly, exuberantly vulgar (2009, p.2).

Some of these characteristics were displayed in *Election Fever* where living politicians were held up for scrutiny. In this play he had enlarged photographs on stage of the politicians who were criticised by name. Two examples will suffice. Of Andreas Shipanga he said:

Ladies and Gentlemen, this little arrogant sheepishly (sic) and alcoholic puppet is a remnant of an era one would rather like to forget. He used to be Minister of Mining and Nature Conservation. No wonder this country is today in the total mess it finds itself. His pedigree reads like a typical spy-drama; first forced from the Polit Bureau of the Liberation Movement after which he joined the Colonial puppet brigade. Drowning in lots of South African government money, Andreas very unsuccessfully contested the elections for Swapo Democrats.

And for his sins of “selling out the Liberation Movement” Shipanga was to be castrated.

Andy Kloppers was paraded to the audience as:

The turncoat, the deserter, the renegade, the defector, the confused and political (sic) lost son of the nation. Like father like son, Andy Kloppers. Fortunately it is Swapo that will have to bare (sic) the brunt of this man’s political inconsistency. He and his three supporters are just a public nuisance and a pain in the arse (2005, p. 198).

Even after these plays were performed publicly there is no evidence from the records that anybody took any punitive measures against Philander. The reason for that may only be speculated.

The Curse (also known as *Katutura* '59) was based on an actual historic event. It dealt with the eviction of black people from the Old Location and their relocation to the Katutura township.

The play started with an aggressive white policeman, Sergeant Lombard, entering with two Bouker police, or as Philander termed them, two Kaffir policeman. The latter two, Klaas and Pineas, could not tell left from right and Lombard had to tie a red ribbon around their right feet and some straw around their left feet. When the two policemen marched in they had to be told, instead of left and right, “Rooivoet! Strooivoet!” (Red foot! Straw foot!) (Undated, p. 1). This device, however did not work because Klaas complained: “But boss it is too dark. We cannot see!” (p. 1). In this opening scene Philander spoke directly to the sentiments of a pre-independence audience. The stereotypes of the white police brute and the stupid Bouker police were types that the township audience could relate to. In this pre-independence play Philander projected the views of both white and black people with regard to Sam Nujoma and the freedom struggle. The white character expressed his view with regard to Nujoma as: “Who the hell does he think he is? The king of Kaffirland?” (p. 5) while the black character spoke of him as: “a born leader of the nation” (p. 30). Although this play has a pre-independence theme as topic, Philander continued to stage the play after independence.

The Mole People concerned the “incarceration of freedom fighters, the torture and killing of men and women at the hands of their own people as part and parcel of the liberation of Africa” (2009, p. 2). In this play about the infamous Lubango dungeons of SWAPO, where those accused of being spies or collaborating with the South African government or defence forces during the liberation struggle, were reportedly imprisoned, Philander sketched a bleak picture of the life in the dungeons and the debauchery and cruelty of the guards. Significantly the name of the camp commander was Danger whom his subordinates refer to as a “fucking psychopath” (undated, p. 14).

The play also spoke about the difficulties that the PLAN fighters had to contend with in the bush in the form of lack of supplies. One of the cadres asked: “But how does the High Command expect us to win the Liberation War with nothing to survive on?” (p. 2) and commented that: “Things are getting worse by the day. Most of our food, blankets, medicine and weapons either get stolen or are sold at high black market prices in the locations of Luanda by our own comrades” (p. 2). They also spoke about poor food “ghoeboemealies and pap” (p. 26), alcohol abuse by the seniors “You, come answer the bloody radio. I am too damded (sic) drunk to do it myself” (p. 11) and poor discipline “Do you really want to know what I was doing, hey? Alright, if you must know, I went to take an early morning open-air shit in the forest ... something you should try one day” (p. 11). By the time Philander wrote this play, reports had already been received via the Parent’s Committee about alleged abuses in some of the SWAPO camps. Although others have written about this period in Namibian history, especially through the Breaking the Wall of Silence Movement, as far as this research could establish Philander was the only Namibian playwright to have expressed himself on the matter of the Lubango dungeons.

When questioned about his response towards often harsh criticism of his plays from theatre critics particularly, Philander had the following to say:

I just tell stories. I document things in a way I experience them and I try to be balanced – give both sides of the tale. I don’t mind exposing my work to criticism. There have been changes, movements for the better but in the arts field they are too slow. People in this day and age, they would still more readily give money to soccer and crap like that and the people in charge for the last 18 years of the National Theatre of Namibia have not promoted our culture which is truthful to what our experiences were. That’s why we continue doing things the way we see fit (2009).

This researcher is unable to explain why Philander had not met with more sanction from government officials because of his overt criticism of the government and social institutions. One possible reason that comes to mind is that these officials were so disinterested in theatre that perhaps they were unaware of the criticism in Philander's plays. However, that is speculation. Schauffer (2009) claimed that there was harsh criticism of Philander by politicians and church leaders as well as theatre critics, but this research has been unable to find documentary evidence of that. Even after independence the unequal balance of power remained and this led to continued exploitation and oppression. Philander continued to deliver social criticism on these conditions.

As stated earlier, perhaps the greatest contribution of Philander and his Committed Artists of Namibia was their annual play festival. This has been an on-going event that has become part of the Namibian cultural calendar. How those festivals were evaluated, if at all, does not concern this research. The only assessment of Philander's work that is of importance to this research is to what extent his plays reflected a particular structure of feeling related to the socio-economic and political realities of his day. As has been shown, his work did that unfailingly. The artistic merit of his work is not evaluated. As has been pointed out by a number of people, the artistic and aesthetic value of the kind of plays that Philander wrote, were in any case always considered suspect by the establishment. Some of the plays that this researcher saw in the early 90's, staged by some of the previously disadvantaged artists would not pass muster in establishment theatres but it was also evident that audience members related very well to the content and the presentation.

As he always did, Philander continued to take his plays to festivals and venues in South Africa. After independence Athol Fugard was the only playwright whose work CAN staged, other than the writings of Philander.

The discussion now moves to Bricks Community Project.

5.3 The Bricks Community Project and Platform 2000

Bricks Community Project had been in existence since 1983 in Katutura, a township of the capital. Platform 2000, the culture section of Bricks Community Project, was launched on 12 May 1986. The name Platform 2000 was selected democratically from twenty possible names (Strauss, 2011). The group usually met three times a week and by 1988 had 23 members (*Bricks Community Newspaper*, March 1988, 4 (2), 6). By April 1987 it was under the leadership of Salome van Wyk. She emphasised that the main aim of the group was to portray the daily struggles of people through drama (*Bricks Community Newspaper*, March/April 1987, 3 (2), 6). It started out as a group of young people who struggled daily with social problems in their community and who decided to do something about it. The group also tried, through their plays, to address unfair structures in the community and to look for ways to change these. They hoped to achieve this by making people more aware, by challenging them to think more critically, to encourage them to be more involved and to take action in matters that affected their daily existence. Perhaps without knowing, they applied Paulo Freire's philosophy of identifying a problem and applying praxis, doing something about it.

Membership to Platform 2000 and Bricks was open to people from the community who were interested in drama and also those who had an interest in improving the daily lives of people. The aim of the group was said to make drama with the people and not for them (1987). Members of the group thought of themselves as activists and the topics addressed in the plays were aimed at social and political conscientization and to represent various aspects of colonial oppression.

Topics for plays and discussions included Bantu education, lack of recreational facilities, alcoholism, unemployment, teenage pregnancies and other social concerns. These texts would reveal something about the nature of anti-colonial resistance and the structure of feeling then prevalent in the township. The approach was not only one of creating awareness, but of an attempt at empowering those who formed the target audience. Social ills were considered an innate result of political oppression but some of these could be addressed and solutions sought while the larger narrative of the national, political struggle was on-going. They felt that stimulation through drama could play a major role in tackling these problems and looking for solutions. An important message that they tried to spread was that Namibians were the only ones who could liberate themselves. This is directly in line with the philosophy of Augusto Boal who believed that liberation started with mental emancipation. Once an individual understood what made him or her feel oppressed he or she could take steps to rectify that. While people worked towards political and social freedoms they had to start taking responsibility for their own personal emancipation from oppressive thoughts and attitudes. People needed to take action

(Freire's praxis). The longer they waited, the longer they would be slaves of Apartheid, ignorance, capitalism and exploitation (*Bricks Community Newspaper*, April/May 1987, 3 (3), 5).

In their April/May 1987 edition of *Bricks Community Newspaper*, Bricks strongly urged Namibians to take responsibility for their own liberation by saying:

NAMIBIANE? NIEMAND BEHALWE ONSSELF KAN ONS
BEVRY NIE. ONS MOET AKSIE SELF BEGIN. HOE LANGER
ONS WAG, DES TER MEER SAL ONS SLAWE BLY VAN APART-
HEID, ONKUNDE, KAPITALISME, MOEDELLOSHEID, UITBUITING
(*Bricks Community Newspaper*, April/May 1987, 3 (3), 5).

(The capitals are as in the original. Roughly translated it means: Namibians? Nobody except ourselves can free ourselves. We have to take action ourselves. The longer we wait, the more we will remain slaves of Apartheid, ignorance, capitalism, discouragement, exploitation.)

Once the group identified local problems, they improvised and work-shopped with members of the community to present a play by the people for the people. When they visited towns outside Windhoek, they encouraged those communities to form their own performance groups and to continue with the work once the Platform 2000 activists left.

Bricks activists thought that they could get their message to the community through some form of community drama. In May 1986 they staged their play *Wie is die skuldige?* (*Who is to blame?*) with the theme of teenage pregnancy. *Bricks Community Newspaper* (1986, Sept/Oct, 2 (7), 6) reported that the communities responded well to the product and that they participated actively in trying to find solutions to the problem. It has been found that, in popular theatre, communities accept modernizing messages and those that encourage change in the community, more readily from performers who are of the community, rather than from somebody outside the

community or from government officials (Epskamp, 1989). Unfortunately this researcher was unable to access copies of the plays performed by Bricks and is therefore unable to evaluate their statements against actual play scripts. This researcher is aware, through word of mouth that videotapes of the performances were made, but despite a concerted effort, none of those could be obtained.

Platform 2000 worked with other community-based organizations. One result of this was a community cultural festival on 12 and 13 December 1986 which was presented in collaboration with NANSO (Namibian National Students' Organization). At this festival there was an emphasis on helping people understand what culture was and how theatre may be used to help develop communities and help them express their communal issues. The way this researcher understands their stance on culture at the time to have been is very similar to the approach taken by government after independence. It revolved around the reclaiming of traditional, ethnic practices that were seen to be marginalised. For Bricks it included the provision of Western styled theatre to a wider township audience. The style itself was not questioned. By then ownership had been taken of it. There was a call for more community theatres that would enable the groups to reach a wider audience (*Bricks Community Newspaper*, Sept/Oct 1986, 2 (7), 5). They also worked together with Serpent Players for an event in 1988 (*Bricks Community Newspaper*, April 1988, 4 (3), 3). At this event they performed a play entitled *In die Army* which was aimed at opposing conscription and which showed the negative effects of enlistment in the army on people from the same community who had to take sides. Often a community activist came into direct conflict with a loved one who was under the indoctrination of the army while he was enlisted. This particular play revealed a lot about the operations of cultural difference or

convictions – how individual identity is shaped by the world that people live in and how that material reality together with cultural beliefs and customs combine to form individual identity, how changing structures of feeling can shape people’s perceptions of themselves, others and the world in which they live. By joining the army, a major shift in personal identity was required of young men from the townships.

Their first project after they were formed in 1983 was a magazine which was published on a two-monthly basis. This magazine reported extensively on the effects of the South African occupation on the lives of the people in the townships. It was not uncommon for the theatre activists to use the articles in the publication as a starting point for their work-shopped plays. As such their plays reflected the structure of feeling caused by the prevailing socio-political and economic conditions of the people. Bolly Mootseng, a Bricks activist, noted that, when the NTN staged a play, the underlying motive was to generate income. For Bricks, however, the aim was to impart skills to people to “do their own thing” (1993, p. 61).

An internet search of the activities of Bricks suggested that the driving force behind the work of Bricks was the intention of poverty alleviation and building a better habitat (www.un.org/africa/osaa/ngodirectory/dest). As such they were said to have focussed on matters such as sustainable community development, the environment, health matters, sanitation and water resources. However, this research could not find records of plays that dealt specifically with these themes. The themes that are reflected in the records that could be traced deal with teenage pregnancy, alcohol abuse, unemployment and the effects of oppression on a community.

Platform 2000 was instrumental in addressing issues related to HIV and AIDS through workshops for school children and adults. They also assisted groups to workshop and dramatize social problems like alcoholism or the problems faced by street children. Bricks had a strong educational mandate and through its various arms addressed matters such as growing your own vegetables, establishing oral history projects as well as researching and keeping alive Namibian history that was left out of the history books (*Bricks Community Newspaper*, April 1988, 4 (3), 3).

According to Andre Strauss (2012), a founding member of Bricks, theirs was the first real community theatre initiative in Namibia. Initially they received no donor funding and raised their own funds through dances in community, church and school halls. He gave credit to church communities for allowing them to use their facilities and for assisting them when it was necessary to hide their activities from government agents. Many black Namibian performers, who are still active today, were involved in Bricks at some time or another. This is a point on which both Bricks and Committed Artists of Namibia make the same claim.

The Bricks mandate always included a two-pronged approach to addressing community problems through theatre. The one part was the plays themselves, often inviting the audience to become involved in the work in a way that Augusto Boal proposed. There was an emphasis on the training of the performers and when two Bricks members, who were pupils at Shifidi Senior Secondary School, won the awards of best actor and best actress at the 1989 theatre festival organised by Philander, Bricks acknowledged their own role in training these young performers. Bricks activists like Bolly Mootseng and Robert Isaaks who left the country to upgrade their

skills elsewhere, came back to share those skills with others in the group (*Bricks Community Newspaper*, August 1989, 4 (6), 5).

The other prong of their approach was to engage community members through workshops. During these workshops, facilitated by the Bricks activists, the community members could discuss their problems and explore possible solutions. The facilitators tried to get the community to a point where they would take action, to implement what Freire called praxis. One of the ways in which the communities were encouraged to take action was to form community groups and organizations. Judging by the literature as published in their regular community newspaper, it seems that Bricks was successful in mobilising the communities which they visited, to form such organizations. Unfortunately, there is no indication in the literature covering the Bricks activities, like their newspaper, as to whether these organizations continued to exist or operate for any length of time.

During the years from 1985 to 1989 Bricks seems to have played a major role in creating awareness in communities, inside and outside the capital, (*Bricks Community Newspaper*, July/August 1988, 4 (5), 3) of the fact that the oppressed state in which they lived, need not be, in fact, should not be a condition that they accepted without a struggle and that Namibia was in a process of transition. While not officially affiliated to SWAPO as liberation organization, Bricks resorted under that category of unsung heroes who continued the struggle for liberation within the borders of the country. A Bricks activist noted that “many people in the National Liberation Movement considered what they called field-rhetorical exercises and intellectual debate more effective than cultural exercises” (*Bricks Community Newspaper*, February 1989, 5 (1), 5).

However, Bricks was convinced of the effectiveness of placing “emphasis on culture as a lever of struggle” (1989) and the importance of encouraging the oppressed in Namibia to use it as a weapon against their enemies. This statement seems to be questionable when one considers that the liberation movement formed its own cultural troupe in exile with the express purpose of using it as an ideological and mobilizing instrument.

Bricks practiced, wittingly or unwittingly, the Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed as developed by Freire and Boal respectively. Those philosophies imply that liberation starts with the individual who works to understand his or her material condition and who then takes action. They seemed to have stayed true to their approach of identifying problems in the community and then, with the help of the community, to try and find solutions to those problems through the methodology of Community Theatre.

Bricks were better off than others in the informal sector since they received funding from the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA) (*Bricks Newspaper*, 8 (3), 6) and other donor bodies from Canada, the United Kingdom, Belgium, The Netherlands, France and Germany. The article gave no indication as to the level of aid received by Bricks or how they spent it.

By 1990 Bricks’s announced program indicated that “individual self-enrichment and personal skills development” would become part of their endeavours (*Bricks Community Newspaper*, March 1990, 6 (9), 4). One may speculate that the dawn of independence allowed the organization to make a shift from purely community-based work to the cultural and artistic

aspirations of the individuals who made up those communities. The reader is reminded that this was the period of euphoria just after independence and national hopes were high for a significant improvement in the lives of all Namibians. The new enemies of continued poverty, unemployment and disillusion that were to emerge later when people realised that independence did not magically change their day-to-day problems, were yet to become the new focus for community activists. At that time, however, people felt free and could channel their artistic inclinations towards more personally fulfilling activities. In line with that feeling, Bricks announced that their programs would concentrate on personal enrichment and individual skills development. This, however, did not mean that Bricks discarded the community as the nurturing unit for individual artistic expression. The individual, as part of a community, was still informed and influenced by the ethos of that community.

Cultural expressions like theatre carry within themselves the values, ideas and beliefs of a society and as such the post-independence theatre would signify the values, beliefs and experiences of a politically free society. Antonio Gramsci referred to this as “art that is culturally comprehensible” (1998). Since theatre was no longer needed to fight an illegitimate regime, those powers could then be harnessed to serve the community in a different way. Irrespective of what terminology one uses to identify this kind of theatre, Bricks continued to maintain their focus of helping communities to help themselves. When the NTN and the National Gallery of Namibia in the centre of town opened their doors wide to outside groups for the first independence celebrations, Bricks preferred to present most of their performances and workshops in Khomasdal and Katutura, the suburb and location previously reserved for non-whites (*Bricks Community Newspaper*, March 1990, 6 (1), 7).

The work of Bricks was greatly influenced by the philosophies and practice of Ngugi wa Mirii and the Zimbabwe Association of Community Theatre (ZACT). Wa Mirii was originally the Director of Kamirithu Community Educational and Cultural Centre (KCECC) in Kenya but at the time (1992) he was living in self-imposed exile in Zimbabwe.

In 1992 Bricks organized a Community Theatre for Development Workshop at which Ngugi Wa Mirii was the keynote speaker. The coordinator of Bricks at the time, Naftali Uirab, explained the aims and objectives of Bricks as sharing theatre skills, sharing organizational skills, learning the role of culture and theatre in solving problems, creating plays based on the historical and cultural experiences of the ‘people’, and to collectively analyse the need for establishing a Community Theatre network in Namibia (*Bricks Newspaper*, 8 (3), 6). He acknowledged that what drew all the participants together was “the fact that all of us acknowledge that theatre is of crucial importance to our (community) work” (1992, p. 6).

Uirab claimed that Bricks ‘stood firm’ in its resolve to produce theatre of the people, by the people and for the people during colonial oppression. He believed that communities who were disempowered under Apartheid needed “to be empowered with skills, self-confidence and critical tools to struggle in their own interest” (1992, p. 7). He elaborated on the important role that Community Theatre could play in helping local communities to “agitate boldly for an increasingly better life” (1992, p. 6). Bricks, as a non-profit, non-governmental community based initiative, addressed itself to the needs of the disadvantaged section of the Namibian society as well as the development of an aesthetic consciousness in those marginalised communities within

which theatre activists operated. The postcolonial impulses to forefront the previously marginalised and their histories became an important motivation for Bricks.

At the same conference where Uirab made the above observations, Ngugi Wa Mirii touched on some aspects that would become issues of concern during the period in the country when the initial independence euphoria wore off. He argued that in terms of cultural development Namibia was what he called a 'neo-colony' (1992, p. 5). His conviction was that, since the economy was still in the hands of the minority and multi-nationals, they still held the power and could dictate the dominant cultural expression and as such cultural imperialism continued. This was strengthened, according to Wa Mirii, by the dominance of what Strauss & Kenny (1992) referred to as Euro-Namibians. These were people from European descent as well as those of African descent who identified more strongly with European culture than with African culture. This became a contentious issue since these were the people who were in decision making positions in the arts.

Wa Mirii pointed out that, even after independence, governments were still threatened by Community Theatre because this type of theatre showed the reality in people's lives, their structures of feeling. This reality often indicated that, despite independence, people were still disadvantaged, that their basic needs had not been met and that development had not reached them. These issues usually come out in Community Theatre because it is a theatre for the people, by the people and as such it deals with the concerns, aspirations, interests and developmental problems of the people. Governments often do not like this.

This research has found that Wa Mirii's experiences in Kenya and Zimbabwe were not always applicable in Namibia. While government was not overly enthusiastic in supporting the arts, at the same time it also did not actively victimise artists. Philander's work highlighted the plight of ordinary Namibians after independence and a playwright such as Vickson Hangula could be openly critical of the government of the day. However, Wa Mirii's request to governments to be more supportive of the arts, especially in terms of financial and infrastructural support, is a theme that would become increasingly pressing in the period after the post-independence euphoria.

Despite the on-going rhetoric by those in positions of authority about Namibian culture having to be strengthened, and for Namibia to develop what Behrens (1992) referred to as a 'Namibian mode of expression', as early as 1992 the reality on the ground was beginning to be slightly different. In an article in Brick's newspaper (*Bricks Community Newspaper*, May 1992, 8 (2), 11) Bricks actor, Simon !Noariseb, questioned the insistence on presenting traditional Namibian fare. He felt that urbanised communities would not necessarily practice the old customs because performers revived these traditions on stage. He felt that the old customs needed to be seen for what they were used for in the past, namely to entertain, educate and to criticise (1992, p.11). Songs and dances were not used arbitrarily. They had meanings within a certain context. Merely reviving certain songs and dances out of context deprived them of their real meaning and true significance. He felt that truly meaningful work could only be achieved by looking at culture and history critically and using those outcomes as a means to be "uniquely creative in our art" (1992). He argued that the only way to practice theatre meaningfully was to include all the dynamics, both positive and negative, in a critical analysis of the entire national state of affairs.

His conviction was that theatre should be meaningful by using topical issues as its frame of reference. While !Noariseb did not state it pertinently, the reader gleans the impression that a sense of disillusionment was already beginning to set in.

Bricks Community Project Year Report March 1989-March 1990 listed many achievements in the period leading up to independence but this research focuses on theatre and the only play that was reported on in the literature was a performance entitled *Turning Tables*. This play reflected Brick's continued commitment to portraying the socio-political climate of their target audience. In that transitional year to independence the themes of the play were "decaying colonialism, warnings of the pitfalls of corruption and women's liberation" (p. 10).

In their *Year Report March 1990 - March 1991* Bricks listed as one of their achievements the accumulation and organization of a large body of documentation dealing with many issues in the country, and that was meant for use by organizations that "were looking for their background" (p. 6). They also claimed to have had a collection of newspaper cuttings pertaining to community work. However, when this researcher approached individuals who are known to have been in the Bricks management structures, no one could tell her where these valuable documents were. It is hoped that the work presented here will motivate those who are in possession of these documents to augment the history of the work done by Bricks and other organizations and individuals.

By 1993 Bricks was working towards the establishment of an NGO network forum. The idea was to restructure Bricks to "become an essential mouthpiece for Non-governmental and community based organizations" (1991, p. 14). These deliberations culminated in the establishment of the

Namibian Non-governmental Organization Forum (NANGOF) when about fifty community-based organizations (CBO's) organized themselves into an umbrella body.

That period was also the time when Andre Strauss left Bricks to join the newly formed government as Deputy Director of Culture in the Ministry of Education and Culture. He felt that the colonial conditions which gave rise to the formation of Bricks had been dissolved and that there was no antagonism between the government and NGO's. For him it was important that "culture should be diversified, democratised and that resources and material should be made available to the majority of the people" (1991, p. 17). His position in government would allow him to assist with that process. It is clear from this research that most Windhoek based artists did not believe that Strauss succeeded in that aim.

The reader may perhaps expect to find a continuation of the work of Bricks Collective after independence since they were one of the most active initiatives during the pre-independence period. Strauss (1999 in Matusse, p. 95), who was instrumental in the establishment of Bricks, stated that Bricks continued the tradition, but focussed on development rather than resistance. Strauss did, however, not make mention of actual performances by the group after independence and this research has not been able to identify any. That does not mean that these performances did not happen, but that the records thereof are not in the general public domain. The only reference this research found to Bricks' involvement in theatre was a schools theatre evening that they organised as part of the annual independence celebrations in 1994 and one play published in *New Namibia Plays Volume 1*.

Bricks, and other community-based actors, and came from a tradition that did not rely overly on the written script. Scenarios were agreed on and improvisation used to get the piece to point where it could be taken to the public. Many of them were well versed in the techniques of improvisation.

Improvisation was a valuable tool to actors during the early years of resistance theatre both during rehearsals and during performance. Improvisation was used to get audiences involved and also to respond to audience participation. Short rehearsal periods combined with audience input meant that actors had to be able to ‘think on their feet’ and respond appropriately. It would be more correct to speak of the audiences during this time as spect-actors in the way that Boal (1979) defined the term. Where scripts were attempted, they were mostly scenarios which could be embroidered on as the performance progressed. Actors often indulged the audience or ‘played to the audience’ by elaborating on the improvisations as long as there was an audience response.

It was not unusual to see things happen on stage during a performance which were never there during the rehearsal. This was particularly true in the case of comic or tragic moments in a play. This researcher, coming from a tradition of formal university training and work in ‘mainstream’ theatre, found this tendency to improvise a bit difficult to deal with when first starting to work in Namibia. Often the actors could not understand why they could not put in their ‘own words’ and it was not uncommon, despite a lengthy rehearsal period, to find entirely new elements in a play when an audience was present. Danie Botha (2006) related how, in the early years of Afrikaans drama in South Africa, the pioneering actor/director, André Huguenet, included a clause in the

contract of his actors to the effect that they would not leave out one iota of the script (or add anything).

Kees Epskamp (1989) related the experiences of Chikwakwa in Zambia where “at first it required considerable effort for the actors to grow accustomed to the continuous talking by and direct reactions from the audience” (p. 112). The actors in the repertory companies in Uganda “... were sometimes rather troubled by the talking and shouting of the audience” (p. 108). Audience members often commented directly on what the characters were saying or started a dialogue directly with a character. In Namibia, like Zambia and other communities where there is frequent audience response, the production allowed the actors a fairly large margin for improvisation. The Namibian actors who moved from community-based theatre to mainstream productions after independence, at times found it difficult to play strictly according to script.

The study now moves to the work of Aldo Behrens.

5.4 Aldo Behrens

Aldo Behrens is discussed within an institutional context as member of staff of the Drama department of the Academy which later became the University of Namibia. This institution received regular funding from the government and is considered establishment. After his retirement in 2009 he continued to make theatre, but that work falls outside the scope of this research.

5.4.1 Aldo Behrens and the School of the Arts

Holdsworth (2010) explained that she situated state sanctioned theatres as sites for asserting political power and/or national cultural autonomy (p. 7). The School of the Arts, which consisted of the departments of Drama, Music and Visual Arts and was established in 1982 as a centre at the Academy (later renamed the University) was a state sanctioned and funded entity. While the dominant structure of feeling of the institution was highly influenced by it being part of the ruling class, the research will show that attempts were made by Behrens and the School to employ the content of theatre to generate a creative dialogue with “tensions in the national fabric” (2010, p. 7). In the collaborative work that Behrens did with Dorian Haarhoff and George Weideman the student of postcolonialism in Namibia can find some answers to the question as to what the text reveals about the politics and/or psychology of anti-colonialist resistance.

During the years following its formation the School would be renamed The Centre for Visual and Performing Arts (CVPA). When asked about the origin and history of the School of the Arts, Aldo Behrens (2009) responded that Drama started at the academy in 1981 as part of the ED (Education Diploma) and ECP (Education Certificate Primary) curricula. He explained that at that point he had never seen any syllabi and that he and Laurika Behrens were asked to teach something related to Speech and Drama. As a Drama lecturer at the Windhoek College of Education (WCE) he taught a similar course that was approved for the 1st year students. The initiative for the introduction of Drama came from Academy authority – in collaboration with RAU (Rand Afrikaans University) and the Ministry of National Education in Namibia. Later

when Beeldende en Uitvoerende Kunste (BUK) (Visual and Performing Arts) was established, Behrens and his colleagues crafted syllabi that were approved by the Academy senate.

On the mission of the department which he headed, he said that prior to his involvement no documentation existed and he took it for granted that objectives should be in line with Drama-in-Education/Theatre-in-Education/Speech and Drama requirements. Later, after the formation of BUK, he crafted a Drama syllabus for a BA curriculum – mainly based on a syllabus he taught at Potchefstroom University. Behrens remembered that, in the early years: “Ek was so gelukkig soos ‘n vark in Jerusalem en geld was volop” (I was as happy as a pig in Jerusalem and money was abundant).

In 1983 they did *Revue '83* and *RAKA*; the latter directed by Hannes Horn, with which they toured Potchefstroom, University of Zululand and the University of Transkei, very successfully. This was possible because, as he said, money was not a problem. The Academy even bought a big bus for their tour. Behrens remembered that, “incidentally the green Mercedes bus is still in circulation” (2009). This has to be seen against the background of the Apartheid policy of favouring white establishments with support and funding.

When parliament accepted the University of Namibia act in 1985 they formally became the School of the Arts with faculty status and Behrens was appointed Associate Professor in 1986,

the same year in which he obtained his D.Litt. The School of the Arts then existed of 3 Departments – Drama, Music and Dance and Visual Arts. The centre was merged into the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in 1998 and the Centre ceased to exist. Drama and Music merged and became one department while Visual Arts became a department on its own. The former sections of the CVPA were now departments within the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Behrens commented that before independence the various institutions like the Windhoek Theatre and the Conservatoire were all ‘performing’ on their own little islands. He cautioned the researcher to remember that the Conservatoire and SWAPAC (the later NTN) were Administration for Whites “Kosie Pretorius and the Verkrampes” (2009) property while the Academy ‘belonged’ to National Education, also seen as Bantu Education by the Conservatives and was positioned by politicians in a DTA-camp” (2009). The grassroots groups were suspicious of this alleged DTA monster and Freddy Philander “gave us grief, especially with the George Weideman texts” (2009).

According to Aldo Behrens (1999, p. 59) in 1982 and for a long time after that, they interpreted the known *status quo* in the Namibian visual and performing arts environment as being “especially European orientated, Windhoek based and primarily catering for white audiences.” As an academic institution the School of the Arts is said to have challenged this accepted *status quo*. Since 1982 the School strategically planned and actively explored the unknown *status quo* because it was believed that for the arts to be relevant, it should grow from those communities

which it claimed to represent. Holdsworth (2010) felt that, what she called convivial culture, might be an integral part of theatre practices “of artists who embrace the *other* as part of the national *us*” (p. 8). At that stage the unknown *status quo* was seen as those experiences that fell outside the reality of Namibian whites and thus unknown to the dominant culture, which meant that it was the culture of the ‘Other’. According to Bourdieu (1993, p. 236) “the function of culture is to strengthen the feeling of belonging in some and the feeling of exclusion in others.” The way in which culture was funded and promoted before independence clearly supports Bourdieu’s viewpoint. The white population, irrespective of which language group they came from, belonged together to the same dominant Euro-centric culture and the way in which it was applied, ensured that all non-whites, the Other, were excluded.

The School produced work that was thought to be in line with its perceptions and expectancies of the ‘unknown’. Behrens, who headed the centre, emphasized that the expressive arts should not only rely on the verbal or written code system to characterize its existence, and he promoted what he called alternative modes of expression. He also stated that, since its inception, the School of the Arts had been confronted with a relatively unknown and unexplored Namibian culture. This confrontation may have been caused by the presence of “non-white” students. He said that “a coherent and identifiable body of artistic work does not exist but is in the process of being established” (1991, p. 59). He felt that it was important for academic institutions to generate the necessary dialectics that could result in “a synthesis of code systems depicting the intrinsic, critical and contextualising points of view” (1991, p. 59). What these intrinsic, critical and contextualising points of view were, are not clear to this researcher. If an objective of ‘Namibianising’ theatre work was achieved, it may have occurred much later, if at all, and the

School continued mostly to stage works in the Western traditions. As Behrens (1991, p. 59) recalled: “The criticism and canon available to the School of the Arts are and were drawn from the masterpieces that are European-orientated.” From what was said by Behrens, they continued to stage works of the “old masters” which they considered necessary for students at an institution of higher learning. This staging of “Euro-centric” work was criticised by people like Andre Strauss. However, by the middle 1980’s the scene was set for the staging of plays done in collaboration with Dorian Haarhoff that dealt particularly with the Namibian situation.

In 1988 Aldo Behrens expressed the view in an interview with *The Namibian* newspaper (1988, November 11, p. 8) that, due to the political situation of ‘separate development’, there was an unnecessary duplication of facilities and financial application (toediening). This led to the underutilization of facilities in the formal sector while grassroots groups had nowhere to do their work. In that particular article Behrens did not suggest an alternative or solution. It would have made more sense to this researcher if the comment was made within the institution’s dawning awareness of the fact that the Other did not merely exist, but that it had something to offer. While the School was exploring the “unknown status quo” they might have learnt a lot by allowing their underutilized venues to be used by the informal theatre makers. But then, in their defence, one should remember that they were operating within a system of separate development and that they were state-funded.

Behrens felt that the performing arts were meant to be a non-commercial reflection of what is beautiful in a nation and country. That was why he intended the School of the Arts at the Academy to verbalise the needs (behoefte) of the Namibian nation. He believed that in an

independent Namibia the School would have an important role in promoting the arts. Therefore it was important, he said, to research the indigenous culture and to write it down for future generations. Ironically, in *Die Republikein* of 26 July 1987 (p. 7), Behrens also said, in response to negative criticism by Philander on the production of *'n Smeerige Geskiedenis* by George Weideman, that the Academy was autonomous and that their choice of performance material was a matter of pride and privilege. "Whether that choice conforms to the 'Suidwes-kultuurbeeld' we do not claim". While The School of the Arts was busy researching this new mode of expression, productions of Western masters continued. At this stage the work in the Western canon at the School of the Arts would seem to have reinforced the colonialist ideology through its silence about colonized peoples.

Like the Academy, the School appeared to have suffered from a crisis of identity. Both were creations of the South African-controlled interim authority in Namibia and as such were tainted, at the same time that it tried to transform itself into genuinely open institutions that reflected the composition of, and hopes and aspirations of all the people of Namibia. Behrens' comments seemed to suggest that in their 'brave new world' they were eager to transcend the narrow, Eurocentric society they inhabited, yet were not quite sure, at that stage, how to reach out and present art in the idiom and culture of the majority of Namibians.

However, it is clear from this research that Behrens had the need for what Holdsworth (2010) referred to as convivial culture, the desire to reflect the presence of the Other in his work. During the latter half of the 80s Behrens collaborated with playwright George Weideman. They used the workshop method to devise the plays and Weideman penned them. Weideman wrote in

Afrikaans and this work dealt very explicitly with the social situation as it pertained at the time, particularly from the perspective of the disadvantaged. The plays in question are *'n Smeerige Geskiedenis (Filthy History)* and *M29*. The use of the oppressor's language, namely Afrikaans, may reflect on the structure of feeling of both Behrens and Weideman, but by that time hybridity and assimilation meant that Afrikaans had become the *lingua franca* in Namibia. It was the language in which a large part of the subaltern people communicated with the oppressor and with each other.

The play *'n Smeerige Geskiedenis*, which was performed in May 1987, centred round a group of people who were agitating for political change. They formed a club, M29, where they rehearsed a play which was to be shown to five invited guests. However, when they came out to rehearse, they found that the hall was packed to capacity. The play is a drama within a drama. The actuality of the play was heightened by the fact that it was based on historical reality, which was the removal of black people from the old location in 1959. The play was conceived as a theatrical resistance to the oppression of Apartheid. The play explicitly represented various aspects of colonial oppression like the poor living conditions of the oppressed, the disregard of their voices in determining their destiny. While they did not like the poverty in Smartie Town, it was their home. They had built a community there and they felt a sense of belonging. Their removal to a different location not only meant the destruction of homes, but also of community and support systems.

In 1987 SWA/Namibia was represented at the Grahamstown festival for the first time when students from the Academy took Weideman's *'n Smeerige Geskiedenis* to the festival under the direction of Aldo Behrens. Besides the fact that, at that time, Afrikaans was perhaps not well received at the predominantly English festival, *Die Republikein* (1987, July 13, p. 6) expressed the opinion that the standard of the play as well as the content were not enough to keep audiences attentive. By the yardstick of contemporary theatre, this production was seen as lacking in the theatrical elements that keep an audience interested. The attempt, however, was lauded by Philander (1987, p. 6) since up to that time, SWAPAC, the regional arts council, had not entered the festival at all. This research does not express itself on the aesthetic value of performances, but on whether they reflected the socio-historic and political milieu of the day. Both *'n Smeerige Geskiedenis* and *M29* did that without question.

In *M29* the residents of Smartie Town, a township in Windhoek during the Apartheid era, discover the medieval figure, Ambrosius swaddled in bandages next to a rubbish bin on erf M29. They suspect that he returned as Broertjie, the son of the Eva character. Broertjie, a freedom fighter, disappeared ten years previously. The drama ends where Ambrosius and Penny (Eva's grandchild) are tied together and Ambrosius about to be 'necklaced' because he was identified as an informer.

'n Smeerige Geskiedenis was work-shopped by George Weideman and Behrens at the School of the Arts at the Academy. In the play realism and fantasy existed side by side. The setting may have been anywhere where a government deprives the individual of his or her freedom. Roux (1987) described the play as a serious/religious search for the truth. The universal theme was man's resistance against those powers that threaten his humanity. It was protest theatre about

political activists, sell-outs and the heavy-handedness of a racist regime. From a post-colonialist perspective one may say that the play represented various aspects of colonial oppression.

White audiences were given a small insight into the realities that non-white people had to live with on a daily basis; be it eviction from their homes, police brutality or those who sell out their communities to advance themselves (1987). Since the School of the Arts had a traditionally white, middle class audience base, this work was important in raising awareness in members from the dominant culture to the suffering of the oppressed.

At Kampustoneel (Campus Theatre festival) later in the same year the play was described by Paul Boekkooi in *Beeld* as ‘sonder twyfel die subtielste vorm van protesteater’ (without doubt the most subtle form of protest theatre) (1987, April 11, p. 8). Adrienne Sichel in the *Pretoria News* (1987, April 8, p. 6) described the play as “explosive community theatre within a conventional dramatic framework.” It further expressed the opinion that Weideman and Behrens had “combined intelligent, poetic writing and theatre conventions with people’s protest. Political theatre with savvy and punch” (1987, p. 6). These comments are important to this research since they reflect the attempt by the School of the Arts to be relevant and to reflect the prevailing structure of feeling of the non-white students who could then study at the institution while their continued productions of ‘old masters’ catered for the structure of feeling of students coming from the advantaged sections.

Weideman called his plays political fantasies, a kind of socio-political actuality that compelled audiences to become involved (Roux, 1987). By entering the theatre the audience member also entered the 'magical township gathering place'. From that vantage point the audience member could empathise with a lifestyle that was foreign to him or her, yet was enforced on large numbers of the populace. Non-white audience members could understand and sympathise with the predicaments of the characters in the play because they were familiar with that reality.

Behrens and Weideman considered this work a theatrical resistance against the hated Apartheid regime. It was essentially Community Theatre within the conventional dramatic framework, used to address the politics of the day in Namibia. It gave an empathetic portrayal of those victimised by the establishment. Weideman embroidered the myth of the medieval sorcerer, Merlin, into the play in an attempt to transform people and ultimately society itself. He cleverly used the far-reaching power of the sorcerer in the myth as a parallel to the all-pervasive power of the state over people's lives. Weideman's attempt was not merely to show the socio-political realities of the day, but also to try, in a Brechtian way, to get people involved enough to want to bring about change.

Riaan Roux in *Die Republikein* (1987, May 11, p. 7) considered the play as "touching the core of South African socio-political actuality." By being deeply involved in that reality, the play forced the audience to become involved. The playwright, Weideman, was described as a trendsetter. According to Roux (1987, p. 7) the play was:

'n religieus-ernstige soeke na waarheid, na die onderskeid tussen syn en skyn, na sekerheid wat dalk nie vervaag nie, en na God wat dalk

bestaan.

(a religio-serious search for truth, for the distinction between appearance and reality, for certainty that does not wane, and for God that may exist.)

While the differences of opinion of the various critics on the artistic value of the work do not influence this study, what is important is that all were in agreement that this work by Weideman and Behrens was a sincere reflection of the socio-political milieu at a particular moment in history, during which Namibians existed under the rule of Apartheid. This fact is important to the present study. It was with plays like *'n Smeerige Geskiedenis* that the Academy, although it was considered part of the establishment, showed their social awareness of the political situation in the country and they used theatre to inform whites, their traditional audience base, about things that happened to their non-white countrymen, like the forced removals from the Old Location in 1959, a theme that featured strongly in the play.

Marianna Blaauw expressed the view of the whites in a letter to *Die Republikein* (1987, May 8, p. 17). While she honoured the positive elements of outreach in the play, she reserved judgement about the 'strong' language in the play. She wrote that:

'n groot deel van Suidwes se gehore se Christelike grondslag enersyds en hul positiewe denke andersyds, maak hulle nie 'n nommerpas gehoor vir Weideman en Behrens se sterk boodskap nie (p. 17).
(The Christian convictions of a large part of the South West audiences do not make them a suitable audience for the strong message by Weideman and Behrens.)

She referred to the “kru gebruik van die Here Jesus se naam” and “sterk gekruide uitdrukkings van mense in besonder bitter omstandighede.” Blaauw was clear in her opinion that the message of the play was not suitable for the traditional Space Theatre audience at the Academy, namely

the whites. She felt that their convictions did not make them a suitable (nommerpas) audience for what she considered a strong message. For her the clash between the structures of feeling was too strong. However, all the comments by the different people who wrote about the performances, made mention of the social relevance of the play in that it dealt with the feelings of the oppressed in an unequal society.

Behrens collaborated with Dorian Haarhoff on a play titled *Skeleton* which was also taken to the ATKV Kampustoneelfees in 1989 under the direction of Gerrit Schoonhoven. The setting of the play was a futuristic independent Namibia. The play could be described as a tragi-comedy with lots of music specially written by Retha-Louise Hofmeyr, who is now the Director of Arts in the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture. As always, Haarhoff made liberal use of satire. According to Behrens (1989, p. 7) the play used water symbolism to express the thirst of Namibian people for peace. Philander commented in *The Namibian* (1989, p. 17) that the play made a valuable contribution to “people’s culture”.

The plot of the play revolved around workers who unearthed dozens of skeletons from the pre-colonial and violent colonial past of the country while they were searching for water. They discovered that a biltong farmer was tapping all the water off for various purposes like a green rugby field. Every aspect of life of the people was affected by the dropping water levels, from the beer making for the October fest to watering their animals.

The ‘moral’ that Haarhoff was addressing in this play was the desire from some parts of the population to have self-determination within an independent republic. The characters in the play

were mobilised to get involved in the search for water. There was the realization that communities had to do things for themselves rather than wait for “the government” to solve their immediate problems. The character of Werker 3 pointed out to them that, while there was underground water, they did not utilise it. He said: “Hier sit ons soos ‘n klomp slagpatte en vrek van die dors” (And here we are sitting like a lot of weaklings and die of thirst). (Unpublished, p. 37). After the workers realised that (the character) Van de Mentele was siphoning all the underground water off to his Republic of Skeleton Republic (RSR), (the character) Rooinasie suggested that they use the skeletons that they found, especially those of the elephants that were killed by settler hunters, to block off the underground water and stop it from reaching Van de Mentele’s republic. In that way the play also addressed the issue of people having to realize that they could do things for themselves and that they did not have to go on depending on others.

The metaphor of water was carried right to the end of the play when Nampa told the workers that, as a people, they used to be like a strong current of water that dried up when the colonialists came, but with independence the people could once again be like a strong current. In her own words:

Lank gelede was ons water, sterk water toe het die kolonialiste gekom en ons het opgedroog. Nou kan ons die droogte breek en ons kan weer vloei soos ‘n sterk stroom (p. 39).

(Long ago we were water, strong water and then the colonialists came and we dried up. Now we can break the drought and we can flow again like a strong current.)

Jo-Mare Duddy in *Die Republikein* (1989, April 4, p. 7) commented:

Oplaas! Teater vir almal, en veral vir die man op straat. Nie swart-pak-stywe-nek teater, gegrond op die liniêre beginsels van Aristoteles en Shakespeare nie. Eie teater. Afrika teater.

(At last, theatre for all and especially for the man on the street. No black tie, stiff necked theatre, based on the linear principles of Aristotle and Shakespeare. Own theatre, Africa theatre.)

She said that, at last, there was a play that attracted people rather than drove them away from the theatre. This may be a direct reference to the fact that the traditional Space Theatre audiences did not relate very well to tone of resistance in the plays that Behrens started to stage.

Andrea Vinassa in *The Star Tonight* (1989, April 12, p. 8) described the play as a combination of satire, cabaret, agit-prop, using pop sci-fi film devices, Western literature and traditional African story theatre which both entertained and educated. What made people like Jo-Mare Duddy and Andrea Vinassa enthuse about the ‘Africanness’ of the play was that it was spoken and sung in Damara, Nama, Herero, English, German and Afrikaans.

Barrie Hough in *Rapport* (1989, April 16, p. 15) likened the production to that of *Smeerige Geskiedenis* which he saw previously at Kampustoneel. The comparison drawn by Hough is significant to this study since both plays dealt with Namibia’s colonial past and visions for the future. It therefore reinforces the premise of this study that drama written and performed during this historical period, under the auspices of Aldo Behrens at the Academy’s School of the Arts, reflected the socio- political and economic realities of the nation and particularly the structure of feeling of township dwellers. Although this research considers the School of the Arts as an establishment institution due to its mainstream profile and government funding, it did in fact

become involved in resistance drama with the work that they staged in collaboration with George Weideman, Dorian Haarhoff and imported productions such as *Woza Albert!*

Haarhoff's method of writing was almost always the work-shop method. The play *Guerrilla Goatherd* was performed as part of the Namibian independence celebrations in 1990 and was also performed in Grahamstown during the same year. The play was based on the history of the Bondelswarts people of the south of Namibia. They came into conflict with both the Germans and the South Africans during the colonization of Namibia (Leys & Saul, 1995, p. 9). In 1922, the Administrator of South West Africa, Gysbert Hofmeyer, took personal charge of a campaign against the Bondelswarts. Assisted by the South African Air force, he bombed the Bondelswarts into submission. Abraham Morris, the renowned leader of the Bondelswarts and the guerrilla goatherd of the title, returned from exile to lead his people in revolt. He was killed during the rebellion (Heywood, 1990, p. 125).

The play used symbol and metaphor to tell the story of this struggle of the Bondelswarts. The story is told against a Calvinist-Protestant background with the Bondelswarts, who traditionally were goat herders, being the goats and the colonisers the sheep. At a time when the government was still trying to rewrite the history of the country to include the struggle, Haarhoff succeeded in sketching a very human picture of the Bondelswarts as a people who had a valid claim to their land and the hardships they suffered in their attempt to hold on to that land. This was in contrast to the story in existing history books of the time that demonized indigenous people and portrayed them as uncivilized.

Another play on which Behrens collaborated with Haarhoff, *Orange*, was first performed in the months before UN Resolution 435 became a reality. The idiom for this play was a fantastical orange plantation in the Namib Desert. World class oranges were produced there but the people of the land, although hungry for them, hardly ever got to taste them. Most of the oranges were exported. Although the play was first performed in 1988, it was set in a futuristic 1995.

In the *Orange* scenario, Nango, a returned exile with a D.Cit (Dr of Citrus) came and invented a machine, The William of Orange which affected the currents off the Luderitz coast and produced high rainfall in an area which was a desert. Because of that, the erstwhile desert became the fertile SWARANGE plantation, producing high quality, juicy oranges. The oranges came in three sizes; the largest the Loftus orange, was exported to the rugby crowds in South Africa after they had been injected with oranje-wit-en-blou-blits. The medium sized oranges were sent to Europe while the smallest, the Ovambo orange, was kept for local consumption. NOPU (Namibian Orange Pickers Union) led by Witbooi, a descendant of the famous Hendrik Witbooi, wanted the oranges for Namibia. In the end they managed to expel the bad people. The South Africans went back across the Orange River, but they promised to return. Haarhoff prophetically predicted that independence was not going to lead to an equal share of the national cake for all. History has proven him right.

In 1986 the Space Theatre of the School of the Arts hosted the South African production of *Woza Albert!* with Sello Make and Louis Seboko. While the quality and force of the performance was not questioned by anyone, the performance did give rise to letters to the editor of *Die*

Republikein newspaper. The year 1986 was 4 years away from independence and at that time there was a great awareness in the country about the impending transition to independence. Minority groups in the country and non-SWAPO members were greatly concerned about the ‘communist nature’ of the party and what it would mean for the country if they came to power. This sentiment is encapsulated in two letters published in *Die Republikein* of 29 August and 5 September respectively.

In the first letter Ida Van Zyl wrote that it was the first time that she had seen ‘black theatre’ and she found it a strange experience (*vreemde ervaring*). She claimed that as a white person she felt as if she were placed in the dock (*beskuldigdebank*), that as a representative of the white group she felt ‘attacked, denigrated and ridiculed (*bespotlik*)’ and that things that were of value to her were portrayed in a manner that verged on blasphemy. She wrote that the play showed ‘communism as the innocent victim and placed Jesus in the same category as banned ANC leaders.’ She considered theatre like *Woza Albert!* as open ‘instigation to violence and revolution” (1986).

In response to this letter Chris Lombard wrote (1986, September 5, p. 4) and commented that one should look past the artistic excellence of this ‘type of drama’ and look at the ethical and moral effect that this ‘type of drama’ can have on society. The writer contended that this ‘type of drama’ was no innocent entertainment or interesting experimentation, that the people who worked with this drama knew the “force of theatre.” This writer took pains to explain the important communicative and persuasive function of theatre.

The responses of these two letter writers largely reflected some life views of the majority of white, particularly protestant Namibians at the time. This researcher's own early lived experiences were not very different from said world views, and the advice, warnings and admonitions received, were given against a similar background as the two letter writers. One was led to believe that a different social order was something to be afraid of.

What is important for this research is that Behrens had the courage of his convictions in providing his predominantly white, middle class audience with an experience such as *Woza Albert!* It was the first time that some members from the dominant culture saw work by members of the oppressed community and they found that reality hard to deal with. The play is a social satire which looked at what may happen if Christ's second coming, as prophesised in the Bible, should take place in Apartheid South Africa. The play presented snippets of black life during Apartheid and it showed some of the difficulties that black people had to live with as a result of racial oppression. As such it addressed themes such as exile, leadership, protest, religion, violence, oppression, Christ figures and more. The main premise of the play was the search of the oppressed people for a saviour.

What particularly upset white members of the audience in Windhoek was that Jesus was presented in the same vein as prominent African National Congress (ANC) leaders like Albert Luthuli after whom the play was named. There is no evidence in the literature that there were non-whites in the audience. If there were, they did not make written responses to the play. This

researcher accepts that black members of the audience would have related well to the messages in the play because they could identify with the subject matter.

Augusto Boal (1979) had encouraged participants in Theatre of the Oppressed to make themselves aware of the factors that led to them feeling oppressed and in a communal way to seek solutions. For Boal liberation started with the individual understanding the causes of oppression and why he or she as an individual felt oppressed. To reach that point, the individual benefited from the communal analysis of problems and advice formulation. He or she could then decide what action was necessary to overcome the feeling of being oppressed. Sometimes this involved joint, communal action, but sometimes it involved only the individual and his or her cognition, or the way he or she decided to respond on a cognitive and affective way to those factors which made him or her feel less human. Boal acknowledged that it was not always possible to change the material world significantly, but each person had the inner resources to decide how to respond to material reality. The first step, however, was the awareness, what Freire referred to as conscientization which represented the development or the awakening of critical awareness. *Woza Albert!* attempted to bring that awareness to communities outside the black townships .

The work-shopped production of *Dissie lewe die (This is life)* by Naomi Beukes and other drama students, directed by Behrens, dealt with the life of drugs and sex in especially Khomasdal, a 'coloured' neighbourhood in the capital. Jo-Marie Duddy commented in *Die Republikein* (1989, September 27, p. 7) that thankfully the play did not deal with yet another political theme. She felt that the themes addressed in the play were actual, universal and the moral disintegration shown

in the play was very real in Namibia of 1989. While the struggle for liberation was on-going, people had to deal with social problems on a daily basis that were not only the result of oppression, but were part of the human condition everywhere. The play by Beukes dealt with those issues, taking her experience from the township/suburb she lived in, expressing her structure of feeling. This play by Beukes is important in the context of this research. She showed that, while the struggle for political emancipation was important, the struggle against social evils was an on-going part of the daily lives of Namibians.

About their work during this time, Behrens commented that, apart from classical texts that are normally part of a Drama Department's repertoire, for example *Raka*, *Endgame*, *Antigone*, *Agnes of God* etcetera, they were being very politically inclined and that they work-shopped texts to address specific issues, for example the Weideman and Haarhoff plays. "The verkramptes hated us for doing them and the liberals supported us. It was a very successful era and the hype towards liberation and against colonialism was great" (2009). This statement by Behrens indicates that Namibians were well aware that the country was in a transitional phase and that the realization affected the work done in theatre.

While the general vision of the School of the Arts was to create an awareness of the arts in general (Behrens, 2009), it also succeeded in creating awareness of the impact of colonial rule amongst middle class audiences. The plays of Weideman, in particular, did inform on that and because the traditional audience at the Space Theatre was middle class and mostly white, they would have gone away more informed. It is not certain that there was an attempt at conscientisation for the purpose of mobilisation.

The Sjordes that Behrens started were lunch time performances at the Space Theatre which drew audiences from workers in the town centre. During this time the Academy was situated in the centre of town and this enabled workers to attend shows during their lunch hour. The Sjordes showcased mostly dance and music and performances were mostly well attended. Up to independence the audiences for the Sjorde comprised a mostly white and middle class audience. However, by 1993 when the university was preparing to move out of the city centre there was also a growing number of “non-white” middle class members as well as “black” students who comprised the audience. Unfortunately there was never a research into the audience profile at the Space Theatre along the lines of the research done by Hauptfleisch in 1982 for the Windhoek Theatre. Therefore the statement about the audience profile can only be made tentatively.

What is true, though, is that the Sjordes never pretended to be anything other than entertainment and the audience members who spent their lunch hour in the theatre expected to be entertained. This researcher never gained the impression that these were people who came because they were hoping for performances that addressed social issues or that would expect of them to exert themselves in any way.

5.4.2 Behrens and the Centre for Visual and Performing Arts (CVPA)

After independence, the Academy was renamed the University of Namibia. The old School of the Arts became The Centre for Visual and Performing Arts (CVPA). Like with other (semi) State institutions, the CVPA was caught up in a transitional period where old programmes had to

be reviewed and a plan forged for the future. Part of that review process was to make locally-produced Namibian work the primary source for performances. The record of actual productions during this time does show an effort to try to implement some of these aims especially between 1986 and 1992.

There was much theorizing about how in-depth research should eventually manifest as theatre performance, music happenings and visual art exhibitions. The academic/professional activities that were proposed were meant to “implement the unknown into the mainstream of aesthetics and praxis” (Behrens, 1991, p. 59). Here the unknown refers to the culture of the “others”, that which had been kept away from the mainstream by political ideology. Corrigan (1979) referred to this feeling of otherness towards someone else as the realization that “no matter how well you have known someone, there is always something unknown between you, something that separates the two of you” (p. 37). This sense of unknowing was deepened in Namibia because the dominant culture and the oppressed culture never got to know each other before independence. For most, this otherness is experienced as a threat. What Behrens, as dean of the CVPA, aimed to do was to forge a merger of Western and African (Namibian) artistic conventions and practices, or at least to bring the latter closer to the former and to enrich it in the process. As will become clear from their work discussed below, the Centre had limited success in this endeavour.

Implementing this unknown into the mainstream of the work produced by the CVPA was to be done in the following manner as quoted fully from Behrens in *Namibian Culture; An Overview* (1991, p. 58):

1. the decoding of the Namibian oral tradition into written code systems;
2. translating the Namibian way i.e. grassroots metaphor, rural rhythm, geographical harmony, nature conservation, ecosystems and many more, into aesthetic terms;
3. utilising those non-logical, non-sequential and non-chronological elements of felt life which are typical to Africa in establishing a Namibian mode;
4. acknowledging classical definitions and elements in Namibia;
5. utilising universal codes in the process of fusing indigenous and foreign aesthetic elements into a national aesthetic mode;
6. decentralising arts education;
7. furnishing new, and upgrading existing, arts educators;
8. contextualising and contemporising all art syllabi on a continuous basis;
9. manifesting arts philosophies in practical terms and
10. exposing arts manifestations to a wider national and international audience.

It was envisaged that the Drama department was to be instrumental in exploring and establishing a canon of Namibian dramatic art and to work towards a synthesis of existing Namibian and Western code systems to establish a Namibian mode of expression. This research does not question the sincerity of the intentions of the CVPA, but it wonders at the naivety of academics in the face of assimilation and hybridity. It is surely possible to combine elements and signs from different cultures in a play, but to think that such combinations will lead to a unique Namibian mode of expression appears as idealistic short-sightedness and an underestimation of cultural invasion. The cultural forms that emerge after independence will be what they are despite the best efforts of academics and administrators.

During the second run of Kafka's *Report to an Academy* in the Space Theatre in 1991, Behrens explained that staging a play from the European canon was not a case of 'the little Europe syndrome' and that they would use European drama but would "use it as a departure point for Namibian works of art. We also want to establish our own dramatic canon" (*The Namibian*, 1991, February 15, p. 5). He went on to say that too much attention had been paid to European traditions in the past but that the School of the Arts had always tried "to create accessible theatre – theatre that challenged conventional educational ideas" (1991) and that the CVPA would continue to do so. This was said without citing any examples of the accessible theatre that challenged conventional educational ideas. The researcher is therefore not in a position to comment on or to interrogate the statement. However, this researcher considers the work that Behrens and the School of the Arts did with Haarhoff and Weideman to be eminently accessible.

This research has not found evidence that the abovementioned ideals were fully achieved during the ten years after independence. Attempts were, however, made. Much later, after 2000, Aldo Behrens staged some unpublished works that were compilations of Afrikaans poems, a play about the Dorsland trekkers and the life of David of biblical fame. In these productions he explored a different mode in moving away from the 'well-made' play format.

It seems that most of the above, as quoted from Behrens (1991), have remained at the level of intention and that very few of the principles have found their way into staged productions. This is perhaps not surprising when one looks closely at what was set out as their objectives. Many of the statements come across as idealistic and academic theorising, without due thought to the actual implications and implementation strategies, or the effects of assimilation or the

postcolonial condition. The failure to find “a Namibian mode of expression” (Behrens, 1991, p. 59) does not come as a surprise. Such an assumption contains the undertones of a romanticised vision of a nation as well as ignoring or underestimating the influences of rapid globalisation, urbanization and the exposure to foreign cultures through the media and greater access to international travel. What may be said for the work that Behrens did at the Drama department is that there was an awareness, since before independence, of the need for inclusive theatre and that attempts were made to make theatre accessible to a wider audience with the works of Behrens, Weideman and Haarhoff. While not all of the philosophy about implementing the unknown into the mainstream of the work found its way into practice during this time, and even though a fair balance between Euro-centric and Afro-centric work had not yet been achieved, the CVPA did venture to stage plays that were a reflection of the wider Namibian audience’s structures of feeling.

In 1992 the Centre’s annual cultural festival under the heading ‘Ten years of Drama’ included plays such as *Endgame* by Samuel Beckett, *Talking with* by Jane Martin, *Report to an Academy* by Franz Kafka, *Agnes of God* by John Pielmeier, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by Roald Dahl and *We Shall Sing for the Fatherland* by Zakes Mda (*New Era*, 1992, October 1-7, p. 27). Looking at the plays performed two years after independence this research cannot find evidence of the proposed course of action for the Centre for Visual and Performing Arts as spelt out by Behrens above. Other than the Weideman and Haarhoff plays, as well as occasional works by students and Behrens himself, not much evidence has been found in the literature of any great successes by the CVPA to establish a definite Namibian mode of expression. However, Behrens and the CVPA continued to try to reflect more Namibian themes in their work.

“Professor Molotov”, writing in *The Namibian* (1992, June 12, p. 13), commented that, while the festivities for the 10-year celebrations that concluded the festival were billed as the Afrika Festival party, he found nothing that would speak to the indigenous Namibian African. The entire festival was in English, a language still out of reach of most Namibians, the fashions on sale were entirely West African and some people were looking for music CD’s of West African musicians who were living in Paris. The outlay of money necessary to enjoy the festival was entirely out of reach of the working class Namibian, let alone the many unemployed. Informal discussions with audience members revealed that they were distinctly middle class or from the diplomatic services. The point made here is that the CVPA’s professed move towards a ‘Namibian mode of expression’ did not manifest in their public performance programs at large. In the early and middle 90s they were still largely catering for what Strauss & Kenny (1992, p. 24) called the Euro-Namibians. Since, as stated elsewhere, Behrens considered their mandate as one of exploring traditional modes as well as educate students in the wider Western canon, the process of finding a balance between the two philosophies of performance, would be an on-going process.

In 1992 Behrens wrote and directed the play *Affirmations* for the independence celebrations. The alternative title to this play was *Get the Donors on your Side*. In this play he tried to present a ‘Namibian mode of expression’. On a bare stage with cubes and triangles the cast performed songs, dances and short dialogues. The play “epitomizes the Namibian situation, and indeed that of other third world countries with regard to the exploitation of the people’s cultural roots” (Behrens in *Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1992, March 8, p. 8). The play told of how the West had tried for

so many centuries, and had in most cases succeeded, to market African cultures and tribalism, destroying them and tearing them apart to suit their needs. The message of the play was that, if you wanted assistance from Western donors, you needed to present an African image which the donors chose. This was particularly the case since independence as community arts groups struggled to find support to do their productions in what they considered a truly Namibian way. Many performers who went this route were known as 'embassy artists' (McLaren, 1999).

Andre Strauss was of the opinion that the CVPA was so caught up in irreconcilable contradictions which made it impossible for the Centre to move out of its predetermined paradigms. The result, according to Strauss, was mostly academic and Euro-centric theatre being offered to the public, a trend he claimed had continued well into the independence era. One is reminded here again of Julius Eichbaum's (1993) observation that Western culture was embraced in all other spheres of life except the arts.

There is no evidence, from existing literature, to suggest that a harmonious merger had been achieved somewhere between European or Western art forms and indigenous (non-Western) ones to form a unique Namibian expression. Something akin to the cultural mergers that occurred in Latin America, especially in the field of religion, did not happen in Namibian arts during this time.

One may argue that the CVPA, in its idealism, yet failure to realise it fully, represented a mirror image of the Directorates of Arts and Culture for who, as noted at the beginning, variety of cultural expression and removing any obstacles to equal opportunity, appeared to have been the

ideal. The CVPA is not unique in this attempt and non-realization of the attempt. Literature shows that institutions in other postcolonial African countries went through similar searches and that, invariably, the situation in the arts ended up sorting itself out with performers adapting to the style and philosophy of the director or type of play they may be lucky to be cast in. Much as governments, idealists and romanticists strived to nail down a single uniquely African or Namibian style of theatre, this did not happen.

5.4.3 Behrens and the Performing Arts Department (PAD)

What used to be known as the School of the Arts, then the Centre for Visual and Performing Arts, became the Performing Arts Department at the University of Namibia in 1997.

Soon after independence the arts in general, and Performing Arts in particular, were relegated to lower ranks on the priority lists of funders and government. Arts were removed from school curricula in 1996, which meant that fewer students registered in the Performing Arts Department at the university. Students, who in the past could pursue teaching qualifications in the arts, now had that option removed as the university cancelled the post-graduate teacher's diploma in Drama because the subject was no longer taught in schools. Bursaries were increasingly difficult to obtain and in a country where a large percentage of the parents are subsistence farmers or wage earners who cannot pay for their children's tertiary education, people generally opted for disciplines where there were bursaries available. Performing Arts was not one of them. In this way an ever-vicious cycle started to develop at the University where budgetary and staffing allocations were linked to staff-student ratios and full-time equivalent calculations. With ever

smaller numbers of students registering in the department, it became increasingly difficult to motivate staffing positions and other expenses in the Drama department.

A positive outcome of the above was that people who did make it into the department were those who were genuinely committed to the discipline. Since around 1997 the profile of students coming into the department had changed vastly. Departmental records show that students were now predominantly 'black' with a fair proportion coming from other African countries especially Botswana, Zimbabwe, Angola and Kenya. Due to linking agreements with foreign universities, there was a regular influx of European exchange students, especially Finns, Norwegians, Danes and Germans. During this period white Namibians, with a few exceptions, went to South African universities.

Since independence the official language of the country is English and most, if not all, performance work was done through the medium of English. The experimental milieu within the Drama department, however, allowed for work done in mother tongue. In most instances where mother tongue was used, it was in concert with English. Usually a program was in English with items in mother tongue. A complete program in Afrikaans would come later with the *Variasie* programs of Behrens.

This student profile made it easier for the department to reflect the social milieu in the work that it did. However, the issues that confronted the young people at that time were not the same as for their generation ten years earlier. Cable television and global exposure had informed them differently. The 'Namibian mode of expression' dreamed of by the School of the Arts, and the

national culture sought by the Directorate of Culture, only existed in the minds of theoreticians and in policy discussion documents. That said, it is still true that in their selection of work and in their own writings, the Drama Department continuously dealt with topical issues of the day at the same time as staging works from the Western canon.

Around 1997 there was a realization that a certain sector of the Namibian theatre audience was feeling neglected (Behrens, 2009). These were the people who traditionally formed the audience base of the pre-independence National Theatre. They were the German and Afrikaans-speaking whites. Behrens decided to address this perceived neglect. Since that time he has compiled programs of Afrikaans poetry dealing with the human condition at large. These programs proved very popular and he extended them by writing programs around specific themes, for example the Dorsland Trekkers. These were a group of Afrikaners who trekked north under very inhospitable conditions and, finding Angola less inviting than they had hoped, had to trek south again. Behrens' work around themes which did not address an historical aspect invariably addressed issues that were current in Namibian society or themes with a religious nature. His productions, *Dawid, klong van God (David, lad of God)* in collaboration with Chrisna Beuke-Muir and *Variasies op Gebed (Variations on prayer)* are later examples of the latter.

The audiences who came to these performances were predominantly white and Afrikaans speaking. What is important for this research is that Behrens identified a market sector that had stories to tell and did not have the medium for a long time after independence. It was typical of post-independent Namibian society to try and break away from everything South African and to be seen to do so. The university was no exception. However, by the time that Behrens did his

“Varieties”, artists had matured enough to challenge the fact that not all Namibians spoke English and that the theatre should speak to people in their own languages. The work that Behrens did with his “Varieties” programs addressed that shortcoming in Namibian theatre fare for Afrikaans speaking audiences. It can be safely said that the audience for these performances would have had no interest in a play written by someone from the township that reflected that structure of feeling. In that sense hybridity as a one-way, rather than an intercultural communication and learning was more pronounced.

5.5 The Windhoek Theatre/ The National Theatre of Namibia

As stated in the introduction, the National Theatre of Namibia was not a main focus for this research since they did not have a resident company and were thus not theatre makers. However, in order to interrogate the assumption that the theatre represented the structure of feeling of the ruling elite, it is deemed prudent to shortly try and explore if there is any basis for such an assumption.

5.5.1 The Windhoek Theatre

At the gala opening of the Windhoek Theatre in 1973, Mr. B.J. van der Walt, Administrator of South West Africa at the time, had the following to say:

South West Africa is a young country but its whites are co-bearers of the Western civilization which is more than two thousand years old. One of the wonderful characteristics of this civilization towards which the mother countries of the white South West African language groups contributed, and in which we all now share, is especially its refinement or art consciousness (Association of Arts, 1973, p. 2).

In universalizing the interests of one powerful section of society as the interest of society as a whole, the Administrator applied what Gramsci (1998, p. 210) referred to as “condition in

process”. In this process the dominant class does not merely rule a society but leads it through the process of “moral and intellectual leadership” (1998). The Administrator explained that the Administration considered this civilization to be so important that it made generous State funds available to the SWA Performing Arts Council (SWAPAC).

He elaborated on the involvement of the Stellenbosch Wine Trust in the Arts Councils and pointed out that the “nobler things in life” (1998) like ballet, opera, theatre and good music which constitute culture, always went hand in hand with good wine. Good wine was one of the nobler things in life which brought enjoyment, uplifting and fulfilment. At the same event Olga Levinson, President of the South African Association of Arts (SWA) dedicated the new building to “you – the public” (1998). The fact that the majority of Namibians could not use these facilities effectively excluded them from the term “you – the public”. This fact seemed to have escaped Ms Levinson.

Although these events happened before the period covered by this research, the information is included here to illustrate the philosophy that was underlying the concept of culture and the execution of performance during the periods before independence. It was clearly and publicly proclaimed as culture that was aimed at only one sector of the entire Namibian population. The exclusively white establishment was the mainstay of performance activities during the period of South African rule of Namibia.

In 1963 the regional arts councils in the Republic of South Africa (RSA) were established (SWAPAC Publication 1976, p. 9) and it did not take long for the establishment of a similar one in South West Africa, which was treated as a fifth province by the South African government. The minutes of SWA Legislative Assembly meeting of 13 March 1967 (p. 7) indicate that The South West African Performing Arts Council (SWAPAC) was established in 1966 but the National Theatre Organization for English and Afrikaans plays had been in existence since 1947 (1976).

According to the aforementioned publication, the establishment of SWAPAC marked the beginning of the promotion of performing arts at a professional level, with recognition and financial assistance from the State. Thus, from the very beginning the Apartheid government funded the promotion of the dominant culture through the arts council. While the National Theatre Organization for English and Afrikaans plays concentrated on drama performances, the new recommendations in 1966/67 made provision for the inclusion of ballet, opera and music together with drama. Andre Strauss (1999) identified the functions of that council as catering for the needs of white Namibians, being fully sponsored by the State, it was a “crucial ideological arm in perpetuating the myth that blacks are inferior and whites superior” (p. 89).

In 1982 Julius Eichbaum asked the question whether the Arts Councils should be restructured. Because the Arts Councils had been funded with public money and had been subjected to outside interference by political personalities, their credibility had been brought into question at times. Eichbaum explained that Arts Council directors had been in the invidious position of having to serve both the political masters who provided the money and a public who looked for artistic

productions of high quality and relevance. According to him many viewed CAPAB (Cape Performing Arts Board) and the Nico Malan Theatre in Cape Town as establishment entities, “symbolising the voice and attitudes of the governing political party” (1982, p. 24). This observation could equally be applied to SWAPAC.

According to Eichbaum the arts councils had, for the most part, studiously avoided anything that may be termed politically contentious in the way of productions. He said that: “it seems that Theatre of Relevance which forms such a vast percentage of our indigenous theatre must remain the sole preserve of organizations like the Space (in Cape Town) or the Market (in Johannesburg), who do not receive a government subsidy” (1982, p. 34). As Eichbaum argued, the public could hardly be blamed for regarding the arts councils as being merely a political extension of government policy in South Africa and hence also in Namibia.

This background is included because Namibia (SWA), being ruled as a fifth province of South Africa, had its own arts council which operated in the same manner. The tone that was set then, was to continue until independence and a little after that. An addendum is attached to this document, showing some of the activities in the theatre during the time that this research applies. It is clear from that that the “culture” that was actively promoted was classical European and contemporary Afrikaans. By virtue of the choice of material, languages used and the segregationist philosophy of the time, the largest percentage of the population was excluded. This example shows the kind of work that the grassroots performers cited when they criticised the NTN for being overly Western-centred.

This, however, is not strange. It has been noted by social commentators like Karl Marx and Pierre Bourdieu (Haralambos, 1989) that the dominant culture is always that of the ruling class. There was no attempt to incorporate any of the cultural expressions of the oppressed people of the time. In fact, it was never a consideration. As Zeeman (2000, p. vii) remarked, there was a collusion between the state arts provision and the classic colonial culture to exclude indigenous, autochthonous cultural expression. This researcher found that, three years after independence, young black students at the University of Namibia were reluctant to display any of their cultural activities in a context outside the cultural group. Even when a script used during class work called for an indigenous song or dance, this was offered very tentatively. The impression that this created was that people were made to believe over time that their cultural contribution was inferior and should therefore stay within the confines of the village or township. David Kerr referred to this as a “colonially-induced inferiority complex” (1995, p. 109).

Zeeman (2000) made the observation that the work presented at the Windhoek Theatre was entirely Euro-centric. The early Western/European format of theatre was based on the ancient Greek model and the nature of theatre as set out by Aristotle’s in his *Poetics*. Augusto Boal (1979, p. IV) for example, considered this nature of theatre as set out by Aristotle as prescriptive and coercive. Part of how this legacy was interpreted was for theatre to be considered elitist and exclusionary. Despite the fact that some of the prominent Western playwrights throughout the centuries have written inclusive works, this perception remained. That was also how performances at the Windhoek Theatre were perceived.

The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1984) made the observation that, although class rule is ultimately economic, the form it takes is cultural and that the production and reproduction of

cultural space helps to produce and reproduce social space, social power and class difference. He further argued that social practices of cultural consumption, which involve the making, marking and maintaining of social difference, help to secure and legitimate forms of power and domination which are rooted in economic inequality. Although culture does not produce or cause class or race division and inequalities, “cultural consumption is predisposed . . . to fulfil a social function of legitimating social difference” (1984, p. 7).

According to Bourdieu (1993, p. 236) “the function of culture is to strengthen the feeling of belonging in some and the feeling of exclusion in others.” The way in which culture was funded and promoted before independence clearly supports Bourdieu’s viewpoint. The white population, irrespective of which language group they came from, belonged together to the same dominant Euro-centric culture and the way in which it was applied, ensured that all non-whites were excluded.

It was of this theatre philosophy that Zeeman (2000, p. v) spoke when he said that until shortly before independence the Windhoek Theatre was the exclusive preserve of white Windhoek. The theatre staged heavily subsidised European music, ballet, European and Afrikaans drama. He argued that there was collusion between the state arts provision and the classic colonial culture to exclude indigenous, autochthonous cultural expression. Up to the time of independence, black Namibian performers had no access to the theatre because of the 1953 Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, (Swilling, Humphries, & Shubane, 1991, p. 93) or to its funding and subsidised training programmes. They were effectively excluded from institutional cultural controls. Zeeman contended that culture “that was not of the oppressor’s or colonialist’s mould was not

patronised” (2000, p. v). The state had a decisive control over arts expression through its funding of the arts and did not allow any elements, which it considered subversive, into the mainstream, government–sponsored culture. The exclusion did not only apply to the performers, but to the audience as well. This researcher made the observation over the years that it would take a while after independence for all sectors of the Namibian population to feel comfortable enough to attend performances in the National Theatre.

In a study done by Temple Hauptfleisch in 1982 at the request of the then SWAPAC, (*Report TK/SESAT –2, 1982*) Hauptfleisch gave a profile of the theatre-goer during the early eighties. This profile was to continue for about three years after Namibian independence. The profile that Hauptfleisch sketched was one of a theatre-goer who was white with 55% being female and 45% male, Afrikaans or German speaking, and between the ages of 25 and 45. This person was usually educated beyond high school level, had a good job and an average to above average income. Most were categorized as professionals (as opposed to administrative, management or manual workers). The majority were city dwellers who regularly attended the theatre irrespective of whether it was a professional or amateur production. Hauptfleisch gathered his data through questionnaires that were handed out to audience members at performances in the Windhoek Theatre during that year. According to Hauptfleisch (1982) five thousand five hundred and sixty nine (5 569) questionnaires were received back which represented a feedback of 23%.

The percentage of audience members who spoke Afrikaans was 42.2%, German 48.5% and English 9.3%. 0.3% spoke another language. The research report did not indicate which other language. Patronage at the theatre was exclusively white.

In 1988 visiting black artists like Shaleen Surtie Richards, Soli Philander and Thandi Claasen performed their shows at the Moringa Room at the Kalahari Sands, a local hotel. This was one way of getting around the problem of having blacks on stage and in the auditorium of the theatre. Up to the time of independence, black performers had no access to the theatre because of the 1953 Reservation of Separate Amenities Act (Swilling, Humphries, & Shubane, 1991, p. 93). When Thandi Claasen returned in 1990, she would be allowed to perform in the Warehouse Theatre (*The Namibian*, 1990, May 18, p. 12).

During the 80s certain white hotels in different parts of South Africa and South West Africa had been granted permission by the government to admit South-African born black guests as well as Blacks from outside the Republic. These hotels were graded as International. Previously the only black guests allowed in White hotels were foreign Blacks of VIP status (Hitchcock, 1977, pp. 11-12). The Kalahari Sands hotel in the centre of Windhoek was one such hotel. Robert Kavanagh (1985, p. 25) pointed out that this development came about as a result of the South African government looking for new economic markets in the rest of Africa. It entered into *détente* with African states north of the Zambezi. What was of significance in the cultural field was that certain hotels and restaurants were declared international and race restrictions were relaxed in these venues. That made it possible for “non-white” artists to perform in these places.

In August 1989 the Warehouse Theatre in Tal Street was inaugurated as part of the National Theatre of Namibia. It was known as the Alte Brauerei Warehouse Theatre. Hannes Horne, then director of the National Theatre of Namibia, explained in an interview with *The Namibian*

newspaper (1989, April 23, p. 2) that it would be the home for amateur theatre groups, Windhoek's equivalent to the Market Theatre in Johannesburg, South Africa. The first forum presented there was entitled *Yola Pamwe*, Oshivambo for 'let's laugh together'. By giving the forum an Oshivambo title, the message was sent out that all were welcome. However, personal observation has shown that the management was to learn that it would take more than an indigenous language title to convince the arts community of its sincerity and to lure them to these previously whites only venues.

The Warehouse Theatre was a favoured venue for music performances. In 1991 the NTN revised its relationship with the Warehouse and the collaboration ceased. In 1993 the Warehouse reopened as an entirely private, non-subsidised institution (*The Namibian*, 1995, January 20). In that capacity the Warehouse relied heavily on sponsorship from other cultural organizations and businesses and it readily opened its doors to performances that could fill the theatre.

Earlier discussions to again make the Warehouse part of the NTN bore fruit later. The reintegration of the Warehouse theatre into the organizational structure of the NTN happened on 1 May 1999. It was intended to become an alternative venue for NTN productions. The financial assistance of the Embassy of Finland in Namibia was meant to broaden the scope of activities at the Warehouse Theatre. The intention was to include mainly live music, cabaret, and stand-up comedy in the Warehouse fare. It was also intended that there should be an emphasis on "community theatre and Namibian contemporary and traditional music to ensure that local talent received the recognition in deserved" (Philander, 1999, p. 16). Yet, even then, many Namibian

performers found it difficult to raise the fees for theatre rental. However, the sharp hike in music performances was a direct result of the availability of the Warehouse theatre.

In 1988 Barry Hough wrote (p. 24) that the winds of change blown into South West Africa with the coming of Resolution 435 would not really change much in terms of the type of theatre that SWAPAC was intending to present at the Windhoek Theatre. In the same article, the director of the SWAPAC, Hannes Horne, explained that certain types of plays were not appropriate in the Windhoek context. The example that he gave was that German audiences would not be happy if they did the *Diary of Anne Frank* and although they did stage some Brecht works, there were some German audience members who could not make peace with his work either. "So," asked Horne, (1988, p. 24) "what do you do?" In response to the position taken by Horne, Behrens pointed out in the same article that the Theatre presented *Bacchus in die Boland* which was insulting to Coloured people and he questioned the theatre's willingness to offend Coloureds but not Germans.

This is mentioned because this small polemic underscores the premise of the research that drama is reflective of the socio-political milieu of the nation. That milieu in Namibia/South West Africa during the years 1985-1989 when this discussion refers was of white South African domination, with the emphasis on the culture of the dominant faction, with little or no regard for the culture of the oppressed or their response to what was presented in the only theatre in the capital. In fact, the research literature available in the form of archival reserves such as newspaper reviews, institutional yearbooks, readers' letters to newspapers, to name a few, focus entirely on the work done by people in the mainstream or establishment theatre. There is very little in the form of

archival records on the counter-culture that Zeeman was speaking of. The exceptions here are the Windhoek Players of Philander, Bricks Collective and a little bit about Roots Travellers.

In 1988 the Representative Authority for Whites handed the South West African Performing Arts Council (SWAPAC) over to the interim government. The Cabinet of the interim government decided that SWAPAC should be incorporated as an association not for gain under Article 21 of the Companies Act, 1973, and be registered with the Registrar of Companies as the National Theatre of Namibia (Cabinet submission: National Theatre of Namibia. 3rd draft, 1992, April 28. File Nr 15/3/2. NTN Archives).

By 1989 the process was completed and the Windhoek Theatre operation moved from the control of the central government to being an Article 21 Company. As an Article 21 company, the theatre operated as an incorporated association not for gain. This was the company which Mr T. Zeeman, new director of the National Theatre of Namibia inherited from the outgoing director of the Windhoek Theatre, Mr Hannes Horne in 1990. Mr Horne oversaw the transition of the Windhoek Theatre to the National Theatre of Namibia. These measures seem to have been in preparation for the post-independence scenario where it would be necessary for the theatre to collaborate more widely and indeed have a more inclusive character.

The cultural boycott

The General Assembly of the United Nations accepted Resolution 2396 on December 2, 1968, which was aimed at isolating South Africa until it abandoned its Apartheid policies (*The Namibian*, 1990, July 6, p. 7). One means of doing that, it was decided, was for member states to

“suspend cultural, educational, sporting and other exchanges with the racist regime and with organizations and institutions in South Africa which practice Apartheid” (Willemse, 1989, p. 25).

This was the culmination of a process which was started in 1954 by a former priest of Sophiatown, Father Trevor Huddleston. In the London *Observer* of October 1954 Father Huddleston wrote:

I am pleading for a cultural boycott of SA. I am asking those who believe racialism to be sinful or wrong to refuse to encourage it by accepting any engagement to act, to perform as a musical artist or as a ballet dancer – in short, to engage in any contact which would provide entertainment for any one section of the community (1989, p. 24).

In the years since the boycott was imposed, South African entertainers, academics and sports people had been barred from participating in events outside their own country. At the same time UN member governments discouraged their own performers, sports people and intellectuals from going to South Africa. The boycott was only adapted to allow cultural exchanges supporting or organized by the anti-Apartheid campaign.

Already in 1984 the Commission of Inquiry into the promotion of the creative arts in South Africa reported in its findings (1984, 2.2.14, p. 8) that, “mainly as a result of the political isolation of South Africa, South African artists and art are cut off from the rest of the world to a high degree and this has a noticeably impoverishing effect on the artistic life of the country.” The report further stated that, that was one of the reasons why a large part of the artistic community distanced itself from anything to do with the arts if the State was involved.

When, on April 23 1990 Namibia became the 160th member of the UN, it pledged to respect the decisions of the UN General Assembly. But, as David Lush (1990) pointed out in *The Namibian*

(July 6, p. 7), the new Namibian government was finding it difficult to ensure that all aspects of the cultural boycott were enforced. He noted that “South African entertainers continue to stream over the Orange river to perform in Namibia, while the South African movie company, Ster Kinekor, continues to show boycott - busting films at their cinema here” (1990, p. 7). In the same article the Deputy Minister of Education, Culture and Sport, Mr Buddy Wentworth, went on to say that it would be hypocritical of the Namibian government to say that it would enforce the cultural boycott and then do so selectively since, at the time, Namibian schools still taught the South African school syllabi. There was thus no point in refusing South African performers entry into Namibia.

5.5.2 National Theatre of Namibia (NTN)

It would have been helpful to start this chapter with an exposition of government’s arts policies in order to evaluate the work done in the theatre against those, but as had been mentioned before, no such policy for arts and culture existed at the time. The NTN experienced many problems that were to dog its work for the duration of this research period.

Soon after independence the NTN had to establish a relationship with the new government. Minutes of meetings (NTN Board 1990, January 29) show that formal contact with the government would only be possible after the new government had been sworn in, but that all members of the NTN Board of Directors should make informal contact. By the next meeting on March 2, 1990, it was decided that Mr Horn, as person in charge of the theatre, should contact Mr Buddy Wentworth and Mr Nahas Angula. At that stage there was no indication of what the

agenda for such discussions would be. In April Mr Horn reported back that he had in fact met Mr Wentworth personally and had spoken to Mr Angula telephonically and that there would be follow-up meetings after the official independence processes.

Whatever the outcomes of these follow-up discussions were, the structure of the NTN seemed to have remained intact. In a submission to Cabinet in April 1992 (File Nr: C 15/3/2 NTN Archives) the NTN asserted that the Ministry of Education and Culture was of the opinion that the dispensation of the NTN at the time was the best possible legal framework to “ensure that having become (an Article 21 company) it remains a truly democratic cultural institution.” In order to meet the aim of engaging traditional performers, cultural officers were sent into the regions. The researcher of the work of the NTN will find that some years after independence the task of the NTN and its cultural officers was taken over by the Namibian Arts Council. However, the Arts Council did not focus on regions, but awarded assistance on the basis of proposals. The records show that most successful proposals came from urban theatre makers. This opens up a new research avenue for future researchers.

The main objective of NTN as a post-independence, article 21 Company was:

To present, produce, manage and conduct performing arts, both professional and amateur, in such a manner and at such times and places as the company shall determine (1992).

In pursuance of that object they pledged to:

Take cognisance of, and make provision for, both the diversity of and the common ground between the performing arts traditions of the various cultural and language groups of Namibia;
 Take into account not only the needs of urban communities of Namibia but also those of regional communities and provide opportunities for both to experience the performing arts;
 Encourage indigenous performing arts by promoting, utilising, presenting and financing indigenous work and artists as much as possible (1992).

The euphoric motto of NTN in 1991 was to provide a platform for the performing arts across the cultural spectrum. “Through relevant theatre productions and workshops, NTN wishes not only to entertain but also to address various environmental, social and economic issues of the day” (*Kalabash*, 1992, p. 16). In line with postcolonial responses, the NTN had vague ideas about making the subaltern visible. While the intention was there, it did not always manifest. As Zeeman (2000, p. vi) explained, the subsidy received from the government was used to service the bricks and mortar of the building structure and did not extend to the fulfilment of the various and varying objectives. In other words, it was not enough to significantly improve the operational activities. At that stage the ‘platform’ consisted primarily of providing logistical support (unspecified) to various cultural groups in the regions, music performances, short workshops and servicing the Ministry of Education and Culture (*Kalabash*, 1992, p. 16). According to the NTN submission to Cabinet in April 1992, no budgetary provision had been made for culture in the financial year 1991/1992 and the NTN could thus not carry out some of their functions.

In their programming for 1995 Leon Beukes, General Manager of the NTN, singled out the regional activities that “were never done before” (1995). He believed the majority of the people who lived in rural areas to be the most marginalised. For that reason he felt it their “duty to develop those areas that incidentally also remain the custodians of our traditional performing arts” (1995, p. 58). His approach was to train performers in the rural areas in organizational and artistic skills to enable them to create and market their wares efficiently.

It is noticeable that Beukes acknowledged that these rural areas were the custodians of traditional performance, yet they needed to be trained. There was the constant underlying insinuation that

rural people lacked skills that they could only obtain from their urban counterparts. For the work to be acceptable these people had to be “trained in artistic skills.” Did they have no artistic skills before? Who defined artistic skills and whose criteria were acceptable? This researcher has observed over a number of years that institutions and organizations readily fall back on the training aspect when they approach donor bodies for funding. Whether or not that training was actually needed by the communities in question is a moot point. It is significant that some of the groups that were singled out for training had been in existence long before that time, for example the Caprivi Arts and Culture Association (CACA) and that, even after the ‘training’, they continued to perform the same fare in the same way. However, Beukes felt that their intervention had enabled people to “conduct work on their own steam and continue with their performances” (1995, p. 57). These were the same people, incidentally, who had been performing in their own communities without any support and “training” from anybody and who had always been doing it on their ‘own steam.’

How the National Theatre evaluated its intervention is never made clear. If it is in the form of a performance after a workshop, the efficacy of the intervention is questionable, especially as some of these community groups had been in existence for many years without this intervention and “upgrading” of skills. In fact, while they were doing their work ‘on their own steam’ they managed to keep traditions alive to the extent that Beukes referred to them as the “custodians of traditional performance” (1995). Hence, the question persists in the mind of this researcher as to the need for and the efficacy of the NTN intervention in the activities of rural cultural groups.

During that time the theatre worked with foreign missions on educational programs and hosting foreign performance groups such as the Chinese acrobats and Bolshoi ballet. Namibian performers found it strange that the National Theatre, which pleaded poverty, could afford to import said foreign productions. What they did not seem to realize was that many of these productions were made possible by the support of foreign missions from where these productions came.

Zeeman, as new director of the NTN, wanted to encourage local involvement and support drama from the community, but he was well aware that, while their mission was to provide entertainment for all cultures, rural and urban, traditional NTN audiences were accustomed to “excellent theatre”, meaning imported European and South African productions (1992). He stressed the importance of audience satisfaction, saying that it was pointless to persist with productions which did not draw an audience. In the long run this would frustrate many Namibian performers because the work of previously disadvantaged artists did not draw in large audiences. However, when he took over, Zeeman had every intention of making the theatre ‘work’ for Namibian performers. He, however, did not have *carte blanche* since there was still a board of directors to consider.

Zeeman used the life story Rorkesdrift-trained graphic artist John Muafangejo in a musical drama to celebrate the first anniversary of Namibian independence. This drama had to be developed because as Zeeman said: “In Namibia very few scripts exist that one could pull off the shelf to represent the country. So to restore the balance between import and indigenous, Namibians must create their own work” (1992, p. 59). The play, *Forcible Love*, was developed

through what Zeeman called trial and error workshops. Included in the development of the work were an “Oxford playwright, an American-trained South African-born director, actors, out of work people, illiterate dancers and more” (1992, p. 59). According to Zeeman the bringing together of disparate technologies of production – grass roots, traditional, Western and a fusion of all the above would generate a Namibian postcolonial culture. He felt that *Forcible Love* was just one effort that allowed indigenous theatre the space that it needed to develop. This one example is mentioned here because it was the first time a stage filled with ‘black’ performers from most of Namibia’s language groupings, was seen at the NTN.

The literature shows that, in the years after independence, the relationship between the NTN management, the NTN board and government was dogged by uncertainties with regard to the role and function of the theatre and the way in which government carried out its obligations to the theatre. Shortly after taking office as Executive Director of the NTN Zeeman wrote a comprehensive report, illustrated with graphs, to members of the Board to illustrate to them how the Board itself, together with the previous executive, had been remiss in handling the affairs of the NTN properly. Vast amounts had been spent on foreign productions that ran at a loss, while local artists received practically no help from the NTN. Zeeman quoted the NTN objectives which were to:

(iv) encourage indigenous performing art by promoting, presenting and financing indigenous work and artists as much as possible;

and

(iii) take into account not only the needs of the urban communities of Namibia but also those of regional communities and provide opportunities for both to experience the performing arts.

He thought that it would be “informative for the Board to see where the provisions have fallen and what part of the population of Namibia benefited from or had been deprived of subsidy” (Letter to Board members 1991, April. NTN Archives). At the end of Zeeman’s analysis it was patently clear that the NTN management and Board had not carried out their objectives seriously and that the bulk of the subsidy that was available for performance, was spent to cater for the needs of what Strauss & Kenny (1992) referred to as the Euro-Namibians. Zeeman then urged the Board to take greater responsibility for the financial health of the institution and to reconstitute itself to be more representative of the Namibian population.

In terms of funding, there did not exist any formula on which the theatre could rely. The government assisted the theatre because “Its Memorandum of Association and its endeavours to realize those goals met with the approval of current Ministry thinking” (1992). Thus, while the artists were unhappy about what they perceived to be lack of commitment on the part of the NTN with regard to creating and funding performance opportunities in the country, the NTN was locked in a financial battle of its own to secure adequate funding for its operations. Zeeman complained that 90% of the funds still went to maintaining the bricks and mortar of the building, a situation that left them with insufficient funds to make a significant impact on postcolonial theatre practices in the country. This researcher does not dispute that the NTN, as an Article 21 Company, and the Windhoek Theatre, as an institution, tried to make work of these concerns, but the documentation thereof had not been found.

The NTN’s attempt at establishing a drama troupe was short lived. In May 1990 they established a company of five actors who were appointed on a year-long contract. These were performers

who were part of the NTN production of *Legends and Stories of Namibia* which had toured the country extensively (*The Namibian*, 1990, May 30, p. 9). It was understood that other “development” projects like *Mirror Mirror in the Sand* by Naomi Beukes would be used to augment the ‘permanent’ cast when the need arose.

The first year of the NTN acting company came to an unhappy end. After completing a gruelling year of touring for “seven out of the twelve months, with up to six performances a day,” (*The Namibian*, 1990, December 7, p. 11) the actors expected salaries for the whole year as well as a year-end bonus. This, however, was not to be. The actors said that they were led to believe that they were full-time employees of the theatre (1990) and accused theatre management of exploitation and racism. They claimed that it was them, Namibia’s first black acting company, who gave the NTN credibility, but that management viewed them as nothing “but black actors who were not human beings” (1990). However, NTN’s head of drama at the time, Mees Xteen, described everything as a misunderstanding and stated that the group would function on an *ad hoc* basis until the following financial year. Xteen felt that it was unfortunate that the government subsidy to the theatre and their own income generating abilities had not allowed for the existence and growth of the NTN acting company. The theatre never again had a full-time acting company.

In 1990 David Lush (*The Namibian*, 1990, November 23, p. 35) expressed the opinion that it was going to be a battle to win back Namibian theatre audiences who, according to Zeeman had not yet made up their minds about attending locally produced dramas. This opinion was supported by the admission of actors and producers alike who admitted (1990) that it was going to be a

struggle, “particularly as the black community has had little if no previous contact with acting in the theatre”. As he said before, Zeeman reiterated his observation that “in the past the almost exclusively white theatre audiences were fed on a diet of imported culture which came mostly from Europe and South Africa” (1990). He felt that, with the work of the NTN, Namibian culture was being “recovered and re-excavated” (1990) but that white audiences had not yet come to terms with this “new” (1990) drama and that they were still making up their minds whether it was something they wanted to see and pay money for.

The matter of whites staying away from the theatre after independence was brought up earlier by Kate Burling in her review of the performance of Amampondo, a ‘black’ group from South Africa (*The Namibian*, 1990, March 30, p. 17). She noted that, although it was a “fantastic performance,” the theatre was two thirds empty. She saw it as a problem that “Windhoek’s white community – by far the biggest patrons of the National Theatre hasn’t got the interest to fill the building. And it is physically and perhaps financially inaccessible to everyone else” (1990). She felt that it was a problem that the NTN had to address if it wanted to play a culturally relevant role in the new Namibia.

An important contribution that the National Theatre made through the efforts of Zeeman was the publication in 2000 of the first collection of 10 plays by Namibians. This anthology, *New Namibian Plays Volume 1* was the result of the first The Golden Pen competition. The sponsor for both these projects was the Embassy of Finland in Namibia (Zeeman, 2000, back page). The second volume of *New Namibian Plays* was published in 2002, containing plays entered for the second Golden Pen competition.

Another effort by the NTN to assist Namibian performances was a program named Theatre Zone. Initially the idea was that Theatre Zone and the Golden Pen were to be linked. Certain entrants in the Golden Pen competition were to have their plays produced by the NTN in the Theatre Zone project. However, over time that philosophy fell away and the program was open to any Namibian director who wished to enter a play for the Theatre Zone competition. A Theatre Zone cycle characteristically ran over two years. Directors received some financial and/or logistical assistance from the NTN to stage their plays. At the end of the two-year cycle winners were announced in various categories. Both the Golden Pen and Theatre Zone were meant to be on-going projects, albeit with many problems and discontent on the part of the artists in later years. During the time covered by this research, however, both programs ran with some efficiency and effectiveness.

In their Activity Report of January 1996 – March 1997, the NTN bemoaned the fact that, despite the MBEC's mission statement "to promote widespread and lively cultural and artistic expression, to safeguard our physical, linguistic and spiritual heritage and to improve the status of artists and provide opportunities for training in the arts", the Ministry had not increased the subsidy to the theatre since 1990. NTN had to source money from international funding agencies and foreign governments to carry out its 'training programs' in Windhoek and the regions. The theatre management felt hamstrung because it could not provide the comprehensive programming for the capital and the regions which it should have been doing. The NTN cautioned for greater government spending on the theatre since foreign funding could not be expected to continue indefinitely. By March 1998 the grand-in-aid to the National Theatre was

increased from N\$ 1 250 000 to N\$ 1 300 000 (Letter to Mr Herma from Ms Katoma, Permanent secretary, MBEC. 1998, March 5. NTN Archives).

In answer to the question of whether the Windhoek Theatre/National Theatre of Namibia represented, in their performances, the worldview and structures of feeling of the dominant classes in society, this research found that the Windhoek Theatre did that without doubt before independence. It had everything in place to carry out the mandate as explained by the administrator. The situation after independence is not so straightforward. The National Theatre lined itself up as a postcolonial institution with the interests of the subaltern at heart, but did not always have the means and support to live up to its aims. As an Article 21 company it was not entirely empowered by the Ministry to achieve the goals of being all-inclusive. The means for the subaltern theatre makers to do their work would be provided by the government, through the Namibian Arts Council, many years later.

Namibian independence came late in the history of Africa and other nations had gone through their own post-independence phases. Many newly independent countries dealt with the same concerns as Namibia and it appears that some parallels can be identified. The research now explores to what extent the Namibian situation reflected that in some other African countries.

CHAPTER 6

An overview of developments abroad: How did Namibian theatre practices compare to those of some other postcolonial countries in Africa?

6.1 Namibia in an African context

It is not always helpful to think of African drama in the context of “things” such as plays, productions, actors and texts. In the same way as there is an on-going debate about the definition of culture, researchers in the field are not always in agreement about words such as drama, theatre, tradition and so on. Academic disciplines often problematize terminology, but as Liz Mills said in 2009 : “the concern (here) is less with the business of finding accurate descriptors for particular concepts and more with the meanings that are made in the encounter” (SATJ, 2009, 23, p. 23). In the African context, dramatic performance quite often does not rely on a scripted text. This researcher was often answered with a shrug of the shoulders when enquiring after scripted work of theatre groups and individuals. However, said Hauptfleisch & Steadman (1984, p. 4), because of rapid westernization, through the influence of radio and especially television, and the entire urbanization movement, the traditional forms of theatre were rapidly changing. In Namibia, as in the rest of Africa, theatre was sometimes used as an expression of the voice of the people of the land, be it in anger, joy or in sorrow. But, as Marjorie Bolton (1960, p. 155) remarked, the use of theatre for direct propaganda is nothing new. In this way theatre is used primarily to impress an idea on an audience, often implying a view on some important issue.

For the sake of propaganda, this type of play often over-simplifies and over-states a case. This research concurs with those who feel that most of these plays may be of small literary value but that they are of immense educational value. In a country with a high rate of illiteracy like Namibia, a performance could impart information that may otherwise never have reached an intended audience.

The idea that the coming of whites to Africa changed many of the functions of the performing arts has been oft documented. What used to be very sacred and private dances, particularly initiation rites, became public performances. Huwiler (1992) for example, speculated that at independence, the government's intention in most African countries was to support and promote performing arts groups. However, it is also true that after independence there remained a white settler and expatriate community in Africa who had invested heavily in sports and other cultural facilities, for example theatres and art galleries. These institutions continued to propagate the culture of the coloniser. In the African context, that usually meant a white, Euro-centric culture. This is an important point made by Huwiler (1992, p. 26) when one looks at the performance culture in Namibia in the state-sponsored and mainstream performance venues. This research found that statement very apt to the Namibian situation as well. In fact, it was a point of discontent with a section of the arts community. The views of Strauss & Kenny (1992) with regard to Euro-Namibians who preferred Western influenced theatre had already been discussed. Immediately after independence the National Theatre continued to stage work of a Western orientation.

There is a general acceptance that Africa's theatre history passed through three stages (Huwiler (1992, Wa Thiongo (2001)) although different commentators identify the stages differently. There was the pre-colonial era, where it is said that traditional ceremonies and rituals were performed. Then came the colonial era where traditional performances were considered backward, decadent and uncivilized. At the same time the Western practices were implanted, many of which have sunk their roots and become an integral part of present day African theatre culture. Thirdly, independence brought the realization that Africa's cultural heritage was being undermined. Many indigenous Africans had been made to feel ashamed of their customs. As a result a quest for cultural identity began, which set out to instil some kind of cultural, and hence national pride in the population as whole. In Namibia this can be seen in the search for a Namibian mode of expression and the support of traditional groups by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Huwiler (1992, p. 27) discussed post-independence theatre under a heading: *Rise of an African Theatre*. This does not presuppose that there was no theatre in Africa before independence, but that a new form of presentation developed. This she called Popular Theatre. She claimed that:

Following independence a new kind of theatre developed. Previously there had been traditional dances and rituals; then there was the western-oriented theatre, represented by the theatre houses and now there developed a new kind of theatre. It served a new social and political and cultural function, and is referred to as 'Popular Theatre'. Many theatre activities following independence tended to gravitate towards this kind of theatre (1992, p. 27).

In Namibia, this format which Huwiler called Popular Theatre was introduced before independence. It was a 'People's Theatre' and had as its philosophy the idea of developing a social and political awareness in people, the masses. It formed one of the foundations of the

presentation style which was employed in the conscientizing process. It did, like in Huwiler's examples, continue to exist after independence since there were then new concerns to be made known to the communities. While mere entertainment was not the driving force, the Namibian performers found that the didactic nature of the plays had to be balanced with entertainment.

In the years following independence, African theatre enthusiasts started to encourage the performance of locally written plays or those adapted to local situations. Plays which portrayed the 'African way of life' (Huwiler, 1992, p. 26) and which reflected contemporary concerns were encouraged. She did, however, not say what form the encouragement took. In Namibia this was brought about by a realization by the people themselves of the validity of their own stories and their ways of telling these stories. This research did not find any evidence that Namibian playwrights were encouraged by anybody to write plays reflecting contemporary concerns. In fact, those playwrights who did venture in that direction found very little support for their efforts.

While the rate of development in Namibia after independence did not significantly influence life in many villages, the situation was different in the bigger towns and city. There was a big influx of people into urban areas with the, mostly unfulfilled, dreams of jobs and a better life. This led to growing informal settlements inhabited by the unemployed while the urban elite lived increasingly richer lives, often funded by corrupt practices. Plays written by Africans often reflect concerns of individuals trying to maintain themselves in an increasingly corrupt and insensitive society.

While the core concept of Popular Theatre was the same in Africa in general, individual countries put their own stamp on their approach. In Uganda Popular Theatre was defined as taking the people's own forms of expression and enriching them in such a way that the people themselves could take over leadership of their theatre activities. Popular Theatre was meant to link up with tradition, and take it further. It meant travelling to rural areas, performing in "dirty dilapidated halls, playing fields, village clearings and urban bars". The idea of performing in such circumstances, turning one's back on the comforts of the little theatres was considered as revolutionary (Huwiler, 1992, p. 27). The community performers in Namibia did not have an option before independence. They had to go into the streets, performing in dirty dilapidated halls, playing fields, village clearings and township bars. For them the ideal was to get into the purpose-built theatres from which they had been excluded for so long. But that was a long time coming. Before independence Namibian performers did not put a name to the type of theatre they did. After independence academics and aid agencies imported the name from other third world and developing countries and the term Theatre for Development was used for all sorts of theatre activities aimed at improving the lives of people. This researcher wishes to emphasize the point here that this form of theatre was agency driven and not the style of choice for Namibian theatre makers after independence. Many did get involved in it because it provided some income.

According to Huwiler, Theatre for Development became a powerful current in African theatre, especially with workers engaging themselves in the struggle of the oppressed, using theatre as an aid in articulating their concerns and demands. In independent Namibia this did not happen. Theatre for Development, as Community Theatre came to be known, was then largely the domain of Aid agencies and foreign missions. Government departments also made use of the

medium in projects such as voter education. In such instances drama was primarily used as a tool for motivating communities to participate in the objectives of the campaign, for example motivating people to vote and educating them about the voting process. Once the abundant funding of the aid agencies waned, so did the demand for Theatre for Development. This does not mean that it is never used, it is. It just never became the powerful current that it seemed to be in other postcolonial African countries.

After a certain period in independent Zambia there was also a move away from popular style of plays appropriate for a popular mass audience (1992). There developed a greater interest in black American material over home grown which was considered inferior. It used a theatre aesthetic similar to the Western tradition and addressed itself to urban elite audiences. Huwiler observed that, slowly it appeared that African theatre was being absorbed into the mainstream of European theatre. “The theatre houses were being used, a theatre aesthetic similar to the European tradition was being followed – exposition, climax, denouement and productions which attracted an urban elite rather than mass audiences, were encouraged” (1992, p. 27). In this regard Zambia and Namibia followed a similar path.

Immediately following independence there is the tendency to write and produce home grown material. However, due to the colonial legacy of inferior education for large sections of the population, many people from the lower or working classes lacked an understanding of the conventions of Western drama and theatre while the middle classes, traditionally the mainstay of theatre audiences, started to reject these efforts as inferior. The situation in Namibia was no different. After independence there was an effort to produce home grown material which mostly

meant that local issues and situations were depicted in the format that was appropriated from Western scriptwriting traditions with actors on stage and audience mostly passively receiving what was presented to them.

Epskamp (1989) observed that “during the first few years after independence, drama remained an elitist affair, which was mainly due to the unbridgeable gap between the local performing arts in the villages, and the kind of drama that was given shape by the university” (p. 110). When, by 1969, the University of Zambia resolved to be of service to society, the Drama Department became more active in the work with communities and Chikwakwa was born which had as its aim drama for the rural communities. Most Chikwakwa productions were based on scripted texts, without any preliminary research into the problems of the area, because, once again, the aim of the performances “was to bring culture to the people” (p. 108) and not to use theatre for developmental work, unlike in Botswana. In this respect Namibia and Zambia differed. Before independence the National Theatre productions did, on rare occasions, tour to smaller towns, a tradition that was inherited from the then defunct South West African Performing Arts Council (SWAPAC). However, university productions did not.

The Namibian dramatic lexicon only really shows published texts after 1990, but as Zeeman (2000, p. vii) stated: “this scripted ‘first’ belies more than a decade of theatre making that hasn’t found its way into text.” This may be explained by the fact that most of Propaganda Drama and Popular Theatre practitioners did not have access to publishing houses and also that an issue got dealt with and that people moved on to the next issue. As ‘amateurs’ their concerns of day to day requirements overrode the written legacy that they could leave. The urgency of Propaganda

Drama meant that the performance had to be staged as soon as possible while the issue that it addressed was still relevant while, at the same time, it may be detrimental to the troupes if security service personnel were to get hold of these scripts. In fact, a fixed text was not always aspired to. The flow of the performance was usually only suggested in outline and through improvisation the rest was filled in. Community Theatre was often also poor theatre which did not leave resources for expenses such as publications. Yet, despite the lack of a dramatic canon, the amateur theatre played an invaluable role and reached audiences that commercial theatre could never reach.

Namibia is no different from other postcolonial African states where the criteria for theatre were, mostly, drawn from European literary traditions and ideas. Post-independence dramatists in many of the newly independent states were largely educated at the young national universities which were themselves based on a colonial blueprint (Epskamp, 1989, p. 105). This was only partially true in the Namibian situation. University graduates like Sifiso Nyathi continued to write, but the majority of Namibian playwrights during the period before independence and for a number of years after had no tertiary education and they came from the tradition of grassroots theatre. However, from these universities in other African states came a kind of development oriented theatre in countries like Uganda, Botswana, Zambia and Malawi, while in Namibia the development oriented drama was largely driven by donor agencies, often working with informal performers. In countries like Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe a change eventually came about where, instead of taking ready-made plays to communities, development workers cooperated with communities in the creation of the drama. Namibia is different in that respect in that this inclusive type of theatre had already been practised before independence by Bricks, amongst

others, and seemed to make way, after independence, for a greater move towards the ready-made play in a custom-built theatre and away from the townships and rural areas.

By and large, the impetus of Community Theatre seemed to have run out by the time that Namibia gained her independence. The work of Philander and other younger playwrights continued to address social issues, but the tradition of making plays with communities actively involved in the process like in the era of Bricks, appears to have largely, but not totally, come to an end. This may be so because performers hoped to be absorbed into the mainstream. In isolated incidences like the work of Alex Mavrocordatos with the community at Gibeon, the methodology was still used.

Namibia never had the tradition of many other African countries of University drama departments or groups undertaking extensive tours to rural communities. According to Epskamp (1989), the Travelling University theatre, which involved students touring the country with a repertory during their holidays, started in Uganda during the years 1964-1966 (p. 107). The idea was to take “culture” to the country and to promote the work of young playwrights. This supposition expressed by urban institutions that rural people are without culture and that they need to be ‘developed’ is a theme that recurs. Botswana is an exception. The records show that from the earliest exercises in Theatre for Development in that country, the communities were seen as a vital partner. Because people in the rural areas were not used to paying admission fees, the performances were free. The British Council was a major funder for these repertories in Ghana, together with the National Theatre in Kampala as well as some private sector companies. These performances did not have the same intention as the outreach programmes before

independence. Epskamp observed that Julius Nyerere's translation of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* appealed greatly to audiences. The plays were presented in English and Swahili, but the audiences rated the English plays "more beautiful, more serious and carrying more weight" (p. 108). It seems that even in rural areas the idea of Western supremacy had infiltrated.

Perhaps the major difference between Namibian theatre pre- and post-independence is that the two streams of theatre, namely Community Theatre and formal, establishment theatre, were more clearly defined and existed independently of each other before independence. While no generalizations will be made, the literature seems to indicate that both forms of theatre, establishment and Theatre for Development, continued to flourish and develop after independence in some African countries like South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Nigeria. Zimbabwe, in particular, continued with a strong community informed theatre and may also be the country with the greatest censure of performance work.

The influence of universities on theatre was prominent in Botswana as well. The Laedza Batanani (Let's come together, work together) project, started in 1974, continued to grow and used Theatre for Development in many development projects. The project incorporated the pedagogic philosophies of Freire in its work (p. 108). This is one example of an independent African country using theatre as a didactic tool on an on-going basis. The university did not see itself as a travelling entertainment unit that could provide the country "with a form of culture considered to be lacking" (p.116). Instead it attempted to make plays with the rural people that were meaningful to them within prevailing social realities and reflecting local structures of feeling. The equivalent of Leadza Batanani, which was aimed at social uplifting, especially in

rural areas, was not found in the Namibian context after independence. When Namibian students took their plays out of the capital, it was mostly to attend fairly prestigious drama festivals in South Africa, like the Grahamstown Festival. This applied to work from the informal sector as well, since Committed Artists of Namibia regularly attended the same festivals.

Huwiler (1992) noted that in Botswana a technique of participatory research was adopted. In other words the researcher tried to become one of the masses, to discover the problems for the target group. In pre-independence Namibia there was no need to try. The informal performers were part of the masses. Once identified, themes were researched and used as topics for the performances, for example cattle rustling, venereal disease, malnutrition, etcetera. By that time Popular Theatre had become known as Theatre for Development. In 1994 Veronica Baxter mentioned that by the middle of the 20th century, a theatrical technique evolved under various names, amongst others, popular, development, liberation, and theatre of the oppressed. In Southern Africa these terms all seem to have been blanketed under the common name of 'Community Theatre' (p. 1).

In independent Nigeria the universities had worked together with government ministries in development programmes. Students usually obtained the permission of the district chiefs to work in the villages to gain information from the villagers on how they thought government initiatives could best be applied to them. These performances relied heavily on audience participation. From the earliest rehearsals the performers incorporated improvisation. The Nigerian performers made use of 'open rehearsals' (p. 114) where community members could watch and make comments. These comments were then integrated into the performances. In this situation the

process was as important, if not more so, than the actual performance. The information obtained was then used in the government programmes. A problem that the student actors/facilitators experienced was that they raised awareness in communities but that they were in no position to implement changes. The peasant farmers themselves often did not have the wherewithal to implement practical solutions.

Tanzania tried from the early 70s to let the traditional performing artists work with staff and students from the University of Dar es Salaam. It was felt that both groups could learn from each other. This is an approach that was used at the University of Namibia as well. Behrens and Olivier-Sampson had often in their productions made use of non-formal performers and Olivier-Sampson, in particular, had tried to incorporate the knowledge and skills of these performers in her work. These non-formal performers were incorporated as an integral part of the process. Their many years of being active in theatre making endowed them with the ability to impart skills to student performers. These performances dealt with social issues and non-formal actors could understand and interpret the idiom. Most had also mastered many aspects of the craft of acting and could thus integrate well with other performing groups.

According to Epskamp (1989) the approaches of Chikwakwa and Leadza Batanani were greatly influential in the growth of Theatre for Development in Africa and other third world countries. Their approach was that, if innovations were to make sense to people at large, they had to fit into the total cultural setting of the community. Mavrocordatos, for example, made liberal use of song in his work with the Gibeon community because he found there a tradition of musical soirees.

6.2 What happened to Protest Theatre after independence?

The question that arose in the mind of the researcher was “what happened to Community Theatre and Protest Theatre after independence?” It cannot be assumed that there was nothing to protest against in the new dispensation. Since little or nothing has been written about the situation in Namibia, a look at what happened in neighbouring South Africa may shed some light on the question.

In order to evaluate or understand post-independence theatre one needs to understand what Protest Theatre is and the answers are not always obvious. As Van Graan (2006) asked:

Who determines what is protest theatre? Is it the practitioners thereof? Is it critics? Academics? Is there a list of objective criteria by which to evaluate or label theatre? And, what is the point of such labels anyway? Does it serve theatre? Does it help audiences?”
If the conditions exist for protest theatre, should we call it something else, or do we infuse protest theatre with new meaning that would rehabilitate it for traditional theatre audiences since now it would be directed towards a black government and its partners, as opposed to the Apartheid regime and its beneficiaries? (p. 25)

Having said that, does the absence of ‘pure’ Protest Theatre indicate that we simply have nothing to protest about? If the work of Philander were to be removed from the Namibian canon, very little is left that could be considered Protest Theatre ten years after independence in Namibia.

Boal asserted that all theatre is political. Van Graan elaborated on this statement when he noted that:

Whether we like it or not, whether we acknowledge it or not, the act of making theatre is essentially a political act. What we choose to make theatre about, and what we decide to leave out, who we decide to do theatre for, which audiences and at which theatres or buildings we do theatre, are in essence, politically strategic choices. However we may wish theatre to be apolitical, what we do theatre about, where we do it, and for whom, serve

to reinforce or challenge dominant values, beliefs, ideas (p.26).

Mda (1994) added that, whether people liked it or not, the artists would always respond to the prevailing political and social conditions, because they select their material from society. Mda pointed out that actors do not create their works about something that is divorced from their day-to-day reality. Politics is part of their intimate daily experience, and for better or for worse politics will feature in their works. The reality is that, when the predominant political culture was that of resistance, the art that was created reflected that situation. Not only did it reflect it, but it rallied both its producers and its consumers around issues of resistance. When the culture being cultivated by the dominant political structures is that of reconciliation, “the arts (should/could be expected to) will play a role in reflecting that situation, and in mobilising people for reconciliation” (p. 3). It cannot be said with certainty that the expectation of the arts as working in the service of reconciliation was found as a dominant trend in Namibia. The research did not find any evidence that the plays performed in Namibia after independence placed significant emphasis on political reconciliation, unlike in South Africa where that became a common theme. A study of the plays performed in the country shortly after independence does not indicate that such an undertaking was ever a priority. This may be partly due to the fact that Namibia’s transition to independence was far less volatile than the situation in South Africa. The reconciliation in Namibia was more evident in the composition of the performing groups where interracial casts became the norm.

Lena Slachmijlder (1999) proposed that the close relationship between the liberation struggle and Protest Theatre may have carried within itself the germ of its own demise. She argued that, as an amplifier of the struggle for liberation, (South African) protest theatre transported the voice

of freedom fighters across the stages of townships and the world. It produced great names like Gibson Kente and Mbongeni Ngema and trained a generation of talent; yet in its final phase, the fact that it had become synonymous with the liberation struggle raised questions about its lifespan once that battle was no longer needed (1999, p. 18).

There are similarities between South Africa and Namibia in what was staged five years after independence while at the same time there are also major differences. While the South African theatre scene, according to Schlachmuis, showed encouraging signs of growth, the same cannot be said for Namibia. The similarities lie in the way in which artists responded to their new given reality. In South Africa “Five years after the country’s first all-race elections, new themes, new names, and new styles are emerging from South African theatre” (1999, p. 18). Actors, playwrights and directors were responding to and reflecting the society as it existed and as it was perceived by them. There were familiar structures of feeling in a new dispensation. In Namibia the same people who were active in theatre continued to do so after independence. Namibian performers, especially those from previously disadvantaged groups, addressed contemporary social issues and personal stories while their counterparts in South Africa did the same, as well as dealing with previously politicised historical events and cultural treasures which they developed and staged “intent on proving their artistry without drifting away from the reality that created them” (1999, p. 18). Social issues such as domestic violence, crime, unemployment and alcoholism, “which would have been deemed irrelevant during the era of ‘protest theatre’, have been explored afresh” (1999) both in Namibia and South Africa.

Again, unlike in Namibia, South African directors have to a large extent “been successful in drawing audiences” (1999). This did not happen in Namibia. This researcher found that the grassroots artists who moved into the mainstream, were very unhappy about the lack of audience support for their work. The major reason for that appears to have been the fact that the performances were taken out of the communities to be presented in the inner city venues of which the NTN was an important one. The cost involved in getting to these venues and to pay the admission price kept many patrons away. Schlachmijlder indicated that the new writers and directors recognised their emergence from the era of ‘protest theatre’, while appreciating that audiences were no longer looking for the ‘amandla message’ (1999). Audiences that previously patronised the ‘theatre of the struggle’ wanted to be entertained, yet without being transported into a fantasy land that failed to recognise the daily grappling with hardships the new dispensation had inherited, and the disappointment and cynicism that its high expectations had created (1999). Another reason for audience apathy could be that traditional theatre goers found the work of the new breed of theatre makers lacking in the elements of “high” culture that they had been used to.

This lack of audience support for local productions was addressed in Vickson Hangula’s play

The Show isn’t over until ... The character of the Director complained that:

I think it has to do with who has the money to spend on whose entertainment base. Why do you think black theatre groups feel intimidated to perform in the National Theatre? Because they know they will not even get one quarter of the full capacity. Who will go to a place where if a performance has to be successful then it is either a foreign production or one that appeals mostly to white, rich audiences? How many people identify with the operas, symphony orchestras and cabaret shows that frequent that theatre? (2000, p. 25).

The vicious cycle that this produced was that theatre management chose to host shows that drew large audiences and therefore more money was spent on buying in foreign shows than funding local productions. Theatre managers were prepared to take risks on high cost productions because experience has taught them that their regular pre-independence audiences were attracted to 'high' culture. At the same time it also sent out a message to the traditional middle class audience base that, despite a regime change, the theatre would continue to cater for them.

Before independence actors were expecting that the new dispensation would bring opportunities for an increased emphasis on enhancing their craft. "With protest theatre the audience knew the subject so well ... now there is more of a challenge to keep the audience interested" (1999, p. 19). Namibian artists, however, found out soon enough that their aspirations with regard to development would not be met. Training and development of new talent did not progress to people's expectations. The sentiment of Zeph Nzama in South Africa that "there are new faces in senior posts, but they don't do much to give people chances or access to resources" (In Schlachmijlder, 1999) was echoed by Namibian performers. For Nzama, who was disillusioned with changes in the years after independence, the risk inherent in the developmental shortcomings in the theatre industry lay in the potential for theatre to, once again, become elitist and to only reach a minority of viewers.

This researcher agrees with Nzama that redefining the context of 'Protest Theatre', while retaining and improving on the craft was the crux of the challenges facing new directors. Nzama expressed his hopes for the development in regional theatre because the "South African theatre industry will be poorer if it does not rise to the demands of this audience, and instead resigns

itself to the purely commercial realm of entertainment and sensation, which characterises the majority of the theatre sphere in the Western world” (1999, p.19).

Another reason that may be forwarded for the decline in protest theatre was offered by Mike Van Graan when he said that the theatre establishment, overwhelmingly white and privileged under Apartheid had, at best, an ambiguous attitude towards “protest theatre”. He claimed that:

For the mainly white, liberal audiences of the 70s and 80s, going to the Space, the Market and the Baxter was like going to church. Watching protest theatre was like going to confession for their collective sin as beneficiaries of Apartheid, and while it was painful to watch, the actors were essentially performing rituals that were uplifting for the soul of the audience. They then left the theatre cleansed for having been spat at, and if they sat close enough, being spat on. Viva! Viva! Go and sin no more. Now we often hear that audiences – still overwhelmingly white and middle class – don’t want to be reminded of those times (2006, p. 24).

Another factor is the attitude of practitioners and audiences themselves. As Van Graan (2006) pointed out, there are many who would say that there is no longer a need for political theatre. These are people who feel that “in the aftermath of the mass assault of anti-Apartheid theatre, there is almost a desperate plea for theatre to be released from the burden of politics” (2006, p. 24) as if the election of a democratic government and the adoption of a constitution premised on fundamental human rights, are the magic wands by which we have attained the promised land, where theatre no longer needs to concern itself with macro-political dramas in which ordinary people have bit parts.

For Van Graan, what once was Protest Theatre, had now become theatre of nostalgia: good as history lessons, gentle reminders of what things used to be like, but lacking the edge that the immediacy of the Apartheid environment would have provoked. He based this on a performance

of Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi Is Dead* which he saw in 1996 where the atmosphere was totally different from when the play was performed before independence. The 1996 audience apparently responded with a kind of sympathy that clearly indicated that they were happy that it was not required of them to go out and do something about the oppression that the protagonist suffered.

Rayneard (In Van Graan, 2006) explained that Protest Theatre has struggled to come to terms with itself after 1994 in South Africa. The methodology was, like in Namibia, directed at what was perceived as the new enemies. However, he felt that the methodology was ineffectual because it merely pointed out problems rather than address the source of the problems and assist with finding solutions. He noted that:

Typically then, protest theatre has directed itself at the new scourges: poverty, crime and HIV/AIDS. And despite the fact that none of these enemies have ears in and of them-selves, too many actors in too many productions have pointed accusing fingers and given them a jolly good telling off. With all due respect, it's generally understood that crime is bad, poverty is rotten and that HIV makes you dead. It's getting rather tired, having our heads stuffed with truisms (p. 24).

Rayneard felt that the decline of Protest Theatre was partly as a result of it no longer offering solutions or alternatives. Both Boal and Freire encouraged understanding and awareness of oppressive forces but urged for decisive action to follow on the insight. Merely naming a problem is not enough. The individual or the community had to do something about it. The point made by Rayneard that listing the ills in society without addressing the root causes or those responsible for the causes was really telling people what they already knew without any assistance on how to change and improve that reality. It also placed no great pressure on those responsible for the situation to accept responsibility. It is true of the Namibian situation as well that during the postcolonial years the 'Protest Theatre' of people like this researcher, Molapong,

Hangula and others often merely depicted the degraded conditions of their characters without offering real solutions or directing the protest at the government with the intention of finding solutions.

Van Graan (2006) posited another reason for why protest theatre may not have survived as a strong force in the post-independence era with its strong commercial bent. As was said earlier in this document, Community and Protest Theatre were always considered to be of lower aesthetic value than productions offered in the mainstream establishment theatres. According to Van Graan, while it was hardly ever articulated boldly, there was a sense that “Protest Theatre” was regarded as inferior theatre, theatre that would not stand the tests of good theatre such as universality and timelessness. He argued that:

At best, “protest theatre” – or that which was so classified by the pencil test of white critics, academics, practitioners and commentators at the time – was regarded as understandable and even necessary at the time, but infinitely limited. While it might have had political validity, “protest theatre” was a bit of an embarrassment, like an unsophisticated relative from the country, an assault on the establishment’s sense of theatre aesthetics and practice. It is true that generally, anti-Apartheid theatre, particularly that which was created without the influence of trained, generally white practitioners like Barney Simon, lacked in theatrical expertise. But this should hardly have been surprising given that Apartheid education denied black people access to the arts at school level, that career opportunities for black performers were extremely limited in the performing arts council era and that tertiary training institutions with drama departments were generally inaccessible (p.23).

Some of the reasons why Community Theatre and Protest Theatre were considered in that way by the establishment and the regular audiences at mainstream theatres were explained by Van Graan (2006). The plays were didactic, with little room for interpretation. “The message was the thing; theatre was simply the vehicle” (p. 23) and the characters were closer to caricatures representing types, rather than multi-layered characters. The form was generally a storytelling

one, with actors addressing the audiences directly, “often in declamatory style” (p.23) while the actors usually played a variety of roles in the storytelling process. There were no large sets, or multiple props or fantastic costumes because of a lack of resources, but also to make the play portable. The actors were generally untrained, but as Van Graan pointed out, the combination of raw talent and the proximity of the situations being portrayed to their own lives, accounted for the credibility of the pieces. The plays were often workshopped in accordance with the principles of democracy rather than have one writer as “the all-seeing eye or brain” (p. 23) and many pieces of protest theatre combined the disciplines of music, dance and theatre. A further important aspect raised by Van Graan (2006) was that the piece would be performed in community halls where they would be well-received by the audiences who related directly to their themes, and when the same piece would sometimes be performed in formal theatres where the life experience of the audiences would be other, the response was different.

The notions of universality and timelessness, by which theatre is often judged, are not absolutes; they are class bound, intimately linked to life experience, wealth, education, exposure to the arts, or lack thereof and power. They are products of the prevailing structures of feeling. In this light the dismissive or ambiguous attitudes to Protest Theatre by the theatre establishment are largely a reflection of the prejudices of class and privilege. This reference by Van Graan to the South African situation is equally applicable to Namibia. The themes of Protest Theatre may not have resonated with the more privileged citizens in the country, but they would resonate with oppressed people in other countries. The themes of oppression are understandable to the oppressed wherever they are. What was inevitable, given Apartheid education, was that generally, Protest Theatre would lack the theatrical sophistication of the privileged theatre establishment.

Marek Spitzcok von Brisinski (2003) disagreed that Community theatre lost its power. He felt that it did not disappear, but merely transformed itself. Von Brisinski commented that Community theatre has undergone major changes from the apartheid to post-apartheid periods. From the 1960s to 1994 popular theatre was driven by the impetus of challenging the injustices imposed by the apartheid regime and raising awareness of these injustices. During the 80s and early 90s community theatre was most visible. Politically inspired performing groups were commonplace, especially in urban areas. Whether in churches, community halls or as part of funeral processions that were themselves protests against the system, performance was a visible part of township life. The struggle against apartheid united people, especially the youth, and the goal was clear: overthrowing a system of rule that had increasingly oppressed the country's majority for more than 300 years. With independence the unity of purpose dissipated. Community initiatives took on other functions after independence. An important function for these initiatives now became skills training for income generation and networking. Von Brisinski felt that Community theatre did not diminish after Apartheid, "but that it has taken on a diversity of forms and functions that may need to be taken into account in realising its liveliness and livelihood" (p.117) Namibia had nothing like Sibikwa of Phyllis Klotz or New Africa Theatre Academy of Mavis Taylor in South Africa. Namibia could not make the same claim after independence that Von Brisinski makes for South Africa that "despite restructuring and decrease in funding in the arts community arts continue to flourish in various ways" (p. 123).

Namibian institutions like the CVPA, the NTN and the Directorates of Arts and Culture tried to realize a variety of cultural expression and had the removal of any obstacles to equal opportunity

as their ideal. Attempts may not always have succeeded, but attempts were made. Literature shows that institutions in other postcolonial African countries went through similar searches but that, invariably, in practise the arts ended up sorting itself out with performers adapting to the demands of the moment. As said before, much as governments, idealists and romanticists strived to nail down a single uniquely African or Namibian style of theatre, this did not happen in Namibia or her neighbours. Protest Theatre, while not as visible after independence, seems to have continued to exist, albeit with a different focus.

6.3 Developments after 2000

The period after 1999 warrants further research in order for a more comprehensive reflection of arts development in Namibia. As mentioned before, many of the initiatives that were started during the years covered by this research only came to fruition afterwards. Following are some of those initiatives:

- The draft arts policy was submitted for Cabinet approval in 2001;
- The National Arts Council was launched in 2008. This body has made bursaries available for artists and arts teachers to further their studies. It has also made funding available for performers to showcase their work;
- The Namibian Film Commission was established by an act of parliament in 2000;
- The Warehouse Theatre moved from the fold of the NTN in 2007 and became a purely commercial venue;
- In 2012 it was rumoured that government is looking at reintroducing the arts in schools. Whether this is the result of a fundamental change in government philosophy to the arts or whether it is due to the agitation and negotiations of the artists union is a matter for consideration by research covering this period;

- A few of the former grassroots performers have been incorporated into the staffing structures of the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture as well as the College of the Arts Extension program. Some continue to make their income sporadically through work in theatre and film;
- The NTN has lost its status as an elitist institution and all performers feel free to present their work there. However, the financial constraints still prohibit some;
- Alternative performance venues are now available in the form of the Playhouse Theatre (previously the Warehouse), Backstage at the NTN and the wholly commercial Backstage Theatre. The Space Theatre at the University of Namibia still only offers limited access to performers since that venue, which is also a teaching space, is constantly in use by the students in the Drama section for their rehearsals and performances;
- Bank Windhoek came on board from 2003 as a sponsor of the arts, and through smart partnerships, continues with the annual Bank Windhoek Arts Festival. From 2005 to the present (2015) Aldo Behrens has been the coordinator of this initiative;
- Philander continues to stage the same plays as during the duration of this research, as well as some plays by Athol Fugard;
- The performances pulling full houses are still primarily imported products. An example of this may be given here. The Namibian stand-up comedy company, Free Your Mind, usually plays at smaller venues like the Playhouse or Backstage to a small audience while the South African stand-up comedian Trevor Noah consistently fills the National Theatre, however audience responses to local performances, for example the UNAM Choir, where Western and traditional modes are combined in one performance, are very positive.

- The NTN's development program, Theatre Zone, continues and many first-time playwrights, directors and performers had their work seen through this initiative;
- The NTN's biannual film and theatre awards now honour excellence in the fields of film and theatre.
- Audience profiles have changed since the survey by Hauptfleisch. It is much more representative of the larger Namibian population.
- The profile of students in the Performing Arts Department is slowly changing with more white Namibians enrolling.

This research does not conclude that, in the period after 2000, artists are happy with the state of the arts in Namibia. However, the only voice still raised in periodic criticism is that of Frederick Philander. By 2001 Werner Hillebrecht indicated that there was still little discourse about culture in Namibia. Culture was still considered as “a vehicle for achieving moral, economic and political goals, but (not) as a human right and fundamental means of human expression” (p. 208). His opinion was that culture continued to be treated with neglect and that while the State provided “a framework – some coordinating bureaucracy, some survival finding for theatre” (p. 220) the onus was still on private enthusiasm, local initiative and donor funding for the staging of performances.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusions

The aims of this research were to explore the ways that theatre in Namibia was conceptualized, managed and performed from the mid-1980s to the turn of the century. The study tried to establish whether plays performed during the period of the research reflected the structures of feeling in Namibia and how the plays represented various aspects of colonial oppression. The role of the government in providing policies and guidelines against which development could take place was another area that was examined. The research further looked at the situation in Namibia in relation to some other postcolonial countries in Africa to see if there were meaningful similarities in the approaches to cultural expression among different postcolonial populations.

The conclusions reached in this research are that Namibian theatre makers have reflected the socio-political and historical milieu in this country from the mid 1980's to the turn of the century and that their work mirrored the structures of feeling at specific moments in the history of this country. The impulses that led to the creation of theatre were informed by the lived experiences and material reality of the theatre makers and the subject matter of the plays reflected that. Work in the state sponsored Windhoek Theatre/National Theatre actively promoted the culture of the ruling powers in the form of European and South African productions during the five years preceding independence. The philosophies that governed their work could be clearly identified as upholding and promoting the culture of the ruling class. In the years following liberation, their intentions of strengthening previously neglected societies did not always meet with success. The

performances in the informal sector had a common theme, that of rejecting occupation and anticipating liberty. The work of these theatre makers was informed by the need in the oppressed communities to rebel against the victimization they experienced under Apartheid. For the first five years after independence when the sense of euphoria was high, such a clear distinction cannot be drawn. Much of the 'pure' resistance drama faded while theatre makers tried to become part of the mainstream.

The theatre makers whose work forms the basis of this research all had different mandates but, as it turned out, before independence they all had a common goal. That goal was informed by the structures of feeling that governed the Namibian people during the dying years of foreign rule and aspirations of self-government. The work of Bricks was situated directly inside marginalized urban communities and addressed their concerns through a method of participatory theatre with the aim of empowering people to live a better life. This communal and community-based work was made possible through donor funding. Frederick Philander struck out on his own and from the start his performance methodology was shaped by western conventions. While showing the dire conditions of those living on the fringes of society, he also criticized the systems of government that spawned such conditions. Although he occasionally accepted funding, his work was mostly done without any financial assistance from anyone. Aldo Behrens worked from within an institutional framework. At a time when it was risky for state funded institutions to venture into opposition politics, Behrens managed to present work that showed the effects of the political dispensation on the lives of the oppressed. He also took a gamble on possibly alienating his existing audience base, people who had a different structure of feeling to that of the characters they saw on stage.

This research hypothesised that, as an establishment entity, Behrens and his work would reflect the dominant structure of feeling of the ruling class. The researcher was proven wrong to a certain extent. While it is true that their work from the Western canon and the Sjordes did reflect that structure of feeling, the work with Weideman and Haarhoff crossed boundaries of feeling to reflect the structure of feeling of the oppressed.

The first five years after independence seems to have been marked by slow progress in change on the side of institutions in the formal sector while a sense of disillusionment was beginning to creep into the awareness of the artists from the informal sector. Previously disadvantaged theatre makers still experienced difficulties in getting their work staged and it would appear that the new dispensation was not ready to meet their expectations and this led to a sense of disillusionment.

While no definite trends developed in theatre during this period after independence, there appears to be three identifiable streams of concern: firstly, a concern with reviving traditional culture, a second stream was the concern by artists for government to take a lead in planning and development and lastly the expectation of imparting skills and competencies and empowering people through the use of Theatre for Development. There was also the hope of establishing a unique African/Namibian cultural identity. Of all the groups active after independence Bricks gives the impression of having remained closest to the ideals of Boal. Their Community Drama, when they practiced it, continued to involve the people in identifying problems, developing the plays and finding solutions. However, they soon moved into a different direction and stopped making theatre. It was during this time that grassroots performers aspired to work in the

established theatres. It is therefore posited that the pre-independence zeal for Protest Theatre may have waned.

Theatre in Namibia during the first five years after independence faced many challenges to promote itself. The view expressed by arts administrators seems to have been that for theatre in Namibia to grow strong, it had to become a tool for development and a vehicle to promote ways of community empowerment and social change. Despite that, hardly anything was said about how theatre was to be assisted materially or otherwise. The onus was largely on the theatre makers to find the means by which to make their work possible.

Although no common strands or artistic approaches were detectable in theatre in the years immediately after independence, the most consistent and visible theatre activities remained the work of Aldo Behrens and Frederick Philander. In addition to their work, individuals who, previously, were part of community initiatives, then wrote and produced their own work. The plight of performers did not significantly improve and as the euphoria wore off, the dramatists became more critical of the post-independence realities.

The response of Namibian government officials to the search for a national cultural identity largely revolved around a 'going back to our roots' approach. Yet, this research did not find any evidence of the development of a uniquely Namibian mode of expression. This research posits that even in that, theatre reflected the socio-political and historical reality in the country. By the time that the above statement applies, Namibians were already 'cultural citizens of the world'.

The Directorate of Culture worked on their aim of ‘strengthening’ traditional Namibian performances with their regular cultural festivals in an attempt at nation building. This research questions their success at nation building and eliminating tribalism when the cultural festivals focussed on tribal cultural expression rather than a unified national expression. The national cultural festivals that were introduced by the Directorate of Culture five years after independence with the intention of enhancing unity in diversity and nation building, had been an on-going initiative throughout the period covered by this research and, in fact, continue up to the present (2015).

After independence many Namibian performers struggled, some in vain, to make inroads into the theatre world. Besides Philander, who was always mostly self-supporting, the only other pre-independence performance group that survived into the present is Ndilimani. They were formed in exile by SWAPO to be an ideological instrument. After independence they remained a subsidiary of the party, is funded by the party and has the role of praise singer.

An aspect that has frustrated artists to the present is the fact that there exists no official policy document on the arts. Even though the Director of Arts assured this researcher in 2010 that the policy was presented to cabinet in 2001, the truth is that at the end of 2014 there was no official policy. It is public knowledge that stake holders were invited to a workshop late in 2014 to work on such a policy. The result of that was that there could not then be systematic planning and development of the arts until the government clarified for itself its philosophy to arts expression and the development of the arts in Namibia. It is therefore difficult to assess the success or otherwise of government intentions with the arts since there was no official document against

which to evaluate the situation in the country during the time that this research applies. Since before independence, and shortly thereafter, there were general and vague utterances by various party and government officials about what would be done about the arts in the country after independence, but in the absence of an official writ, nobody could be held accountable for the state of the arts in Namibia up to 1999. The rallying cry of the Ministry of 'unity in diversity' was not enough to guide the process of arts development. This was the situation that pertained by the time this research ends. It is the opinion of this researcher that, for a long time, artists worked because they could not suppress the impulse that Corrigan (1979) referred to, that impulse that leads to the creation of the theatrical event and the human needs that are fulfilled by that event.

Ten years after independence theatre had once more become a commercial enterprise where those who do not have access to financial support fall by the wayside. In terms of skills development very little had been done to empower Namibian performers to sustain themselves with their craft. The Oruaano Artists' Union was established in 1997 and it was hoped that this body would play a role in the upliftment of performers. By the time this research ends, that union has diminished almost into obscurity.

A problem that both government and the artists have to deal with is the question of what really constitutes a Namibian culture. Is it traditional performances? Is it the cultural practices of majority groups? Is it the Western influenced work seen in the National Theatre? Is it an integration of Western and traditional modes? There is at present no consensus on what constitutes Namibian culture or even if it is feasible to continue talking about a Namibian culture. As Du Pisani pointed out, there is no discourse around these matters whereby performers

and officials can interrogate new narratives or the impact of terms such as hybridity and postcolonial theories and practices. Or one may equally ask if it really makes any difference whether an artist's output can be labelled 'Namibian'. How does one identify Namibian theatre? May it not be more useful to look at an artist's body of work as a reflection of where he or she came from and where he or she currently finds him or herself geographically, intellectually, emotionally or developmentally? We need to understand that the work of an artist will in all likelihood express the structures of feeling of where he or she finds themselves. An overview of the work of all or most of Namibian artists may then clearly reflect the prevailing Namibian aesthetic ethos and trends rather than imposing a formula on artists by which their work will be accepted as truly Namibian. What is truly Namibian? What purpose is being served by boxing artists into geographical boundaries?

The lack of serious discourse on the Arts in Namibia is glaring. Young theatre makers full of creativity and energy enter the field and are starting to question certain conventions. Yet there are no forums for them to bounce their ideas around. The Namibian theatre makers are perpetuating what this researcher found frustrating. We do not reflect on our work, either at colloquia or in publications and this should be addressed. The expectation is that this document will contribute to discourse on theatre in Namibia.

A nation's artists hold up the mirror to society. Whether that mirror reveals, reflects or distorts was the impetus for this research. While revelations and distortions might have been part of the picture, this research concludes that the theatre makers reflected their reality and it is hoped that

institutions, individuals and the state can work together in order that what is reflected in future is a tribute rather than an indictment of the time that we are now living in.

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ADDENDUM 1
WINDHOEK/NATIONAL THEATRE PLAY LIST 1985-1989
DRAMA 1985

PLAY	AUTHOR	NIGHTS	ATTENDANCE	VENUE
Die Seelenwanderung	Karl von Wittlinger	1	416	NTN
Paradysboot	Karl von Wittlinger	7	1204	NTN
Die Bruidskool	Moliere	5	2842	NTN
Under the Oaks/Over the Hill	Paul Slabolepszy	5	1320	NTN
Mnr Puntilla en sy Kneg Matti (with an imported German director)	Brecht	Unknown	Unknown	NTN
Poppeteater	Franz Grabe	8	3592	NTN
Maria Magdalena	Friedrich Hebbel	7	625	NTN
Ons wag vir Godot	Samuel Beckett	5	249	NTN
Slegs vir Almal	Hennie Auckamp	12	549	NTN GARDENS

MUSIC 1985

PERFORMANCE	GENRE/TYPE	NIGHTS	ATTENDANCE	VENUE
Windhoek Symphony Orchestra	Classical (Moussorgsky, Mendelssohn, Beethoven)	1	337	NTN
Windhoek String Trio	Classical	1	153	NTN

Vienna Boys Choir	Vocal	3	1449	NTN
Cornelia Kallisch (Alto)	Classical	1	111	NTN
Yvonne Timioan	Classical Cello Schumann, Bartok, Paganini, Beethoven	1	147	NTN
Rosa Klarer	Classical	1	102	NTN
Handel's Messiah		2	942	NTN
David Golub	Piano	1	202	NTN
Derrick Ochse	Violin	1	171	NTN
Melody Fair	Light Music	2	350	NTN
Sergio and Odair Assad	Guitar	1	271	NTN
Steven de Groot	Piano	1	271	NTN
Yonty Solomon	Piano	1	153	NTN
Windhoek Youth Choir		1	152	NTN

DRAMA 1986

PLAY	AUTHOR	NIGHTS	ATTENDANCE	VENUE
Harold and Maude	Collin Higgins	7	1599	NTN
A party for Mother	Damon Galgut	5	425	NTN
Die Hose	Carl Sternheim	5	1224	NTN
Die Graswewenaar	Nico Luwes	5	1 350	NTN

Slegs vir Almal				NTN
Pous Johanna die tweede (with Jana Cilliers)	Esther Vilhar	3	544	NTN
Poppespel (a Revue)	Corlia Fourie	7	359	NTN
Vettie, Vettie	Charles Laurence with Marie Pentz	8	1987	NTN
Stevie	Hugh Whitmore (with Dorothy-Ann Gould)	5	465	NTN
Hansie die Hanslam	Pieter Fourie	1	293 On tour 3510	NTN
Warte bis est dunkel ist	Frederick Knott	4	1545	NTN

MUSIC 1986

PERFORMANCE	GENRE/TYPE	NIGHTS	ATTENDACE	VENUE
Ernesto Bitetti	Guitar	1	187	NTN
L'Elisir D'Amore	Opera	5	2044	NTN
Peter Csaba and Virginia Fortescue playing Beethoven, Brahms, Chausson, Mendelssohn.)	Violin/ Piano	1	107	NTN
Danielle Pascal	Cabaret	7	744	NTN
Windhoek Youth Choir	Vocal	1	531	NTN
Ernest Pereira	Violin	1	125	NTN

Arte Flamenco	Guitar/Vocal	1	462	NTN
Kayser trio (Europeans – Beethoven, Brahms, Faure, Martinu, Takacs)	String	1	251	NTN
Hiroma Ohada	Piano	1	311	NTN
Laurika Rauch	Vocal	3	593	NTN
Antonio Meneses	Guitar			NTN
Gert Seifert	Classical – Horn	1	189	NTN
Orazio Maione	Piano	1	267	
Dimitri Yablonsky and Sofia Mashevich	Cello and Piano	1	202	

DANCE 1986

PERFORMANCE	GENRE/TYPE	NIGHTS	ATTENDACE	VENUE
Jose Montoya	Flamenco	3	1013	NTN

DRAMA 1987

PLAY	AUTHOR	NIGHTS	ATTENDANCE	VENUE
Die Vlindervanger	John Fowles	6	1187	NTN
Die Koggelaar	Pieter Fourie	5	987	NTN
Die Sleutel tot moord	Frederick Knott	4	1 324	NTN
Tyl gaan na Mars	Puppets	3	266 ON TOUR 2997	NTN
Die Nonne (Le Nonnes –	Duardo Manet	8	497	NTN

translated by Mees Xteen)				
Kinder des Schattens	Karl von Witlinger	Unknown	Unknown	NTN
Brecht on Brecht – Van Arme B.B.	Brecht	7	545	NTN
Zelda	William Luce	5	642	NTN
Minnaar onder die Wapen (Arms and the Man)]	G.B. Shaw	6	975	NTN
Kwamanzi (Wildlife in Theatre)	Nichola Ellenbogen	5	665	NTN
Bar and Ger	Geraldine Aaron	Unknown	Unknown	NTN
Die Droomkottiljons	Louw Verwey	Unknown	Unknown	NTN
Die koggelaar	Pieter Fourie		987	NTN
Freunde und Feinde	Arkady Leokum	4	1124	NTN
Double Bass	Patrick Suskind	Unknown	Unknown	NTN
Kringe in die Bos	Dalene Mathee	2	625	NTN
Bacchus in die Boland	Bartho Smit	3	748	NTN
Bybie – Shaleen Surtie-Richard with Mathinus Basson	Dramatic monologues/various		No record as it was presented at the local Kalahari Sands Hotel and not the theatre	Moringa Room at the Kalahari Sands Hotel

MUSIC 1987

PERFORMANCE	GENRE/TYPE	NIGHTS	ATTENDACE	VENUE
PACOF's Chamber Ensemble	Classical repertoire	1	145	NTN
Heidi Litschauer	Cello	1	173	NTN

Cornelia Kallisch	Contralto	1	175	NTN
Danielle Pascal	Cabaret	7	958	Guinea Fowl Restaurant
Cantare Audire/Windhoeck Symphony Orchestra	Classical repertoire	3	1229	NTN
Peter Rieckoff German.	Piano	Unknown	Unknown	NTN
Jan Repko	Violin	1	221	NTN
Soo-Kyong Jo soprano	Vocal	Unknown	Unknown	NTN
Lotte Jekeli	Piano	1	216	NTN
Paula Bruni	Piano	1	212	NTN
Godelieve Monden (Laza, Popupienko)	Guitar	Unknown	Unknown	NTN
Elsabe Zietsman (Die Rooi Komplot and Meisie van Suidwes) Moringa		Unknown	Unknown	NTN
Olivier Chaliar	Violin	1	357	NTN
Tessa Ziegler	Guitar	2	621	NTN
Rosa Klarer	Harpsichord	1	311	NTN
Cantare Audire	Choral recital	2	766	NTN

DANCE 1988

PERFORMANCE	GENRE/TYPE	NIGHTS	ATTENDACE	VENUE
La Fille Mal Gardee	Ballet	6	2088	NTN

DRAMA 1988

PLAY	AUTHOR	NIGHTS	ATTENDANCE	VENUE
The Bloodknot	Athol Fugard	2	521	NTN
More is 'n lang Dag	Deon Opperman	2	457	NTN
Whale Nation	Dawid Minnaar	1	321	NTN
Sleutelgaatjie	Lochner de Kock and Richard van der Westhuizen	1	412	NTN
Romeo und Jeanette	Jean Anouihl	1	389	NTN
Yerma (translated by Uys Krige)	F. Lorca	2	552	NTN

MUSIC 1988

PERFORMANCE	GENRE/TYPE	NIGHTS	ATTENDANCE	VENUE
Daniel Adni	Piano	1	Unknown	NTN
Marc Grauwels	Flute	1	Unknown	NTN
Avril Kinsey and John Silver	Guitar	1	Unknown	NTN
NAPAC String Quartet	String	1	Unknown	NTN
Madame Butterfly	Opera	Unknown	Unknown	NTN
Andre Schwarts		Unknown	Unknown	Moringa Room at the Kalahari Sands Hotel
Nataniel in Cabaret	Cabaret	2	Unknown	Warehouse
Danielle Pascal – C'est si Bon	Cabaret	2	Unknown	Warehouse
Henriette Gartner Musaion (Bach, Mozart, Moszkowski, Hummel, Liszt)		1	Unknown	NTN
Ensemble Musical de Paris (Rameau, Vivaldi, Rossini) Fulle house		1	Unknown	NTN

Robin Alleson and Neville Schafer	violin and piano	and 1	Unknown	NTN
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DRAMA 1989

PLAY	AUTHOR	NIGHTS	ATTENDANCE	VENUE
Stille nag	Reza de Wet	6	2080	NTN
Moon on as rainbow shawl	Errol John	2	322	NTN/Space
Legends and Stories of Namibia	Mees Xteen and cast	2 and an extensive tour	Unknown	Warehouse
Yerma	F. Lorca	5	Unknown	NTN

MUSIC 1989

PERFORMANCE	GENRE/TYPE	NIGHTS	ATTENDANCE	VENUE
Drakensberg Boy's Choir with SABC Chamber Choir	Choral	1	Unknown	NTN
Voelvry with Johannes Kerkorrel	Cabaret	2	Unknown	NTN
Thandi Klaasens (Private party)		1	Unknown	Moringa Room
Paola Bruni (Italian pianist – Ravel, Chopin)	piano	1	Unknown	NTN
Legends	Cabaret	5	1620	Warehouse
Judy page	Cabaret	2	535	NTN
Elsabe Zietsman	Cabaret	3	1117	NTN
I Musici	Classical	1	473	NTN

1990-1994**DRAMA 1990**

PLAY	AUTHOR	NIGHTS	ATTENDANCE	VENUE
Stille Nag	Dean Opperman	2	406	NTN
Moon on a Rainbow Shawl	Errol John	2	560	Warehouse
Playboy of West Africa	J.M. Synge	2	Unknown	NTN
Soli Philander		Unknown	1000	NTN
The beauty contest	F. Philander	2	450	Warehouse
Safe mother hood Maria's motherhood	Ministry of health	2	480	NTN
Fast Norman and his girlfriends	Mees Xteen and cast	Countrywide tour	20 000	Various venues

MUSIC 1990

PERFORMANCE		NIGHTS	ATTENDANCE	VENUE
Legends		6	1620	Warehouse
Coffee and Cream		2	424	Warehouse
Judy Page		2	536	Warehouse
Elsabe Zietsman		3	1117	Warehouse
Thandi Claassen		10	538	Warehouse
Marc Grauwels		1	Unknown	NTN
Christi Concert		2	714	NTN
Van der Merwe/Piano		1	73	NTN
Drobisch/Piano and violin			159	NTN
I Musici			473	NTN
Harro Verster			119	NTN
Leprechauns (Irish folk)		2	Unknown	NTN
Talisman singers			250	NTN
Bafona			781	NTN
Schoeman, Horne			87	NTN
Willie Mbuende [black]			400	Warehouse
National symphony orchestra		1	412	NTN

Hotstix Mabuse			Unknown	NTN
Steve Kekana with Ndilimani		14		Touring the country
Steve Bruce		2	Unknown	Moringa Room – Kalahari Sands Hotel
Azoza (from Zambia)		2	Unknown	Warehouse
Amayenge (from Zambia)		4	Unknown	Warehouse (joint production with Club thriller)
Ratotoka with Jackson Kaujeua		2	Unknown	Warehouse
Jeremy Taylor		5	Unknown	Warehouse
Christman Concert	Windhoek Symphony Orchestra	2	Unknown	NTN
Sweet Honey in the Rock	American a cappella	2	Unknown	NTN
Thandi Claasen	Jazz/Blues	10	Unknown	Warehouse
Amampondo	African	1	235	NTN

DANCE 1990

PERFORMANCE	GENRE/TYPE	NIGHTS	ATTENDACE	VENUE
Come and see the moon dancing – Tos van Tonder	Contemporary	5	1027	NTN
Leperchauns	Irish Folk	2	Unknown	NTN

1991

PLAY	AUTHOR	NIGHTS	ATTENDANCE	VENUE
Forcible Love	Director Zeeman and cast.	3	Unknown	NTN
Caucasian Chalk Circle	Brecht	3	Unknown	NTN/Space
Playboy of West Africa		3	Unknown	NTN
Street Kids		5	1000	NTN and on tour
Youth Drama Festival	CAN	1	800	NTN
Stand Up festival		7	200	NTN
A Streetkid named Malapipe		2	200	NTN
The Kafka Experience		5	300	NTN
Soli Philander		13	1000	
Beauty Contest	F. Philander	5	450	Warehouse
Achter die Horizon		2	150	
The ugly Noonoo			100	NTN
Mirror Mirror in the Sand	Naomi Beukes	2	Unknown	NTN

MUSIC 1991

PERFORMANCE	GENRE/TYPE	NIGHTS	ATTENDANCE	VENUE
Champagne from Vienna	Light Classical	2		NTN
National Symphony Orchestra	Classical	3	800	NTN
Marc Grauwels/	Classical	1		NTN
Ilia Tchernae/	Classical	1		NTN
Gigi's Musical Safari		3		Warehouse
Cantare Audire	Choral	4	1000	NTN
Elsabe Zietsman	Cabaret	13		NTN
Gina Beukes	Violin	1		NTN
Voice of the Prairy		1		NTN
Natalie Gamsu		5	Unknown	NTN
Cosi fan Tutti	Opera	4		NTN
Motown		12	400	Warehouse
National Symphony Orchestra	Classical	2	800	NTN
Willie Mbuende		5	400	Warehouse
Sidwell Hartman		2	300	NTN

Concerto Fest	Classical	2	600	NTN
Tony Cox		3	500	NTN
Malinen	Violin	2	200	NTN
Jennifer Ferguson	Cabaret	6	Unknown	Cassablanca Night Club
Lucky Dube	Reggae	5	Unknown	NTN

DANCE 1991

PERFORMANCE	GENRE/TYPE	NIGHTS	ATTENDACE	VENUE
Turkmenian Folk Dancers	Folk	2		NTN
Indian Katak Dancer (Aashish Khan)		1	200	NTN
Spanish Evening	Flamenco	4		NTN
Ballet		4		NTN

DRAMA 1992

PLAY	AUTHOR	NIGHTS	ATTEN DANCE	VENUE
Soli Philander		1	400	Warehouse
Macbeth	Shakespeare	1	470	NTN
Alice in Welwitchialand	Leon Beukes	10	3 100	NTN
We Shall sing for the Fatherland	Zakes Mda	1	800	NTN
My Children My Africa	Athol Fugard (CAN Production)	7	787	Warehouse
Pescanova CAN Play Festival	A. Fugard, F. Philander	20	893	Warehouse

MUSIC 1992

PERFORMANCE	GENRE/TYPE	NIGHTS	ATTENDACE	VENUE
Fine Arts Brass Band (British)		1	400	NTN
Marc Hamelin (Canadian)	Piano	1	260	NTN
Jennifer Fergusson	Cabaret	1	Unknown	Warehouse
Cantare Audire with Camerata	Vocal	4	400	NTN

Vocalis (German University Choir)				
National Symphony Orchestra	Classical	2	800	NTN
Antonio Zepeda (Mexico)	Percussion	1	300	NTN
Tananas (RSA)		1	300	Warehouse
Deutsche Kulturraad Choir (German)		1		NTN
Swiss Choir		1		NTN
SKAZ	Russian Balalaika	2	600	NTN
Mimi Coertze		1	470	NTN
Conservatoire Concerto Festival		4		NTN
National Youth Choir		2		NTN
Cantare Audire		4	300	NTN
Loading Zone		6	Unknown	Warehouse
Steve Newman	Jazz	2	Unknown	Warehouse

DANCE 1992

PERFORMANCE	GENRE/TYPE	NIGHTS	ATTENDACE	VENUE
Chinese Acrobats		2	1 200	NTN
Lambada		1	70	Warehouse
Russian Ballet		5	1 300	NTN
The magical land of Oz	Ballet	4		NTN

DRAMA 1993

PERFORMANCE	AUTHOR	NIGHTS	ATTENDACE	VENUE
The Return of Elvis Du Pisani	Paul Slabolezsy	3	Unknown	Warehouse

MUSIC 1993

PERFORMANCE	GENRE/TYPE	NIGHTS	ATTENDACE	VENUE
Surrendran Reddy	Jazz	2	Unknown	Warehouse
Drobisch and Gerrytz	Classical	4	Unknown	Warehouse
Winston Mankunku	Jazz	4	Unknown	Warehouse
Diamonds on my	Tribute to Tom		Unknown	Warehouse

windscreen	Waits			
Herd of Cows	Jazz	1	Unknown	Warehouse
Ed Jordan - Fly to me	Jazz	4	Unknown	Warehouse

DRAMA 1994

PERFORMANCE	AUTHOR	NIGHTS	ATTENDACE	VENUE
Koffer in die Kas (Sandra Prinsloo)	Jeanne Goosen	5	Unknown	Warehouse
Two men and a Baby	David Ndjavera	5	Unknown	NTN
We shall sing for the fatherland	Zakes Mda			
Bloodstream	Andrew Buckland	3	563	Warehouse
Toivo	Lazarus Jacobs	4	Unknown	NTN
Fame		5	2 798	NTN
I will kill myself	David Ndjavera	1	339	NTN
Papland	Frederick Philander	4	831	NTN
A barstool named desire	Irit Noble	4	1 103	Warehouse
Storm in a B cup	Irit Noble	4	1 017	Warehouse
Toivo (return)	Lazarus Jacobs	3	665	Warehouse

MUSIC 1994

PERFORMANCE	GENRE/TYPE	NIGHTS	ATTENDACE	VENUE
Herd of cows	Jazz	5	Unknown	Warehouse
From Verdi to Lloyd Webber	Various	3	Unknown	NTN
Kwassa Kwassa Connection		2	Unknown	Warehouse
Makwe RHU		2	Unknown	Warehouse
Impactus 4	Kizomba	3	Unknown	Warehouse
Abdullah Ibrahim	Jazz	3	+ - 1800	NTN
Danielle Pascal and Janine Neethling – Soul for sale	Cabaret	5	+ - 1500	Spectrum Warehouse
Samba de mi Esperanza	Latin American	3	520	Warehouse
Errol Dyers and	Jazz	4	Unknown	Warehouse

Basil Coetzee				
Hanover Boys Choir	Traditional German	1	973	NTN
Shawn Phillips	Contemporary ballads	2	1 478	NTN
Laurika Rauch	Afrikaans	1	774	NTN
Golden Sounds	“Lang arm”	1	Unknown	Warehouse
Anton Calitz	Unknown	1	Unknown	Warehouse
Wisdom of forgiveness (Vusi Mahlasela and Louis Mahlanga)		4	Unknown	Warehouse
Kwassa Kwassa Connection (repeat)		3	Unknown	Warehouse
Bayete	African	4	Unknown	NTN
Hot August Nights	American Traditional	2	Unknown	Warehouse
Tony Cox and Steve Newton	Jazz	2	Unknown	Warehouse
Home Rhythms	Namibian Traditional	2	669	NTN
National Symphony Orchestra and Soweto String Quartet	Various	2	1 327	NTN
Sneaky Pete and Dave Goldblum		4	Unknown	Warehouse
Salif Keita		1	783	NTN
Jackson Kaujeau		1	Unknown	Warehouse
Blues Broers	Blues	4	Unknown	Warehouse
National Symphony Orchestra festival	classical	2	1 023	NTN
Reddy, Steady, Go	Jazz	1	447	NTN
Africa Brass		4	Unknown	Warehouse
Sibongile Khumalo		2	Unknown	NTN
Tome XX	German Jazz	2	Unknown	Warehouse
Gospel Fest		4	Unknown	Warehouse
National Symphony Orchestra	Classical	2	863	NTN
Cantare Audire	Choral	1	729	NTN

Acro Boys with Kwassa Kwassa Connection	Acrobatics	1	201	Warehouse
Ras Sheehama & Willie Mbuende	Reggae	4	Unknown	Warehouse

DANCE 1994

PERFORMANCE	GENRE/TYPE	NIGHTS	ATTENDACE	VENUE
Russian Cossacks	Folk	6	2 400	NTN
Daliam Song and Dance	Traditional Chinese	3	987	NTN
Gaere	Traditional Namibia	1	892	NTN
COTA Ballet	Classical	3	1 587	NTN

1995-1999

DRAMA 1995

PERFORMANCE	AUTHOR	NIGHTS	ATTENDACE	VENUE
Feedback	Andrew Buckland	3	Unknown	NTN
The Penalty	Lazarus Jacobs	2	Unknown	Warehouse
So Eine Liebe		1	357	NTN
King of the dump	Frederick Philander	2	143	Warehouse
The Railwayman	Frederick Philander	2	143	Warehouse
Frau Pilatus		1	389	NTN
And the girls in their Sunday dresses	Zakes Mda	1	Unknown	COTA Hall

MUSIC 1995

PERFORMANCE	GENRE/TYPE	NIGHTS	ATTENDACE	VENUE
Dondo Talking Drum	Afro fusion	1	218	Warehouse
Sisters SA		3	Unknown	Warehouse
Karmina Ensemble	Traditional Bohemian	1	441	NTN
Impactus 4	Afro Jazz	2	511	Warehouse
Opera arias	Classical	1	361	NTN
Scaramouge	Guitar classical	1	327	NTN
Kerkorrel	Afrikaans alternative	2	443	Warehouse
Impactus (return)	Afro jazz	1	Unknown	Warehouse

Dramagold	German rock	3	Unknown	Warehouse
Namibian Youth Choir	Various	2	623	NTN
Time out with Dave Ledbetter	Rock	4	Unknown	Warehouse
Savanna Sounds	Afro fusion	4	Unknown	Warehouse
Tina Schouw		4	Unknown	Warehouse
Nico Carstens	Afrikaans traditional	4	Unknown	Warehouse
Carmel floral Fantasy	Classical	1	376	NTN
Concerto Festival	Classical	2	unknown	NTN
Jannie 'Hanepoot' Van Tonder		3	unknown	Warehouse
Rakatoka	Namibian Afro Jazz	1	201	Warehouse
Prof Jah Pin Pin	Reunion Jazz	2	Unknown	Warehouse
Cantare Audire	Light jazz and choral	4	1 312	NTN
Impactus 4 (return)	Afro jazz	1	239	Warehouse
Thandanani	Afro fusion	1	Unknown	Warehouse
Impactus 4 (return)	Afro jazz	1	Unknown	Warehouse
Cover Girl – Elsabe Zietsman	Cover tracks	4	Unknown	Warehouse
Sabouk	African/Caribbean Jazz	3	Unknown	Warehouse
Makwerhu	Afro fusion	3	Unknown	Warehouse
Living spirits	Reggae	3	Unknown	Warehouse
Symphonic pops	National Symphony Orchestra	1	Unknown	NTN
Madeleine Mitchell	Classical violin	1	Unknown	NTN
Under your skin – Anything goes Band	Broadway	4	Unknown	Warehouse
Friends of the Opera	Verdi – classical	1	Unknown	Marco Polo restaurant
Rakatoka with Jackson Kaujeua	Afro fusion	2	Unknown	Warehouse
Jazz Up	Jazz	2	Unknown	Warehouse
Impactus 4 (return)	Afro jazz	2	Unknown	Warehouse
National Symphony Orchestra with William Cele	Classical	2	488	NTN

Malk Family	12 piece funk band	2	451	Warehouse
Abdullah Ebrahim	Jazz	2	679	NTN
Cantare and Friends of the Opera	Classical	1	Unknown	COTA Hall
Rasta Rebels and Pick up the Pieces	Reggae/Jazz	2	Unknown	Warehouse
Saxophone Orchestra of Cologne	Various	3	Unknown	NTN
Zimbabwe festival		3	Unknown	Warehouse

DANCE 1995

PERFORMANCE	GENRE/TYPE	NIGHTS	ATTENDACE	VENUE
The Red Army	Folk	2	588	NTN
Free Flight Dance Company	Contemporary	3	729	NTN
La Sylphide and The Little Match Girl	Ballet (COTA)	2	773	NTN
Dance Kaleidoscope	Various	2	Unknown	NTN
Circle around the moon	Dance drama	2	593	NTN

DRAMA 1996

PERFORMANCE	AUTHOR	NIGHTS	ATTENDACE	VENUE
Street Brothers	Dalton Ashikoto	2	227	Warehouse
You ANC nothing yet	Pieter Dirk Uys	3	934	NTN
The lion, witch and wardrobe	C.S. Lewis	3	947	NTN
Uit die bloute	Eugene Marais	4	1 023	NTN
Little prince	Saint Exupery	2	629	NTN
White men with weapons	Greig Coetzee	4	Unknown	Warehouse
Ons groet Jan Spies	Jan Spies done by Tudhane Pamwe (Danie, Aldo, Tanya)	4	Unknown	NTN
You ANC nothing yet	Pieter-Dirk Uys	3	Unknown	NTN

Palpitations	Markus Zohner Swiss company – pantomime	2	Unknown	NTN
The Little Prince	De Saint- Exupery		Unknown	NTN
The Lion, the witch and the wardrobe	CS Lewis	4	Unknown	NTN
Die wat hier woon	Poetry with Hannes Horne	3	67	National Art Gallery
Andre – the hilarious hypnotist		2 weeks	2 500	NTN
Frau Pilatus	Jean du Parc	1	Unknown	NTN
Ein Egoist	F.Dorin	1	Unknown	NTN
Alice-in-wonder- where-we-are-land	St Georges School	1	Unknown	NTN

MUSIC 1996

PERFORMANCE	GENRE/TYPE	NIGHTS	ATTENDANCE	VENUE
Savanna Sounds	African	2	Unknown	Warehouse
Three Tenors	Classical	1	389	NTN
Sitar and Tabla	Classical Indian	2	410	Warehouse
Not the Midnight Mass	A cappella	4	675	Warehouse
Neville Davids	Popular ballads	1	138	NTN Gardens
Independence concert	National Symphony Orchestra with Jackson Kaujeua and Helena Godfrey	1	377	NTN
Ras Sheehama	Reggae	1	Unknown	Warehouse
Wakatti		1	Unknown	NTN
A handful of keys		3	Unknown	NTN
The Magic Flute	Opera	3	Unknown	NTN
Tropicadero	Reunion Jazz	2	Unknown	Warehouse
Jackson Kaujeua	Afro fusion	2	Unknown	Warehouse
Arnie's Outrageous Rise	Cabaret (Aldo Brincat)	4	Unknown	Warehouse
Urban Creep		2	Unknown	Warehouse
Impactus 4	Afro Jazz	2	Unknown	Warehouse
Concerto Festival	Classical	1	Unknown	NTN
Mama Africa	African	2	Unknown	Warehouse
Jazz Hounds	Jazz	3	Unknown	Warehouse
Solid Foundations Male Choir	A cappella	1	Unknown	NTN

Tananas and Friens	Various	3	Unknown	Warehouse
Cantare Audire	New Composers	1	Unknown	NTN
Calvary	Gospel	1	Unknown	NTN
Pulakena and Willis TV Band		1	Unknown	Warehouse
Concerto	Windhoek frinds of the opera		Unknown	NTN
Cantare Audire	African, choral Jazz	2	Unknown	NTN
Namibia National Symphony Orchestra	Classical	2	Unknown	NTN
Schools' Song Competition (Jan Jonker)	Various	2	Unknown	NTN
Friends of the opera and Werner List Foundation	Classical	1	Unknown	NTN
USIS Classical concert	Classisical	1	Unknown	NTN
Carmen	Classical	1	Unknown	NTN
The Magic Flute	Classical	3	Unknown	NTN
NG Kerk Song Competition	Various	1	Unknown	NTN
USA Jazz Ambassadors	Blues/Jazz	1	Unknown	Warehouse
National Youth choir with Mascato	Various	1	Unknown	NTN
Louka Kanza	Zairean	1	Unknown	Warehouse
Special French Evening	Light classical	1	Unknown	NTN
Solid Foundation Gospel choir	Gospel	1	Unknown	NTN
God is able	Gospel	1	Unknown	NTN
Wallflower and Bitches	Rock/soul	4	Unknown	Warehouse

DANCE 1996

PERFORMANCE	GENRE/TYPE	NIGHTS	ATTENDACE	VENUE
Desert Dance	African/Finnish fusion	2	561	NTN
Andalusia –Anita Ortiz	Spanish	2	694	NTN
Dance Show 96	Various	2	544	NTN
Chinese Acrobats	Dance/acrobatics	1	387	NTN
Hic Hoc	Juggling	2	Unknown	NTN

Derives	Mime/dance	1		NTN
COTA Dance festival	Ballet/Spanish/Modern	3	1123	NTN
Wakati	Contemporary	2	562	NTN
Eurythmy	Eurythmics	1		NTN
Palpitations	Mime	2	328	NTN
Dance Festival/UNAM, COTA,NTN	Various	2	Unknown	NTN

DRAMA 1997

PERFORMANCE	AUTHOR	NIGHTS	ATTENDACE	VENUE
Truth Omissions	P-D Uys	5	1354	NTN
Gcina Mhlope		2		Warehouse
Tonight Neither Hamlet	Mees Xteen ?	4	847	NTN
Mister Haufiku	Lazarus Jacobs	2	138	NTN
Master Harold and the Boys	A. Fugard	3	214	Warehouse
Guardians of Eden	Nicolas Ellenbogen	2	Unknown	NTN
Paper Bride	Dalma Productions (Dalton)	1	89	NTN
Mister Haufiku	Wake Up	1	94	NTN
Anything goes	Sango	1	Unknown	NTN
The Railwayman	Philander	1	86	NTN
Cul-de-Sac 9	Prophets of the south	2	142	NTN
School's Drama Festival	Various		Unknown	NTN
What Professor did about the Which	COTA production	3	124	NTN
Windhoek Art Mix- Play festival	UNAM/Wake-Up, Philander	3	Unknown	NTN
The Water Carriers	Talipot	2	187	NTN
The adventures of Oliver	C. Dickens	4	Unknown	NTN
Dracula's demise	St George's Diocesan School/Ina Scent	2	Unknown	NTN
The Little Stuff	Mark Banks	3	Unknown	NTN
Mina von Barnhelm (German)	G.E. Lessing	1		NTN
The Little Prince	St Exupery	3	257	NTN
Little Shop of Horrors	COTA production	3	456	NTN
Endspurt (German)	Peter Ustinov	2	Unknown	NTN

MUSIC 1997

PERFORMANCE	GENRE/TYPE	NIGHTS	ATTENDANCE	VENUE
Impactus 4	Kizomba	2	Unknown	Warehouse
Rory Rootenburg	Cabaret	5	Unknown	Warehouse
Deadlock	German rock	2	Unknown	Warehouse
Friends of the Opera with Teatro alla Scala	Classical	1	Unknown	NTN
Monsier Croche et Companie	Classical	1	Unknown	NTN
Jazz on Sundays Morne van Biljon, Echard Volschenk etc	Jazz	1	Unknown	Warehouse
Steve Newman and Friends	Jazz	4	Unknown	Warehouse
Sunshine Kids		2	Unknown	Warehouse
'Sex Love	Angolan samba, R&B	3	Unknown	Warehouse
Habib Koite	Malian	1	Unknown	Warehouse
Makewe	Afro reggae	4	Unknown	Warehouse
Dr Victor and Rasta Rebels	Reggae	4	Unknown	Warehouse
Ras Sheehama	Reggae	2	Unknown	Warehouse
Impactus 4	Kizomba	2	Unknown	Warehouse
Friends of the Opera	Classical	1	Unknown	NTN
Traditional Bushmen music and dance festival	Traditional	3	Unknown	Warehouse
The sex, bugs and Rock&Roll show	Cabaret	4	Unknown	Warehouse
Springbok Nude Girls	Rock	2	Unknown	Warehouse
Sacred Bones	African opera	2	Unknown	NTN
Banana Benefit	Various	1	Unknown	NTN
Good vibrations	60's songs	4	Unknown	Warehouse
Jazz on Sunday with Joe Blu and New Orleans Jazz Combo			Unknown	
The Rainbow music show	Various	1	Unknown	NTN
King of Soukous	Kwassa Kwassa,	3	Unknown	Warehouse

	Kizomba			
Legends with Tokhoto		1	Unknown	Warehouse
Black Noise	Hip Hop	1	Unknown	Warehouse
Cantare Audire	Light Classical	2	Unknown	COTA Hall
Luciana 100%	Angolan Rhumba	2	Unknown	Warehouse
La Scala	Opera	2	Unknown	NTN
Monsieur Croche & Compagnie	Popular arias	1	Unknown	NTN
Independence Concert	Various	1	Unknown	NTN
Classical Evening with US Embassy	Classical	1	Unknown	NTN
Youth Concerto Festival	Classical	2	Unknown	NTN
World Music day Concert	Various	1	Unknown	NTN
Afrikaans Music Show	Popular Afrikaans	1	Unknown	NTN
Thikama! International Music Festival	Various	1 week	Unknown	Warehouse
Symphony Orchestra/ Wrner List Foundation	Classical	2	Unknown	NTN
Carmina Burana	Classical	2	Unknown	NTN
NBC Music Makers	Various	2	Unknown	NTN
Country Music Cares	Country	2	Unknown	NTN

DANCE 1997

PERFORMANCE	GENRE/TYPE	NIGHTS	ATTENDACE	VENUE
Bolshoi	Ballet	3	1 600	NTN
Compagnie Yun Chane	Contemporary ballet	1	418	NTN
Thumbelina	Ballet (COTA)	3	1423	NTN
Regine Chopinot:St Georges	Contemporary ballet	1	Unknown	NTN
Sleeping Beauty and Gizelle	Ballet	2	842	NTN

DRAMA 1998

PERFORMANCE	AUTHOR	NIGHTS	ATTENDACE	VENUE
The show isn't over until ...	Vickson Hangula	2	132	COTA
Feeling yes, feeling no	Tanya – schools program sexual awareness with life line child line	Unknown	Unknown	

DRAMA 1999

PERFORMANCE	AUTHOR	NIGHTS	ATTENDACE	VENUE
The money fish	Kay Cowley and Tanya Terblanche	78	interactive kinematic installation	Theatre in the park
I kill me	David Njavera	2	Child abuse, abortion, prostitution, suicide	Warehouse
God bless africa	Africa day – poetry, song, dance	69	Unknown	Theatre in the park
The show isn't over until ...	Vickson Hangula	2	97	COTA
The joys of voting	Tanya and cast	2	Voters education	Warehouse

