

**THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE ARTS ASSOCIATION TO THEATRE  
IN THE THEN SOUTH WEST AFRICA, 1947 - 1967**

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE**

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**OF**

**THE UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA**

**BY**

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**DECEMBER 2018**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation offers a comprehensive account of the origin, nature and development of theatre under the auspices of the Arts Association as a cultural activity in South West Africa as it was called until 1968. In 1947 a branch of the South African Association of Arts, a Fine Arts organisation in South Africa was established in Windhoek, South West Africa. The association organised and developed the Performing Arts in addition to the Visual Arts. The Arts Association saw theatre as a neutral area where they could foster closer mutual relationships between the different European language groups. The biggest achievement of the Arts Association was undoubtedly the sustained development of theatre in Windhoek, which culminated in the erection of the Arts Theatre (1960) and the Art Centre and Gallery (1965). The research revealed that the Arts Association practiced theatre similar to that of South Africa, e.g., the South West Africa theatre practitioners relied heavily on South African playwrights for available texts. Data for this research was gathered from the available primary sources in the archives and newspapers. The significance of this investigative research lies in the fact that this study marks a beginning in the historiography of Namibian theatre, setting up an official database for a portion of Namibian theatre history. The dissertation is a first documentation of the early historical development of theatre in South West Africa. There is information on theatre arts that needs to be addressed urgently before vital information is lost. This study can be used by the theatre students in the Department of Visual and Performing Arts and elsewhere. This dissertation intends to increase understanding, appreciation and critical perception of theatre in South West Africa. The dissertation is not meant to be a complete recording of the Namibian theatre development, but an attempt to interest other researchers to continue with the documenting of Namibia's theatre history.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is the result of my love for the theatre and its history. It is an outcome of discovering that no written history exists for Namibian theatre. It was Prof. Aldo Behrens that planted the seed during my Honours Degree, when he spoke about the African Theatre history and made it come alive.

My supervisors, Prof. Christo Botha and Prof. Jairos Kangira, were supportive and encouraging while supervising this dissertation. They deserve my deepest thanks. I am indebted to them for their assistance, knowledge, positive criticism, direction and patience during the course of this study. Without their careful attention to detail the completion of this work would not have been possible.

My sisters, Rika Nel and Irene Strydom, did exactly what family should: they encouraged me, admonished me when I wanted to abandon the study, supplied tea and were simply *there*. I love you.

Throughout this journey my colleague, Laurinda Olivier-Sampson, travelled with me. For most of the journey we had the wind in our faces, but we persisted. Thank you for your companionship. Listening to me ranting and raving helped more than you will ever know. You are a friend and my sister.

I must acknowledge the stimulating interaction of ideas and support of my colleagues: Dolores Wolfaardt, Tanya Terblanche and Emmanuel Karamuzondo. You were supportive in practical and emotional ways.

**“Writing history is surely a hazardous undertaking. What to include, what to leave out, how to present facts are personal decisions that depend on one’s own historical perspectives and even on the world in which we live - and certainly also on the facts at one’s disposal”** (Dommissie, 2001, p. ix).

**Dedicated to**

**my amazing parents, Philip and Lenie Swart**

**my wonderful children, Jacques and Lihandra**

## **DECLARATION**

I, Susanna Aletta van der Smit, declare hereby that this study is a true reflection of my own research, and that this work or part thereof, has not been submitted for a degree in any other institution of higher education.

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S.A. van der Smit .....

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ESAT	Encyclopedia of Southern Africa Theatre
FATSSA	Federation of Amateur Theatrical Societies of South Africa
NTN	National Theatre of Namibia
NTO	National Theatre Organisation
S.W.A.	South West African
SWAA	South West African Administration
SWA/ Namibia	South West Africa/ Namibia
SWANU	South West Africa National Union
SWAPAC	South West Africa Performing Arts Council
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organisation

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

**A theatre that does not speak for its own time has no relevance** Dario Fo, 1997.

### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This dissertation investigated the contribution of the Arts Association to theatre development of the then South West Africa [SWA] from 1947 to 1967. This arts association was established as a branch of the South African Association of Arts [SWA] in 1947. Before this date theatre was on a loose footing and no organised theatre activities existed. The study ends when the Arts Association, after being requested by the then South West Africa Administration [SWAA] to confine themselves to the fine arts, no longer involved themselves in theatre activities.

The Arts Association was a group of European artists (see 2.1.1 Key Terminology) who practiced their art as a cultural expression and as a service to the Windhoek society. It is the opinion of the researcher that the theatre of the Arts Association was rather ethno-centric in their search for a meaningful existence because the performances, as intrinsic products of culture, were designed to cater for a specific ethnic group. Olga Levinson, president of the Association from 1957-1976, claimed that theatre was “a unique opportunity for the three language groups of the white population to unite in a shared cultural interest” (Rubin, 1997, p. 207) and an effort to gain members (Roos, 1974). Wa Thiong’o (1981) stated “the side which a given work of theatre takes determines its function in the community to which it is presented” (p. 213).

To a large extent the Arts Association's theatre operated in a professedly politically-neutral environment, trying to avoid controversy. There is no indication in any correspondence between the SWAA and the Arts Association that the Administration tried to influence any of the staged productions. From the minutes of a committee meeting it became clear that the Arts Association steered away from overtly political approaches and took great care with the choices of plays staged not to offend any of those groups affiliated to them, e.g. *Five Finger Exercise* by Peter Schaffer (1958), contained several derogative remarks about Germans and it was decided not to stage the production (File 31. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

From the beginning "membership in the Arts Association was nominally open to all races. Later under the white administration, a South West African Performing Arts Council was formed, largely as an extension of the Apartheid regime's cultural agenda" (Rubin, 1997, p. 207). During the period the Arts Association managed theatre, though membership was not restricted to only the Europeans, there were factors, such as political laws, that prohibited the indigenous groups from participating in the theatre as audience or practitioners (e.g. the vast distance of the then townships from the theatre venues).

The establishment of the Arts Association placed European theatre in South West Africa on an organised footing in Windhoek. As the political situation was segregated, the Arts Association ignored the theatre practices of the colonised inhabitants to a great extent. In Windhoek the three white "linguistic" groups (Afrikaans, Engels, German) engaged in their own cultural practices separately from the indigenous inhabitants.

The primary sources revealed that the Arts Association made no deliberate attempts to promote, reflect on, or reach out to incorporate groups other than the European groups. One reason for this

action was that the indigenous traditional theatrical forms differed considerably from the European theatre the Arts Association practiced. Namibia, like other African countries, had to deal with both traditional African and Eurocentric theatre; pre- and post-colonial and pre- and post-Independence theatre, as part of its history. Namibian theatre followed the typical pattern of most colonised African countries in that regard.

A sound knowledge of the indigenous languages spoken in Namibia, which the researcher does not possess, is needed, as data on those indigenous theatre practices exists mainly as oral history. Not even the documentary sources left by the missionaries and ethnologists such as Vedder, Hahn and Mossolow, give information of any dramatic activities of indigenous South West Africans.

Temple Hauptfleisch (2009), theatre historiographer, explains that in order to understand the future of theatre one must guard “against ... willfully erasing the memory of the plays, people and places which make up the imperial or colonial history and its influences, as an inherent part of the history” (p. 7). This is also applicable to theatre practices of the past. Although there was apparently no opposition or political pressure on the Arts Association in general, and the theatre in particular, it is apparent from the available literature that the Arts Association committee was aware of the political context in which their theatre productions were staged, and as such practiced a form of self-censorship (File 31. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

The South West African theatre was influenced by various factors, e.g. its intrinsically Eurocentric nature and the strong influence emanating from South Africa on local Afrikaans and English theatre (Du Toit, 1988). Furthermore, the study examines how local conditions, the role of dominating personalities (such as Olga Levinson and Otto Schroeder), the attitude and

responses of the theatre-going public, and theatrical texts from South Africa and Europe, helped to shape the theatre.

In this study the focus was on theatre as cultural manifestation, within a specific society and a specific historical context, and specific South African influences thereon. The researcher felt the need to provide a brief, though comprehensive survey of the development of the earlier theatre before the establishment of the Arts Association.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

This study aimed to explore the influences of the Arts Association on the development of theatre in South West Africa 1947 – 1967. The development of the theatre in South West Africa has never before been documented. Some research exists on other art forms practiced, e.g. Nico Roos's research on the history of visual arts and Ernest van Biljon's on music. This study aims to fill that gap by focusing on the history of theatre.

Focusing the research on the limited period, 1947 – 1967, made the study manageable and precise. This was the period when the Arts Association was involved in establishing and organising theatre in South West Africa. The Arts Association practiced the arts in ways similar to the way they were practiced in South Africa.

## **1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

A primary objective of this study was to investigate and document the history of the Arts Association's theatre activities practiced and cultivated in Windhoek, South West Africa. 1947 -

1967. A secondary objective was to explore the visions of local theatre practitioners during this period and the extent the theatre-going public embraced the theatre productions.

The study further aimed to:

- \* investigate how South African theatre practices, ideas and influences came to shape the theatre practices and conventions.

- \* investigate and describe the functional and aesthetic character of the Arts Association's theatre productions.

- \* explore the frequency and quality of theatre productions during the period 1947 -1967.

- \* investigate the role of individuals and organisations that helped to shape and influence the evolution of theatre in South West Africa.

- \* explain the developments that resulted in the control of theatre being taken over by SWAPAC and the extent to which theatre (administration & staging of production), came to be subject to political considerations.

#### **1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

No comprehensive written history of South West African/Namibian theatre exists at present – only scant references appear in broad publications, e.g. Banham's *A History of Theatre in Africa* (2005) and in Rubin (ed.)'s *The World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre*, Vol.3, ch.6 (1997). A wealth of information on earlier theatre practices in South West Africa, some existing only as oral history, has already disappeared undocumented.

The potential value of this research is not only for Namibia. Our cultural heritage, which includes the history of theatre, deserves a place next to that of other countries. Currently, very little of the Theatre Studies curriculum at the University of Namibia includes African or South West African/Namibian theatre history and this must be addressed urgently. Our theatre history deserves a prominent position in the curriculum.

## **1.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study, due to the scope of the study, focused on the European theatrical tradition (see 2.1.1.3 European for an explanation of the term). The British spelling of *theatre* is preferred to the American spelling of *theater* by the researcher and will be used throughout, unless the spelling *theater* is used in a quote. For the purpose of this study the term theatre will refer to performances practiced on stage, but will not include dance or music activities. References to such activities, as well as to visual arts, will only be made in so far as it is linked to specific theatre activities organised by theatre societies or the Arts Association.

The period of cultural history covered in this dissertation has previously been ignored as researchers concentrated mostly on writing articles on Post-Independence theatre, not as part of a coherent historical narrative covering the theatre, but to highlight specific performances or leading theatre practitioners. Examples hereof are articles such as Martha Mukaiwa's article *What's in the Theatre Works?* in *The Namibian*, January 29, 2016 and Laurinda Olivier-Sampson's PhD dissertation (2016) *An Analysis of Policies, Practices and Trends in Namibian Theatre in the Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century, with Specific Emphasis on the work of Bricks, Frederick Philander and Aldo Behrens*.

## **1.6 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

Documenting a complete history of South West African/Namibian theatre will be a daunting task. Covering the period of more than 2000 years, would require an intensive research project, larger than what a mere dissertation can handle. If it is done in demarcated periods it will be specific and accurate and eventually be a complete history. According to Postlewait (2009), the history of theatre must first be reconstructed before it can be examined, analysed and have conclusions drawn about it. The scope of this study therefore is the period 1947 – 1967. This will ensure the reliability and external validity of the study. Restricting the time period to a manageable period helped the researcher to maintain objectivity in the study.

The cut-off date of 1967 was chosen as it was the symbolic end of an era. After 1967 the Arts Association limited itself to organising the visual arts activities in South West Africa as instructed by the SWAA. The only performing arts activities thereafter were musical productions. With the entrance of SWAPAC as a cultural force in the country, the Arts Association at first played a supportive role, but gradually had to retreat backstage and eventually was forced out by the SWAA when ordered to release their hold on the theatre after years of managing and producing works for the stage.

The immense contribution of the Arts Association to theatre, e.g. regular performances and thus opportunities for amateurs to participate in them needs to be acknowledged. Documenting the association's theatrical activities for this period is way of recognising their legacy.

This study recorded the Arts Association's theatre contribution while explaining the South African influence on specific areas, e.g. the choices of play texts and availability of actors.

Indigenous theatre practiced in South West Africa has been excluded from this study because it would require a methodology quite different, largely based on oral sources, as not even the documentary sources left by the missionaries and ethnologists give information on their practice of dramatic activities. The study therefore concentrates on theatre practiced by the Afrikaans, English and German Europeans under the auspices of the Arts Association during 1947 -1967.

## **1.7 METHODOLOGY**

### **1.7.1 RESEARCH DESIGN**

This study followed a qualitative historical design. The purpose of the research was to collect, verify and synthesize evidence on theatre. It is important to explore how people understand and engage with the past in order to connect with audiences of today.

Muratovski (2016) argues that triangulation allows a researcher to use multiple sources of evidence during the research process, creating a way of “cross-referencing” research, which in turn ensures “credible, valid and reliable” (p. 39) research outcomes. The foundation for the selected triangulation approach is narrative as it will not only serve as a method for data collection, but also for data analysis. Narrative analysis was a guide to identify, group and code common themes, group and code the data. The narrative function also guide the analysis processes.

The historical design method comprises of techniques and guidelines to help the researcher use primary sources and other forms of evidence, including secondary literary sources to explore the history of theatre during a specific period and the major influences and trends that have evolved over time. An in-depth consultation of Arts Association’s documentation from the archives

(minutes, memoires, official documents, occasional publications, etc.) explored the earlier history of informal and formal theatre in South West Africa before 1967.

In conclusion, the study focused on being descriptive and empirical while attempting to strike a balance between a narrative and a thematic approach to the subject matter discussed. According to Lawrence Stone (2017), narrative has traditionally been the main rhetorical device used by historians:

It is organized chronologically; it is focused on a single coherent story; it is descriptive rather than analytical; it is concerned with people not abstract circumstances; and it deals with the particular and specific rather than the collective and statistical (2017, p. 1).

The content of this dissertation focused on a logical narrative; it is descriptive rather than analytical and concerned itself with people rather than nonrepresentational circumstances; and deals meticulously with the evidence rather than the collective and statistical. According to Stone the aim with the narrative approach is to find out "what it was like to live in the past," (Stone, 1979, p. 13). This dissertation used the narrative-descriptive presentation of history after critically selecting, examining and evaluating primary and secondary sources, and subjecting it to scholarly criteria to gain a better understanding.

### **1.7.2 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS**

The focus of the research was a detailed and comprehensive study of relevant literature as discussed in the Literature Review. An initial orientation reading investigated the collected archival and literature data, revealing themes. The qualitative research method (archival and

document review) served as the primary research tool in the analysis of both primary and secondary sources.

### **1.7.3 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE**

Intensive archival research was done in the National Archives, Windhoek, Namibia. All the available files of the Arts Association, relevant newspapers and documents related were scrutinised to obtain a deeper understanding of the unique characteristics of the Arts Association theatre activities by assimilating and analysing all relevant data. Often the documents and correspondence of the Arts Association confirmed the data collected from newspapers and other sources, or vice versa, which guaranteed not necessarily, but does improve the probability of accuracy. As all sources were meticulously recorded and acknowledged, the data's validity and reliability ensures the credibility of the research.

This research is a narrative which organised the historical facts according to chronology and the sequence of the dramatic events. The gathered data was organised according to the topic's internal logic. It emphasizes the socio-cultural history and examined not just the theatrical event, but why and how it happened to understand the theatre of the period meaningful.

### **1.7.4 DATA ANALYSIS**

A detailed chronicle was compiled which entailed the data gathered to be documented in a coherent narrative, which now serves as an inception of the history of theatre in Namibia: an exploratory overview of that period under scrutiny.

The data collected through the qualitative research method was arranged to reveal frequent occurrences and tendencies that assisted in the formulation of theories, which in turn enabled a

comprehensive overview of the development of theatre practiced. The data analysis was based on the empirical data yielded by the research. The study explored experiences, relationships, traditions and norms in the Arts Association's theatre, and the influences on those practices.

### **1.7.5 RESEARCH ETHICS**

In order to obtain ethical clearance from the Director of Postgraduate Studies Committee of the University of Namibia for this postgraduate research work the researcher adhered to the prescribed ethical requirements in the course of the research. This dissertation followed a qualitative historical design in which the researcher describes and interprets the information gathered on the Arts Association. The study was implemented through an intensive archival research.

The Code of Conduct (2017) for research at The National Archives requires that researchers must comply with data protection legislation, and ensure that confidentiality of the individual is observed. According to Parry and Mauthner (2009), "archived material is governed by rigorous codes of practice" (p. 140) to ensure respect for research ethics, intellectual property and confidentiality. All archival research that involves 'personal data' requires approval to access the materials in the archive. Prior to the beginning of this study permission to research the Arts Association's sealed files 1-75 (1947 -1974), A.345.2/12.AA, was requested from the then Minister of Education, Mr. Nahas Angula . The consent to use the archived documents was freely given and the permission letter was handed in at the National Archives of Namibia in Windhoek.

The ethical issues arose by the qualitative methods, associated with historical sociology (Fogel, Quinlan, Quinlan, & She. 2010), were adequately applied while conducting the archival research

on the theatre practices of the Arts Association. The researcher worked according to the guideline that the investigation into the archival documents should be conducted according to the highest possible standards and the results of such research should normally be made available in the public domain (Ethical guidelines, 2017).

Though the people dealt with in this archival research “relates to individuals who are not living and, therefore, does not involve ‘personal data’, thus defined, this does not, however, mean that there are no ethical issues involved in this kind of archival research (Archival Research, 2017). The researcher respected the rights and dignity of all the people mentioned in the dissertation, especially as “in archival work you're very aware that there are people involved who may not have structured opportunities to shape what you're doing”(Johnson, 2012, p. 68). The people mentioned in the research are however not the only ones to be considered. “It should be remembered that the dead may have living relatives, whose sensitivities should at least be explicitly considered” (Archival Research, 2017, p. 13). Bogdan and Biklen (1992) agree and add to that statement “research ethics include the right to privacy and protection of participants from harm, be it physical, psychological or social” (p. 68).

The researcher acknowledged all the sources which were used to compile this dissertation in the References. In order to avoid plagiarism, all sources cited from were indicated according to the American Psychological Association reference style.

During the data collection process, analysis and presentation of the gathered information the researcher took care to adopt an unbiased attitude to the research in order to be as objective as possible in writing up the history of the Arts Association’s theatre and the influences thereon, to obtain a truthful rendition of the past. The research process was transparent in that it reported

facts accurately and without distortion or manipulation. The aim is to present the findings to the academic community and wider public in a responsible manner (Code of Conduct, 2017).

### **1.7.6 CONCLUSION**

This chapter looked at the orientation, problem statement, objectives, significance, limitations, delimitations, ethics and historical qualitative research design. The main source used to generate information was authentic documentation. The dissertation was divided into chapters to enable a clear chronicle.

In Chapter 2 the Literature Review gave an oversight of the sources the dissertation dealt with. Chapter 3 broadly overviewed the pioneering phase of South West African/ Namibian theatre to provide a background to the research. Chapter 4 investigated the establishment of the SAAA [SWA]. In Chapter 5 theatre under the auspices of the Arts Association and some of the South African influences thereon were explored while in Chapter 6 the replacement of the Arts Association with SWAPAC and the transition period were discussed. Chapter 7 concluded the dissertation with an assessment of the contribution of the Arts Association to the development of South West African/Namibian theatre.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

**The theatre was created to tell people the truth about life and the social situation - Stella Adler** quoted in Kole (2009).

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This study is an exploration of a part of the theatre history of South West Africa, namely the period 1947 - 1967. The purpose was to provide a socio-historical cultural interpretation of that portion of theatre history. In organising the gathered data the researcher was able to discover the Arts Association's involvement in theatre.

##### 2.1.1 KEY TERMINOLOGY

**2.1.1.1 South West Africa:** The name *South West Africa* will be utilised in this dissertation for the country as it was the name used during the period 1920 -1968. Thereafter, the name was replaced on June 12, 1968 with *Namibia* when the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution thereon (Yusuf, 1994).

**2.1.1.2 South African:** The term *South African* refers to people of South African origin (no matter their origin/race/language). It also refers to the theatre (including playwrights, companies, actors, directors and plays) that came from South Africa to South West Africa. According to Herrington (1988) the genre of theatre supported by the European community in South Africa for the period under research, was one that had its roots in Anglo-European traditions but has

continued to be sustained by subsequent theatrical developments which in the twentieth century has broadened to include American genres as well.

**2.1.1.3 European:** According to Collins English Dictionary (2014) the term *European* means: ‘of or relating to Europe or its inhabitants’, or ‘native to or derived from Europe’. This study uses the word *European* as utilized in the language of the period under research which refers to people coming from Europe, but also as being opposed to *Non-European*. Although it was indeed an old, racist political concept it was a historical fact. In 1795 German anthropologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach “divided *Homo sapiens* into five distinct races based on their physical characteristics.” The white Caucasian race was one such group (Blumenbach, 1895) though not strictly white or European, as the term is commonly used today. The use of racial lines as discriminatory tools, e.g., the usage of ‘white’ for mainly European populations, defined by their skin among other characteristics and contrasting with ‘black’, originated came later.

Apartheid was implemented by the National Party after winning the country's 1948 general election. The government enforced that policy of restrictive racial segregation; using the terms *European* and *Non-European* to refer to white and black people. As South West Africa was under the mandate of South Africa the policy was applicable here as well during the period under discussion.

According to Roos (1969) there was a desire among the European inhabitants to maintain the cultural standards of Europe to which they became accustomed in South West Africa. The European traditions were at the centre of the Arts Association’s practice as the European-centric values and belief systems were embedded therein.

**2.1.1.4 Theatre:** The *Oxford Companion to the English Language* (1992) has the term *theatre* as a place where drama is performed. Schipper (1982) agrees. The dictionary further includes terms

such as playhouse, a thing displayed to view and a spectacle. Brockett (1964) describe the concept *theatre* as existing when actors perform before an audience and refer to “the actor, playwright, the director, the scene, the designer, the costume and light designer ...” (in Sirayi, 2012, p. 13). This European concept of theatre (box set stage, realism, and a dramaturgy orientated towards the linear development of plot and the psychological development of characters, was the type of theatre practiced by the Arts Association’s theatre groups. Sirayi (2012) feels that ‘theatre’ is a problematic term because of the multiple meanings. “There is no single way of describing theatre” (p. 3).

According to Sirayi (2012) the concept should be negotiated and that “such a negotiation should be historically and culturally bound” (p.4) and should be bound in that context. According to Sirayi (2012) African theatre is not “an appendage of European theatre arising out of a situation of historical contact” (xi). Though the roots of Western theatre are in similar practices as the indigenous cultural and artistic practices, the European theatre only entered Southern Africa only in 1652; and South West Africa much later, after 1786 when the first settlers came to the country. It is reasonable that the theatre practiced by South West African amateurs under the auspices of the Arts Association, and South African theatre companies visiting South West Africa, was in the function and meaning of that earlier western (European) theatre.

The understandings of the concepts are often very broad and the lines between ‘theatre’ and ‘drama’ often extremely vague. There are numerous scholars, each with an own opinion on these terms; some, are very rigid in their arguments. The concepts *theatre* and *drama* are used interchangeably by most theatre practitioners. Schechner (1992) feels ‘theatre’ relates to place of performance and ‘drama’ to the text and performance. Kerr (1995) defines ‘drama’ as displays of

actions to an audience. This dissertation sides with Sirayi (2012) when he says “the term ‘European drama’ does not refer to all European dramas, but rather to certain forms of European drama (such as farce, comedy and tragedy)” (p.12). The latter dramas were in the European tradition the Arts Association was depended on and staged. These forms were imported from different European countries, such as the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany and eventually from South Africa. These dramas share some common features: “such as a playwright, written dramatic text, actors, director, scene designers, auditorium, stage, costume, and a specially designed drama hall or playhouse.” (Sirayi, 2012, p. 12). Finnegan (1978) too sees ‘drama’ informed by Eurocentric dramatic genres, while Horn (1981) on the other hand speaks of drama as a subgroup of theatre. Often drama refers to an individual play or text or scenario, ready to be performed. Hauptfleisch (1977) argues that “plays that were never performed remain dramatic works but cannot be considered theatre. They become theatre once they are performed (p. 37).” The dramatic works that came into South West Africa via, or from, South Africa were perceived not as ‘foreign’ texts but as a familiar type of theatre to the local theatre practitioners.

A lengthy discussion on theatre and drama falls outside the scope of this dissertation, but to be clear how the concepts are used in this dissertation the following stands: The word theatre in this study refers to European theatre. It can be replaced by the term Western theatre, but as the literature researched, referred to both *European* and *Western* both the terms were used in this study. The focus will be on European theatre as part of the performing arts. The music and dance performances the Arts Association staged during the period of their existence do not form part of the dissertation’s scope and is therefore excluded.

## 2.2. LITERATURE ON THEATRE HISTORY

### 2.2.1 THEATRE HISTORY

Damen (2012) stated “the truth is *all* facets of society involve theatre and are integral to the study of theatre history, a daunting but unavoidable prospect” (p.3). Theatre history as a modern scholarly discipline began in the nineteenth century, when the “scientific” approach to academic study was on the rise. Given that ‘history’ is ‘story’ and ‘theatre’ is ‘seeing’, we might be led to assert that theatre history is a “narrative of the development of performances viewed by audiences across time” (Damen, 2012, p.7). The history of theatre is primarily concerned with the origin and subsequent development of theatre.

Damen (2012) further observed that theatre history “turns by default into a study of the *records* of performances in a society, a culture’s collective memory of the evolution of its theatre and drama” (p.17). Unlike the art of visual artists or musicians, theatre historians cannot retrieve or study the work itself. “The moment the word is said, the gesture is made and the lights go down, the illusion is gone and, if no new illusion arises, the theatre in the strictest sense of the word is done” (Damen, 2012, p. 13).

In recent years there has been a growing interest in the way we study theatre history. Theatre in a historical context connects directly with the history of mankind. The Polish theatre-historiographer, Braun Kazimierz agrees when he says in an article *A Concise History of Polish Theatre from the Eleventh to the Twentieth Century* that “theatre history enables critical examination of the past, since our own social and political concerns inform the making and understanding of the dramatic event” (2009, p. 1).

In this chapter the researcher briefly reviewed some of the sources that are relevant and were used in this dissertation. First a closer look will be taken to World theatre history, then African theatre and lastly to the theatre of South West Africa.

### **2.2.2 WORLD THEATRE HISTORY**

An imposing volume of information has been documented over many years by a vast number of scholars in the field of theatre. Most world theatre histories deal with the theatre history in periods: often starting with the Greek and Roman theatre. Periods thereafter are divided in chronological order, e.g., the Medieval, Renaissance, Restoration, Eighteen-century, and Nineteenth-century and in conclusion a period that is referred to as Modern Theatre. Information on the theatre buildings, stage design, directing, stagecraft, acting, texts, playwrights and socio-cultural history all contribute to a rich and reliable account of theatre history over the ages. Many scholars considered Oscar G. Brockett and Franklin J. Hildy's *History of the Theatre* as the "bible" of theatre history. For countless years this comprehensive and widely used survey of theatre history was the only source available. The newest edition (11<sup>th</sup>) of this source includes information on African theatre that the previous editions did not have. Another informative source to this research was Martin Esslin's *Illustrated Encyclopedia of World Theatre* (1977) as it provided a fuller appreciation of the world theatre history.

The world theatre histories that were scrutinised were helpful in so far it provided a background and sense of direction in how to write a theatre history. The value of the world theatre histories that were studied lies in the inspiration that they generated within the researcher to start writing the theatre history of Namibia. The period chosen is a beginning of such a history.

### 2.2.3 AFRICAN THEATRE HISTORY

It is encouraging that in the last decades major studies covering African theatre studies emerged. One such an academic contribution to the canon of African theatre history is *A History of Theatre in Africa*, edited by Martin Banham. This book claims to be the first full history of theatre in Africa that offers an accessible account of said history. It was compiled by various scholars of this subject, e.g., Kole Omotoso, Eckhard Breiting, David Kerr, and Yvette Hutchison.

*A History of Theatre in Africa* offers overviews of theatre in many African cultures. The manuscript examines concepts of history and theatre in Africa and supply definitions that apply to the continent in particular. Part of the book that was particularly helpful was Chapter 6 (written by David Kerr with Stephen Chifunyise) which bears the heading *Southern Africa*. It covers some indigenous para-dramatic performances of Southern Africa and colonial and post-colonial theatre. South Africa, as Namibia (earlier called South West Africa) is part of Africa and therefore included under concept 'African'. The study refers to Namibia's late independence and the "uneven development of specific theatre tendencies" (Banham, 2005, p. 283) in general terms. Chapter 7 on South Africa, written by Yvette Hutchison, was of value as it gave insight into the South African theatre practices.

A reference for all studies of the history of theatre in Africa is *African Popular Theatre* by David Kerr (1995). Though this study concentrates of forms of African literary drama, it supplied much information on the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods in Africa. The survey of the

performing conditions delivered in Chapter 11, *Popular Theatre & Struggle for Liberation in Southern Africa*, deals with theatre of countries such as Angola and Zimbabwe. It was especially the information on South African theatre that provided background material to this study.

These sources on African theatre history inevitably mention only a fraction of the components that made the theatre of that continent so powerful. Not all playwrights, directors, companies, and theatre artists were named. One reason is that it would make the source voluminous; while another reason is that much information exists in the oldest source, oral history, which must still be explored and documented. The history of Africa is meant to be “a history of ideas and civilizations, societies and institutions based on a wide variety of sources including archaeology, oral tradition and art forms” (Ogot, 1974, p. 75).

The South African theatre history, as part of African theatre history, was documented more than adequately and this dissertation used some of those sources with great benefit. F.C.L. Bosman wrote a two-part history of South African theatre, *Drama en Toneel in Suid-Afrika* that covered the period 1652 -1912. The author reconstructed in much accuracy the conditions under which theatre was practiced during this period, revealing similarities between South African and South West African theatre during each country’s pioneering phase.

*The story of South African Theatre: a guide to its history from 1780 – 1930* written by Jill Fletcher was an excellent source that contributed to the earlier period of theatre in this study. In the foreword to this book Temple Hauptfleisch commented on the writing of theatre history that “we must guard against writing our own new fictions by effectively ignoring the totality of the past” (Fletcher, 1994, Foreword). In adherence to this the researcher included how the European

theatre entered first South Africa and then South West Africa. It also assists in understanding that the formal theatre had colonial beginnings in both countries.

An unpublished dissertation by L.D.M. Stopforth: *Drama in South Africa. 1925 – 1955: A Critical Survey* (1956), provided background information to the periods before and after 1947. This carefully researched study dealt meticulously with the amateur and professional theatre history of South Africa, as well as prominent personalities in South African theatre. P.P. Breytenbach, Lydia Lindeque and Leonard Schach's contribution (though indirect) to South West African theatre were of interest. Another unpublished dissertation that provided background to this study was that of J.W. Stassen. *Die Ontwikkelingsgeskiedenis van die Hollandse en Afrikaanse Toneel en Drama in Suid-Afrika* was a rich source particularly on the dramas staged in the earlier years, e.g., *Lenie* by H.A. Fagan was popular in both South Africa and South West Africa.

A manuscript that was published in more recent years is that of Danie Botha: *Voetligte en Applous: Die Beginjare van die Afrikaanse Beroepstoneel* (2009). This interesting book deals with the formative years of the Afrikaans theatre from 1911 to 1967. Prominent figures of the Afrikaans theatre such as the Hanekoms, Wena Naude, André Huguenet, Lydia Lindeque and Uys Krige and their immense contribution to the Afrikaans theatre were dealt with in the document. As these theatre practitioners were known in South West African theatre circles through tours or judging theatre festivals, their actions in South West Africa were of importance and thus included in this study.

A very unique source that was developed at the University of Stellenbosch is the *Encyclopedia of South African Theatre, Film, Media and Performance* (ESAT). It "is an open access, internet

based interactive resource for theatre and performance researchers interested in the evolution, history and forms of drama, theatre and performance in South Africa” (Hauptfleisch, 2016, p.1).

Temple Hauptfleisch, while head of CESAT, initiated the project under the name *A Companion to South African Theatre and Performance* (COMSAT) as a first theatre research encyclopedic documentation project. “The aim was to involve a range of research and students to compile a general reference work on South African theatre and performance which would make the results of academic and other research more readily accessible to the general reader and the theatre enthusiast” (Background, 2017, p.1).

The original scope was of published documentation of South African theatre history. The aim was “an overview of theatre and performance in the country, a chronology of theatre events (in the context of social, cultural and political events), a comprehensive bibliography and annotated list of plays and performances” (Background, 2017, p.1).

The ESAT website was introduced for usage in March 2011. In 2012 – 2013 the scope was enlarged to include film and media and was called *An Encyclopedia of South African Theatre, Film, Media and Performance* (still using the acronym ESAT). Today these digital archives of materials on South African theatre contain invaluable material for the student of theatre. It certainly inspired the researcher to capture the theatre history of South West Africa/Namibia. This dissertation used information from ESAT with much success.

By the 1950’s a New African Historiography began to reflect the radical changes the study of African history has undergone. Previously African historiography was closely linked with the colonial period and its Eurocentric assumptions. Most countries in Africa have a documented

account of their theatre history, though there are still some such as Namibia that lack it. It was that lack of written theatre history that inspired this research.

Namibia's theatre history, however, will never be complete without the indigenous oral theatre and performance traditions of the different ethnic groups. Currently the Western-influenced theatre traditions are the only documented source (and even in that account of what happened there are gaps).

L.D.M. Stopforth's dissertation, *Drama in South Africa - 1955: a Critical Survey* (1956) supplied certain information on stagecraft and theatre styles that were reflected in South West Africa. From these and many other literature sources - such as the books on theatre history, edited by Martin Banham (1988, 2004, 2005) - it was possible to compile the broad overview of the socio-political and cultural history that forms the background of this research.

Sources on South African Afrikaans and English theatre were available and supplemented the archival data. These sources, e.g. Ludwig W.B. Binge (1969), P.J. Du Toit (1988) and Temple Hauptfleisch (1983,1985, 1997, 2009), discussed the touring companies of the Federation of Amateur Theatrical Societies of South Africa (FATSSA), National Theatre Organisation (NTO) and their productions in South West Africa.

#### **2.2.4 NAMIBIAN THEATRE HISTORY**

While tracing the history of the earlier South West African theatre before 1947 it became clear that the most information was to be found in the newspapers. This state of affairs is true of all theatre everywhere. Programmes, texts, photo's, etc. are usually a bonus. The period 1947 –

1967 when theatre was under the auspices of the Arts Association, had some archival documents to provide fractional additional information. From 1968 onwards newspapers, archival documents and recordings on theatre activities presented more accurate information.

South West African/Namibian theatre stands in a specific historical, economic, political and social context that served as the background for this dissertation. To enable the researcher to have an overview of the history of South West African/Namibia several available sources were used, including Klaus Dierks's *Chronology of Namibian History* (1999), which provided useful dates. H.J. van Aswegen's *Afrika-geskiedskrywing: 'n Terreinverkenning* (1980); Peter. H. Katjavivi's *A History of resistance in Namibia* (1988) and Wallace's *A History of Namibia* (2011) provided important information on the political and economic climate in the country.

The unpublished Masters of Ernst van Biljon *Die Musieklewe van Windhoek tot 1972* not only gave valuable insight into the cultural activities in Windhoek, but into the theatre activities of the Arts Association as well.

A source that deals in general with South West African/Namibian theatre history is *The World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre* (WECT) with Don Rubin as editor. This wide-ranging study is, according to Amazon, the largest international co-operative publication in the history of world theatre. The authoritative entries on each country have been written by leading scholars, critics and theatre practitioners working within specialised areas. South African theatre received adequate recognition, but Namibian theatre was only covered in six pages which concentrate mostly on the theatre of the period preceding independence and thereafter.

There is however no mention of the specific theatre practiced in South West African/Namibia during any given period in *A History of Theatre in Africa*, edited by Martin Banham. The book however did contribute to the general background of the earlier theatre where the conditions, e.g., where colonisation suppressed traditional theatre forms, were similar in South West Africa to that of other African countries.

The dissertation of Laurinda Olivier-Sampson, *An Analysis of policies, practices and trends in Namibian theatre in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century, with specific emphasis on the work of Bricks, Frederick Philander and Aldo Behrens*, dealing with the period mid-1980's to the turn of the century; pre- and post-independence, is a welcome addition to the meager sources dealing with Namibian theatre. Olivier-Sampson's dissertation deals with how the theatre in Namibia was conceptualised, managed and performed.

The study indicted how theatre in Namibia “was influenced by bureaucratic policies, or as appears to be the case after independence, by a lack of clarity as far as a policy for the arts, and theatre in particular, was concerned” (Olivier-Sampson, 2016, Abstract). The study also found that trends in Namibia were largely echoed in other postcolonial African countries (Olivier-Sampson, 2016, Abstract). This source is significant as it reiterates the importance of documenting other periods of the country's theatre history.

In Namibia culture is diverse and multifaceted. A comprehensive theatre history must capture that richness and include all the traditions and forms. Pre-colonial South West Africa, for example, was rich with community-based activities which are related to their tribal social life (culture, belief and religion).

The next section under the heading Available Sources will present a brief review of the literature that is related to the research and this study will closely look at how these sources articulated the topic under discussion.

## **2.3 AVAILABLE SOURCES**

### **2.3.1 ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTS**

A vast amount of the research included in this study was done at the National Archives of Namibia in Windhoek. Permission was obtained from the then Prime Minister Nahas Angula to investigate the 75 sealed volumes of Arts Association documents kept in the National Archives of Namibia. These files contain mostly correspondence of an administrative nature, e.g. letters, guidelines and notices; dealing with complaints, reviews, requests and the minutes of Arts Association's committee meetings. Very few of those files' content, however, dealt with information on theatre in particular.

The information, often only partial and fragmented, varies from sufficient to inadequate, but provided some valuable details and insights into the Arts Association's theatre activities. The historical facts gathered and dealt with systematically, were put into context and brought to light how superficially theatre activities were covered in writing over the years as most of the information in the documents deals with music or visual arts activities.

### 2.3.2 NEWSPAPERS

Another important primary source from the National Archives of Namibia in Windhoek was the various newspapers from this period (see Appendix B). All the newspapers in the National Archives between the dates 1898 (when the first tabloid, *Windhuker Anzeiger* was founded) and 1976 were scrutinised with meticulous care for theatrical activities. There were quite a few newspapers during these years: *Deutsch-Südwestafrikanische Zeitung*, *Südwestbote*, *Windhoek Nachrichten*, *Suedwest*; the bi-lingual Dutch and German newspaper *The Voortrekker*; *The Windhoek Advertiser*, *Der Kriegbote*, *The Windhuk*, *Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Ons Vriend*, *Die Suidwes-Afrikaner*, *The South West News*, *Die Suidwester*, *The Windhoek Observer* and *Die Republikein* (see Appendix B). The media covered the research period reasonably well, but broadly, as they mostly contained articles, reviews, advertisements and letters on other relevant issues, e.g., sport or politics. Advertisements and reviews were often similar in the different newspapers and seldom offered additional information on specific issues other than the play's title, the names of the actors and backstage crew, and/or some criticism or praise.

The information from the newspapers verified and supplemented some of the data from the Arts Association's archival documents. The available sources spoke of an effort, made by a very small group of people, to keep theatre alive under difficult circumstances. They relate how theatre festivals were held and how performances were staged, e.g. the German Theatre Group with the comedy *Lotchen's Geburtstag* [Lottie's Birthday] (1934) by Ludwig Thoma, directed by Hans Berker (snr.) in 1948, and *Love of Four Colonels* (1953) by Peter Ustinov, staged by the English Theatre Group directed by Fiorella Holmes (1960), which were especially popular with the local audiences, as the latter enjoyed comedies and farces according to the media. The

articles relate the rehearsal progress, review the performances, reveal budgets and published public praise and disapproval.

While data from the archives deals with facts about the organisation of the Arts Association, most newspaper articles supplied sketchy information on theatre activities, advertisements of coming attractions and notices of meetings.

### **2.3.3 BOOKLET**

A secondary source that provided useful information was Olga Levinson's booklet *Our First Thirty Years: The History of the South African Association of Arts* (1979), which she wrote in commemoration of the association's thirty years of arts activities. As helpful as the booklet is, it only gives minimal details on theatre practices. The information provided by Levinson though confirmed some of the archival data and provided a general socio-historical background to the study. The booklet refers to various local performances and theatre productions imported from abroad, e.g., opera and ballet.

### **2.4 CONCLUSION**

The sources utilised in this dissertation provided a framework for the research. Today there are many innovative and widely acclaimed theatre histories with a mass of information that has been documented by many scholars over decades. Fresh perspectives on the history of theatre are however welcome as it enriches the existing canon and broaden the existing knowledge base.

This dissertation aimed at an exploration of theatre during a specific period in history. As an interpretive study it placed understanding, explanation and accurate documentation as the principal access to knowledge of the chosen period. Chapter 3 will provide a broad overview of the pioneering phase of theatre in South West Africa.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **THE PIONEERING PHASE OF THEATRE IN NAMIBIA**

**The history of Namibia is one of conflict, resistance, foreign occupation and the exploitation of material and human resources (Du Pisani, 1986, p. 3).**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter focused briefly on an influential period in a much larger history. Before embarking on an overview of the development of theatre in South West Africa under the Arts Association a brief outline of the earlier theatre will allow the reader to understand the conditions prior to 1947. Though this period does not fall in the scope of this dissertation the overview of the theatre of this period is given to contextualise the study.

The land, people, events, situations, and influences dealt with served as a historical background for what happened on a cultural level in South West Africa. Both the Germany and South

African colonization's of South West Africa laid the foundation for Western theatre to be established in the country.

The practice of the arts, and theatre in particular, was inextricably wrapped up in the country's history according to Terence Zeeman, a former National Theatre of Namibia manager (Zeeman, 2004). "Namibia's history is scarred by the recurrent agony of war and colonialism ... All cultural perspectives of Namibia must take into account this colonisation, occupation, land alienation and its socio-linguistic and cultural consequences" (Strauss & Kenny, 1991, p. 3). One view was 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).

Temple Hauptfleisch (2009), said that "Like so much of the early history of mankind, the history of this period in Southern Africa is still extremely tentative, and based on much theorizing and speculation (p. 2)." When researching the development of theatre in South West Africa it became apparent that there is very little information about the earlier theatre in the literature, much less than in oral history (Erichsen, 2007).

Hauptfleisch claims that theatre history is based on "ideas about the social life of these communities and the function of art within them which no doubt was as varied as the social, economic and political conditions" (Hauptfleisch, 2009 p. 2). Though Hauptfleisch speaks of Southern Africa in general, and South Africa in particular, this is applicable in Namibia as well.

It is thus necessary to look at the function of theatre and the conditions under which theatre was practiced earlier in South West Africa and how the European theatre entered the country via

Europe and South Africa; and how the Dutch, French, British and Germans contributed to the theatre tradition that eventually found roots in South West Africa/Namibia. South African theatre was also reliant on Dutch theatre – which in turn used much German work.

### **3.2 THE NATURE OF THEATRICAL ACTIVITIES IN SOUTH WEST AFRICA**

#### **BEFORE 1947**

Erichsen (2007) claims that “before Europeans ever set foot on Namibian soil, the territory was buzzing with activity” (p. 1). Part of these pre-colonial activities included cultural and religious performances such as indigenous initiation or wedding ceremonies; the transmission of legends and oral narratives such as myths, legends, folktales, dances, songs, enactments, and festivals (Brockett, 1999; Dhlomo, 1977 & Mabweazara, 2011). Sowing, harvesting, rain, war, fertility and death rituals often had dramatic forms developed from (Schipper, 1982). Many of those traditional ritualistic plays influenced, ordered, modified, educated and entertained. Sirayi (2012) states that ‘African theatre’ may be “described as a socio-cultural interaction between performer and audience” (p. 5).

“There were also special occasions during which it was a must for some traditional performances to be presented” (Mogobe, 1999, p. 42). Each of the different ethnic groups in Namibia has their own ancient cultural forms, performed for various reasons. Examples are the ancient Herero ritual that marked the transitions of the life cycle from birth to death with rites of passage; or the traditional Himba wedding rites, or Efuudula, an initiation ceremony for young Oshiwambo girls. This ‘theatre’ is usually directly related to and coexists with the traditions (Omodele, 1988), culture, and art forms of the people. Sirayi (2012) add storytelling as a theatrical activity

and claims that “these stories took the form of tales, history, riddles, proverbs or accounts of their adventures during the day” (p. 22). The researcher agrees that the origin of the theatre in South West Africa/Namibia lays in the indigenous cultural and artistic expressions and practices of the earliest inhabitants. “Drama is life; it is interwoven throughout every aspect of the African’s existence and experience” (Freeman, 2005, p. 5). Traditional dramatic performances in earlier South West Africa were typically unstructured, spontaneous integrated expressions. Singer (1959) uses the term ‘cultural performance’ to describe theatre those forms. Traoré (1972) uses ‘theatre’ to refer to these pre-colonial theatre forms. For the purpose of this research it is accepted that *theatre* was practiced in South West Africa before the European settlement.

The European settlers brought with them a tradition of highly formalised, tightly structured, premeditated, high art theatre. From the moment Europeans made their home in South West Africa, two separate traditions of dramatic expression developed as each society practiced their own forms of theatre. The Eurocentric cultural activities were done for the appreciation of the artist’s work and the entertainment of audiences: it was art for art’s sake. The theatre practiced by the two cultural groups, indigenous and European was, and still is different in ideology, function and style. The fact is that the political and cultural situation in the country made the practice of traditional African theatre impractical in the townships.

“For many centuries the vast majority of the African people had no writing of their own and history was passed on from one generation to the next by means of oral tradition” (Van Aswegen, 1980, p. 3). The form of written, staged and acted drama is a comparatively modern construct (Nwankwo, 2005) and it often had the effect of displacing the performing cultures. “The Europeans were the first ones who ever sat down, and wrote about what was happening”

(Erichsen, 2007, p. 1). Rubin (1997) agrees and says “It was the coming of European colonization which introduced the notion of spoken theatre, (as a formal and distinctly separate system), to the region” (p. 270). “Having defined theatre as an exclusively literary genre, it has been easy for Europeans to claim that blacks had no theatre” (Vandenbroucke, undated, p. 50). African theatre is usually seen on the open stage as opposed to European drama that is usually seen in print before it is seen on the stage. Nkosi (1981) claims with African theatre “there is no proper ‘script’ and therefore no single author, sometimes not even a proper audience since the audience itself is fluid and indefinable, constantly merging with performers” (p.176). The formalised European theatre stands in contrast with those traditional indigenous theatre practices. Namibia’s artistic creativity is as old as the first inhabitants. The first inhabitants concentrated on hunting and gathering, rather than being creative (Schroeder, 1956). The oldest form of art in the country is that of the San’s (Bushman) rock paintings and engravings. Some of these sketches, e.g., at Twyfelfontein, reveal shamanic dancing figures which indicate performing art activities that forms part of the San people’s rituals and religious practices (Wittmann, 2005, p. 2). It was not understood by the Europeans that the indigenous arts were practical and functional; part of people’s lives, but carrying the seed of creativeness. Stories about the hunting and gathering, told around fires, were accompanied by dramatic activities and enthralled audiences often participated when they got caught up in the enthusiasm when daily events were dramatized (Losambe, Lokangaka & Sarinjeive, 2001). Barrault (1981) agrees in claiming that “The whole history of the theatre shows that it has its source in imitation” (p. 2).

The African theatre practiced in South West Africa differed in style from that of the Western, e.g. the demarcation between the performer and the audience of formal theatre was non-existent

as the concept ‘theatre’ and ‘drama’ differs in the European and the African context (Van der Smit, 2007). The Europeans never took into account the differences between the cultures, but assumed the indigenous cultures as heathen, vulgar, barbaric and their theatrical activities as black magic (Van der Smit, 2007). Soon the ethnic, indigenous theatre traditions of the country were dominated and impacted by the European/ Western traditions. Rituals, festivals and ceremonies gradually disappeared when many of the indigenous people moved to the towns. The function of their cultural tradition changed somewhat to a leisure time diversion and gradually new urban performing art forms emerged, e.g. *swanking*, which was practiced by young well-dressed males in a theatrical fashion parade.

To André Strauss, the then Director in the Ministry of Education’s Arts and Culture division in the Namibian Government, African theatre is spectacle (Strauss, 1991), taking us back to our orators, savants; conveyers of the spirit of men and women that were and are the creators (Zeeman, 2005). Strauss points out that the African performers could not afford the buildings, the décor, and the pretence – which for him is European theatre. Strauss further claims that European theatre is marked by a culture of repetition, of stasis, of boring petrification, while the African theatre by contrast is the unlimited pursuit of what the body and mind can do (Strauss, 1991; Zeeman, 2005). It is, however, an indisputable fact that “the collision of cultures that resulted from the influx of imperial forces did strike a blow to the face of African theatre” (Mabweazara, 2011, p. 13).

A broad overview on how the Western theatre entered first South Africa, and later South West Africa, sheds light on the type of theatre the Arts Association practiced after 1947. In 1652 the Dutch arrived in South Africa. During their voyage the passengers and crew entertained

themselves with comedies and farces (Fletcher, 1994). In the barracks the Dutch soldiers performed short scenes for the other officials (Fletcher, 1994) in the Garrison Theatre (Greyvenstein, 1989a). This type of formal classic style theatre was popular in European countries at that time. The French, who arrived in the last quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, influenced the Dutch theatrical activities (Fletcher, 1994). “This theatre had its roots in Europe ..... the theatre and the players on stage were from Europe” (Schach, 1996, p. 14).

The Dutch and French foreigners in South Africa were followed by the British, e.g. Sir George Yonge, who “played a prominent role in campaigning for the erection of a private theatre in Cape Town” (Schach, 1996, pp. 14). The English had a rich theatrical tradition dating back several centuries (Fourie, 1979) and introduced “Shakespeare, Molière, Chekhov, Shaw, Miller ... British drawing room comedies, French farces, Broadway comedies, and American musicals” (Hauptfleisch, 1997, p. 74). It was their theatre tradition that inspired commercial companies, the National Theatre Organisation (NTO) and later its successor the Performing Arts Councils. Next to bring the European theatre influence were Germans who served in the Dutch East India Company at Cape Point in South Africa (Fletcher, 1994). Many of them participated in amateur productions.

Before 1900 there were very few Afrikaans plays (Nel, 1972), mainly because Afrikaans was not yet a written language – but Cape Dutch performances occurred often, mostly for amateur theatre (Fourie, 1979). Soon playwrights, such as Langenhoven and Fagan, were writing plays in an early form of Afrikaans (Fletcher, 1994). In these plays Afrikaans nationalism found expression and historical significance (Bode, 1982).

Farces were popular during late 19<sup>th</sup> Century in Europe and South Africa (Fletcher, 1986; Stassen, undated); and most amateur theatre groups performed them (Binge, 1969). Playwrights, such as Melt Brink (1842 – 1925) and J. H. H. de Waal produced farcical and melodramatic plays and dialogues with considerable merit for the debating societies (Nel, 1972); popular in South Africa and South West Africa. No documentation of formal organised European theatre performances before 1900 in South West Africa could be found. Infrequent informal theatre activities were for a specific event by amateurs, e.g. a fundraising for a school or a cultural evening (Binge, 1969).

With the arrival of colonial rule the Europeans' cultural patterns were imposing and dysfunctional in an African milieu. The "African reality is perceived from a European point of view, and thus distorted. This culture reproduced "the perspective of the masters and by necessity ignores the experience of the colonised people" (Junge 1993, p. 127). The culture, of which the performing arts are an integral part, was heavily influenced by each European invasion into South West Africa. According to Gert Oostindie (2008, p.vii) "Cultural heritage is one of the many legacies left by colonialism worldwide."

The European colonial theatre models ignored existing traditions, continuing with the promotion and development of an almost exclusively European culture, supported by erstwhile regimes (Bharucha, 1993; Strauss & Kenny, 1992). Dommissie (2001) confirms this when she says "Since the earliest years of performances in urban theatres, audiences were almost exclusively European... such entertainment had never been part of the way of life of the African people" (p. 301). In the so-called 'locations' of the time there was oral poetry, jazz, and dance competitions in the community hall or shebeens (Ridgway, 1991). This was very much in contrast with the

white population's symphony concerts and theatre events. The latter were part of the Arts Association's performing arts.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century missionaries, such as the German Rhenish Missionary Society and the English Wesleyan Mission, influenced the indigenous mission church followers to "regard their own traditions from a more detached and skeptical point of view" (Dederling, 1990, p. 91). Besides teaching the inhabitants the Christian faith the missionaries also enforced the European culture (Haarhoff, 1991; Katjavivi, 1988). The missionaries, though, made an important contribution to the tradition of theatre when they used drama in their education. The themes were staged versions of biblical teachings, but also didactic western plays (Katjavivi, 1988).

In the early years farces, addressing topics of national importance in an acceptable moral way, were staged by amateurs to the delight of the Windhoek public (*Die Erf tante*, 1923). In a review of *Die Erf tante* [Inheritance Aunt] (1929), written by Nemo (J.E. van Oordt), in *The Windhoek Advertiser* (Puritanism, 2013) special reference was made to the "sturdy Puritanism of the Dutch Afrikaner people" (Coming to Stadt Windhoek, 1923, p.2; ). An anonymous Windhoek reviewer observed that in the early years of theatre that "on the whole the public is more enamored of lighter material or the definite classic tragedies" (The Game Kid, 1924, p. 2).

In 1907 a first mention was made of the establishment of a theatre society in South West Africa (Mossolow, 1967). Some performances were given at Stadt Windhuk Hotel, a building which would play an important role in the cultural life of Windhoek (Bravenboer, 2004). The venues where the theatrical activities were practiced, were hotels and clubs (see Appendix C), e.g. the Railway Recreation Club or the Continental Hotel (Items, 1924; Luukse hotel, 1950).

As cinema gained popularity worldwide it had a negative impact on the world of theatre (Hauptfleisch, 2016) as audiences flocked to the cinemas. There were three cinemas in Windhoek: Garden Cinema, Kaiserkrone Cinema and Stadt Windhoek Cinema (Garden Cinema, 1924). Combined performances (theatre and bioscope) became popular (Afrikaanse Klugspel, 1949) as theatre in Windhoek was forced to compete with this kind of entertainment (Over six hundred, 1925).

A form of public entertainment which spilled over to Windhoek from South Africa was concerts. *The Variety Entertainment* was presented by Messrs Benson & Ungar (owners of the Stadt Windhoek Cinema) at the Kaiserkrone in aid of the Girl Guides (The Variety Entertainment, 1924). The evening included two bioscope pictures, a musical programme and a revue, *Step this Way*. This unique concept ensured that there was a good attendance and the event was hailed as a great success (The Variety Entertainment, 1924).

As entertainment facilities were limited in Windhoek “the Council built an unpretentious building that housed a kiosk on the premises of the Zoo Park” (Bravenboer, 2004). This building became a popular venue for social gatherings and entertainment (see Appendix A) and later hosted the office of the Arts Association. Despite the lack of proper stage facilities a variety of theatrical activities were performed at this venue, e.g., there were monthly meetings for play readings, e.g. on Wednesday, September 22, 1920 a Mr. Du Voss had the Shakespeare play *The Tempest* on the menu (Readers are reminded, 1920).

In 1920 a newspaper, *The Windhoek Advertiser*, introduced a Mrs. Gossip, who at various instances gave glowingly enthusiastic, over-zealous opinions (Open Letter, 1920) in reviews on theatre events to bolster the public’s interest. From Mrs. Gossip’s evaluations of earlier European

theatre in South West Africa provided evidence that theatre evenings seemed to be social outings as well as artistic entertainment. In July 1920 Mrs. Gossip attended the Vaudeville evening arranged by the South African Railways and Harbors (Mrs. Gossip, 1920). She wrote about being dressed up in furs for the theatre evening; how they had to walk to the venue as they were late in ordering a car; that they bought sweets to eat during the show and that everybody she knew was there (Mrs. Gossip, 1920). Her reviews provided evidence that there were amateur theatre practitioners active in Windhoek; that the audience dressed-up for the events and that the concert type of theatrical performances was in fashion at the time.

On September 24 and 25, 1920 a farce, *Susanna Reyniers* (1908), written by A. Franken and performed by the Debating Society. *The Windhoek Advertiser* gave a synopsis of the Afrikaans play “for the benefit of our many English and German friends” (*Susanna Reyniers*, 1920, p. 3). In a letter to *The Windhoek Advertiser* dated October 6, a reader called the play “a real Dutch play produced and staged by people singularly qualified to do it properly” (*Susanna Reyniers*, 1920, p. 3) and refers to the character of the Landlady as “a type well known to all South Africans” (*Susanna Reyniers*, 1920, p. 3). South West Africa, having no own playwrights of its own, relied on such plays like *Susanna Reyniers*., The audience, of whom many were from South Africa, had no trouble understanding the references and appreciated the characters.

After 1920 a transformation occurred in South African theatre when there was a swing away from romantic–historical plays to those that dealt with man and his problems, conflicts and relationships in a farcical way (Binge, 1969). Playwright Fagan’s excellent theatre technique was evident in philosophical plays such as *Lenie*, but the play had little attraction to the public when

staged in Windhoek (*Arme Lenie*, 1947). The South West African public was not ready for these types of plays; they preferred the shallow comical farces.

The practice of bringing foreign theatre via South Africa to South West Africa was occurring already in the early years of theatre, e.g., in 1921 African Theatres tours brought *The Startlers* to the Kaiserkrone Hotel on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of May (Startlers, 1921, p. 4). Dutch, English, French and German plays were often translated and performed in both countries.

In 1921 Professor N.J. Brummer of the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, delivered a lecture titled *Afrikaner Humor*, on Friday July 15 at 8:00 in the Turnhalle. This was one of the ways knowledge of the South African theatre was conveyed to South West Africa. In August 1921 the Windhoek Club Hall was once again the place to be when on a Wednesday Rev. Joseph Wood gave a lecture on various *Character Sketches* (Mr. Justice Gutsche, 1921). There was thus a conscious effort in the community to not only produce theatre, but to empower themselves through informative lectures.

A practice during this period was to get the governor's permission (or patronage) to perform. Theatre performances were supported by high ranking officials, e.g., the Administrator, or his wife and other dignitaries, and this was guarantee enough for the activity to be a success. The presence of dignitaries certainly attached an aura of elitism to an evening of theatre (Partytjie, 1948). Asking a high-ranking official to be the patron was later used by the Arts Association as well.

Toward the end of the 1930's theatre's growth slowed down (Binge, 1969). There were intermitted droughts, floods, unemployment and poverty (Stopforth, 1956) and the growing

popularity of radio and film (Du Toit, 1988). These difficult circumstances were not conducive to the development of theatre. South West Africa, with no professional acting company, relied solely on South African touring companies, such as those of Paul de Groot and André Huguenet, and a few local amateur performances. The first Afrikaans Theatre Society in South West Africa was formed by G.P.J. Trümpelmann (Hauptfleisch, 2016) who was an amateur theatre practitioner. An educated guess would be that the availability of a suitable play text, a director and talented actors would have been elements when theatre groups wanted to stage a play.

### **3.2.1 THE CHOICES OF PLAYS**

In South West Africa many of the inhabitants were, and still are, bilingual or even trilingual. That made it possible for the public to attend shows in other languages. Each of the language groups had a different audience they had to consider, but in the earlier years most of the public enjoyed comedies. In the period before the establishment of the Arts Association there were performances in Windhoek in Afrikaans, English and German for the European community.

The choices of plays often hinged on factors such as available texts, directors and actors, the time available for the rehearsals, a suitable venue and the audience it was aimed at (Humorous Dutch play, 1923). In the thirties and early forties the play texts, many of which were brought from South Africa to South West Africa, reflected the social and economic situation the Afrikaners found themselves in (Dommissie, 1976). South African theatre in turn relied heavily on European and American texts, though there was some original writing from South Africa as well. From 1940 there was a stronger artistic striving among the playwrights who worked closely with the live theatre, e.g. Uys Krige, and W.A. de Klerk.

The English audiences in South West Africa were no different to Afrikaans audiences in that they also preferred light entertainment. Examples of the comedy genre regularly performed by the Afrikaans, English and German theatre groups were:

- **Afrikaans:** *Die Silwere Rand* [The Silver Border] (1917), written by E.S.M. Viljoen, was staged by a group of amateurs at the Kaiserkrone in aid of The Dutch Reformed Church Building Fund on Monday the 13<sup>th</sup> July 1925 (*Silwere Rand*, 1925, p. 2). *The Windhoek Advertiser* claimed that this play was “the best staged amateur performance...seen in Windhoek” (*Die Silwere Rand*, 1925, p. 2). Other popular plays such as *Die Erf tante* and *Susanna Reyniers* were also performed by the same Windhoek dramatic society. Interestingly, in each case South African dramatic societies performed the play years before the South West African amateurs performed the same plays (Binge, 1969; *Die Erf tante*, 1923; Du Toit, 1988; *Susanna Reyniers*, 1920).

- **English:** the comedy *In Two Minds* by Richard Harris was staged at the Kaiserkrone Hotel (Miss Muriel Venning, 1924) by English amateurs. With another popular play, *What happened to Jones* by G.H. Broadhurst, the takings were quite high and the newspaper indicated that more people were attending the English plays than the Afrikaans plays (Takings, 1925). *The Windhoek Advertiser* described the play as “one of those light farces” (*What happened to Jones?*, 1925, p. 2).

- **German:** 1922 the German Amateur Theatrical Society performed the comedy *The Rape of the Sabines* (1884) by Franz von Schoenthan in September at 20:30 at the Stadt Windhuk Hotel. (On Friday evening, 1922, p. 2). Mr. Hans Mueller was the director and the proceeds went for charity. The performance was followed by a dance (German, 1922, p. 2). This pattern of

combining a dance with a play and/or music was followed for many years. On Friday August 27, 1923 *Der Herr Senator* [The Senator] (1894) was produced by the Männer Gesangverein. The principal character was portrayed by Mr. Henoumont. A married couple, Mr. and Mrs. Müller, participated in this amateur production. This tendency of husband and wife acting together would be observable throughout the years to come. Mrs. Müller was observed to corpse in the play, but it was clearly forgiven by the public who saw it as part of the play.

It is difficult to determine why one play was more successful than another as reviews are often the only source of information. It is nevertheless apparent from the reviews that the English plays were popular amongst the majority of theatre audiences.

### **3.2.2 THE THEATRE PRACTITIONERS**

There were some talented amateurs and certain names began to gain a measure of recognition, Mrs. J.D. de Waal, for example, was hailed as “extremely good and her acting is of an order seldom met with on the amateur stage” (Coming to Stadt Windhoek, 1923, p. 2). She was often cast as the leading actress (Rehearsals, 1924). Another stalwart was Mrs. J. W. Sievers. She was well known in Windhoek for organizing entertainment, directing and acting skills. Mention was also made of colorful theatre personalities such as Mr. Lefebvre, a well-known entertainer of whom it was said that he “stands in a class by himself in Windhoek. He is not only very amusing but is extremely clever ...as good as anything we have heard on the professional stage” (Police Concert, 1926, p. 2).

It seems that the amateur actors gathered together because of the shared languages in which they wanted to produce the plays. The fact that these actors appeared in so many productions was an

indication that there was a small pool of skilled amateurs active in Windhoek. Many of the actors that were in the English production *What Happened to Jones?* acted in the Afrikaans play *Die Silwere Rand* as well (*Die Silwere Rand*, 1925, p. 2).

In these formative years of the South West African theatre actors were frequently director, manager and stagehand. This was a trend that South West Africa inherited from South Africa where the practice was common among the Afrikaans touring companies (Bosman, 1951; Botha, 2006). The necessity of being a jack-of-all-trades was mostly due to financial reasons, but also to the fact that for years there was a lack of technical expertise, creativity and even discipline. South West Africa with its small population, and even smaller theatre community, had no choice but to be actor-director-backstage crew (Binge, 1969; Du Toit, 1988).

Another feature of the early years of the theatre was that, due to the lack of a developed theatrical community, married couples and family members would often participate in the same performances. For example, on Friday August 27, 1923 *Der Herr Senator* [The Senator] was produced by the Männer Gesangverein and Mr. and Mrs. Müller were participants. Two sisters, May and Hilda Colie, joined forces in the play *Quality Street* by Sir James M. Barrie (*Quality Street*, 1925). This tendency of family members acting together would be a consistent trend throughout the years of the Arts Association's reign.

Many of the theatre practitioners had contacts outside the borders of South West Africa. For instance, the stage settings for a production in Windhoek came from the shop Liberty of London and the costumes were made by Madame Marco Basaldella, a theatrical costumier in London (Pins and Needles, 1921). However, more often costumes and props were obtained from South Africa, simply because of its close proximity to South West Africa.

Many of the actors were from South Africa, seconded to the Administration (Van Biljon, 1982). Though there were no professional theatre practitioners under them, there were dedicated amateurs and theatre lovers.

### **3.3 SOUTH AFRICAN CULTURAL SOCIETIES THAT PROMOTED SOUTH WEST AFRICAN THEATRE**

South West Africa's early theatre benefited from South African theatre societies' involvement in theatre activities. South African theatre was brought to South West Africa via different cultural organizations, societies and later via various travelling companies involved in theatre. One such society was the Jewish Social Club, called Windhoek Jewish Guild, formed in February 1924 under the chairmanship of Mr. M. L. Lewitt (Windhoek Jewish Guild, 1924). On Monday, August 11 the new society's members held a Mock Trial, the "First time that such an affair has been staged in Windhoek" (Windhoek Jewish Guild, 1924, p. 2), and the Kaiserkrone Hall was filled to capacity. Debating societies were popular in South Africa since late 1800's, especially among the Afrikaners (Nel, 1972), and Windhoek followed the pattern (Bravenboer, 2004). These debating societies often staged plays for either fundraising or entertainment.

The year 1927 saw the establishment of the Afrikanerkring (Stals, 2008). This society, which originated in South Africa, played an important role in the cultural life of the Afrikaans-speaking inhabitants of Windhoek. Not only was there now an active Afrikaans cultural society in Windhoek, but also branches in other centers in the country, amongst others, Swakopmund (Stals, 2008). One of the aims of this society was to promote the Afrikaner culture, which it did by staging theatre performances (Klug spel opgevoer deur Afrikanerkring, 1931).

### 3.4 PERFORMANCES FROM VISITING SOUTH AFRICAN THEATRE

#### COMPANIES

During the period before 1947 there were theatre performances in South West Africa that were produced by South African groups and companies. *The Windhoek Advertiser* said on September 30, 1925 that

Windhoek cannot expect professionals to visit this town, as the expense would be enormous, resulting in a few hours pleasure at a great loss, but the public are always ready to patronize an amateur show, if they feel they are given the best possible talent (Quality Street, 1925, p. 2).

As early as 1880 South African travelling actors were visiting South West Africa. The first Afrikaans group that took a theatre performance on tour to rural towns of South West Africa was the University of Stellenbosch in 1920 (Binge, 1969).

On 14 April, 1926 *The Windhoek Advertiser* printed the news that for the first time in the history of South West African theatre a professional British dramatic company, the Majorie Clifton Comedy and Dramatic Company from Cape Town, was visiting Windhoek (A dramatic company, 1926). This company, which had performed at all the major theatres in South Africa, had an extensive repertoire, which included plays like *Twin Beds* (1914) by Salisbury Field and Margaret Mayo, *Baby Mine* (1910) by Margaret Mayo, and *Woman to Woman* (1921) by Michael Morton (A dramatic company, 1926). In the opinion of the researcher a visit by a professional company would surely inspire and incite local amateur theatre practitioners to better themselves and to perform the same and similar plays.

Early professional theatre in South Africa before World War II was almost exclusively imported (plays from foreign playwrights) or theatre presented by companies headed by Leonard Rayne in Cape Town (Report, 1977), which tended to follow the style and tradition of the English provincial repertory companies.

The reporter of *The Windhoek Advertiser* wrote in an article about this company: “The chief object of the playwright is to interest and amuse” (Those big winners, 1926, p. 5). Another interesting comment was that the company would “succeed in bringing a lot of cheerfulness to our somewhat isolated and drab existence here inasmuch as we never get Companies of any standard coming up this far” (Those big winners, 1926, p. 5). This bout of professional theatre must have been a tremendous energetic injection to the amateurs. It is apparent that Windhoek audiences wanted to be entertained. The companies encountered many difficulties and problems with transport (train and bus), and staging: it was costly and uncomfortable. The exhausting travelling over the vast distances and the laborious setting up of the stage were none the less rewarded with enthusiastic, appreciative audiences (Binge, 1969; Botha, 2008).

A number of professional companies were formed in South Africa by theatre practitioners such as Paul de Groot and André Huguenet, husband and wife team Hendrik and Matilda Hanekom, with Wena Naudé. The companies visited South West Africa at intervals. Most of the play texts used was adaptations or translations and not original Afrikaans dramas (Nel, 1972) but their performances raised a theatre consciousness under the public.

The type of theatre the South African theatre companies practiced was naturalistic-realistic on proscenium stages. This style of acting was introduced to South Africa by Paul de Groot (Dommissie, 1957). De Groot came to South Africa in 1924 from Amsterdam and his

contribution to, and influence on Afrikaans theatre in particular, was immense (Stead, undated). According to Dommissie (1957) this style was typical of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century reformatory theatre of Shaw and Ibsen. The theatre companies from South Africa produced both Afrikaans and English plays with which they toured through South West Africa, inspiring urban and rural amateur groups to achieve the same professional level of theatre.

The South African touring groups were received with great enthusiasm and appreciation. Their performances were a welcome change from the sporadic local amateur theatre productions. Many local theatre practitioners copied the acting and directing style that was presented to them. All of these contributed in varying degrees to the theatre development of South West Africa. A brief look at some of the different visiting theatres is thus appropriate.

#### **3.4.1 THE JAPIE VAN NIEKERK THEATRE COMPANY**

The South African Theatre Company set up by Japie van Niekerk toured the whole of the South West Africa with the comedy *Die Verstoteling* [The Outcast], a one-act play by Andries de Klerk, and *Rebecca* (1939) by Daphne du Maurier. Only Walvisbaai was missed as the company was advised not to travel on that road with their caravan (Rebecca, 1947). The reviewer of *Die Suidwes-Afrikaner*, V.D. was positive about the performance of *Die Verstoteling* and mentioned that the play was a good choice, well-rehearsed and gave a clear indication of the taste of the Windhoek public (Verstoteling, 1947). Sannie Visser's review was just as positive and mentioned that the performance in Windhoek was attended very well by an appreciative audience (Visser, 1947c).

The performance of *Rebecca* was staged on July 02, 1947 in Stadt Windhuk Hotel and *Die Suidwester's* reviewer, J.v.M., this time, was full of praise for the groups' acting and mentioned how they had improved since they staged *Die Verstoteling* by Barry Connors in Windhoek (Favell, 1947). Either the group really improved in about two week's time, or, a more plausible explanation, *Rebecca* was a superior play and better rehearsed than the previous play.

The performance of the Van Niekerk's group in Okahandja was called 'satisfactory' and the article mentioned that the public, in past years, has more than once had been disappointed by travelling theatre troupes. Inferior work was staged and the travelling theatre groups expected that audiences in South West Africa, because it was so remote, would be so grateful for any theatre performances that they would accept anything.

South West Africa was toured with two new plays; *Poppie van Tant Koba* [Poppet of Aunt Coba] in May and *Te Lank sy Ssoonheidsduur* [Too long his Beauty] an adaption by Robert Kauziaric of *The Picture of Dorian Grey* by Oscar Wilde. Both these plays were accepted enthusiastically by large audiences of 400 and more. With all the visiting travelling theatre companies who produced mostly comedies, the more serious *Te Lank sy Ssoonheidsduur*, was a welcome change according Sannie Visser (Visser, 1948c), but the acting was disappointing (Visser, 1948b).

From a letter dated June 30, 1948 it is evident that Japie van Niekerk was already planning the next tour in South West Africa (Letter: AA to Van Niekerk, June, 30, 1948, File 23, NA, A.345.2/12.AA). He wanted to know from Sannie Visser whether she knew of two local actors (male and female) as he was in need of them. There were thus opportunities for actors to participate in performances and gain experience, which they could then plough back into the

amateur theatre activities of the country. More important is the implication that South West African actors would be familiar with the acting style of the South African company and would be able to be part of such a company.

With their regular visits to South West Africa the Van Niekerk Company helped to lay the groundwork for the amateur theatre groups which would come into existence in 1948 – 1949. In 1949 the Van Niekerk company returned to South West Africa and performed *Net Wat Mens Van 'n Vrou Kan Verwag* [Just what you can expect from a woman] in the Railway Recreation Club hall. An unknown reviewer from *Die Suiwester* said that the Japie van Niekerk Company knew the theatre tastes of South West African audiences which leaned towards comedies. The Arts Association would in the coming years try to elevate the audiences' tastes by educating them in the theatre arts and give them a taste of serious, high quality drama.

### **3.4.2 THE NORVAL THEATRE COMPANY**

This South African group came with an Afrikaans comedy *Ou Liefde Roes Nie* [Old Love Never Dies] on Thursday, July 28, 1949, which they performed in the Railway Recreation Club Hall (Ou Liefde, 1949). The company was under the direction of James Norval and his wife, Anna Cloete (the writer of *Ou Liefde Roes Nie*), who were both previously part of the Hanekom theatre company. The audiences enjoyed the good acting, especially that of Norval and Cloete (*Op spesiale versoek*, 1949). The Norval Company was far better known than Van Niekerk or Fourie in South Africa, but they visited South West Africa less than the other companies.

### **3.4.3 THE JOHAN FOURIE THEATRE COMPANY**

This South African company was held in high esteem and the appreciative audience was not disappointed by their performance of *Silwer Hare Tussen Goud* [Silver Hair between the Gold] in the Railway Recreation Hall on July 30, 1949 (G.P.K., 1949b). The successful play drew large audiences who wanted more visits from this group (G.P.K., 1949a). The reviewer felt that for most of the performance the acting was convincing, but at times it was over-dramatic (G.P.K., 1949a). The legacy of De Groot's realistic acting style was evident in this company.

On August 27, 1949 the theatre company was back on the return leg of their tour in the same hall with *Doodsvonnis* [Death Penalty] which attracted large audiences (Kuns, 1949). The directing and the acting were described as masterly, subtle, restrained, brilliant; carefully creating an atmosphere full of tension, but the gestures and voice inflections were described as sentimental and theatrical at times, and the costumes of some the characters were inappropriate (Kuns, 1949).

The Railway Institute Hall was packed to the rafters when *Groen Koring* [Green Wheat], an adaption of the novel with the same title, written by Tryna du Toit, was performed on August 8, 1951 (Groen Koring, 1951). The actors were Rina Botha, Retha Aveling, Johan Fourie and Deon Vosloo. Some interesting facts came to light in the review that the lead actress's make-up was a bit 'over-done' for those in the front rows, in the attempt to make it visible for the back rows (Groen Koring, 1951). It was felt that some characters spoke too fast and indistinctly, and there was not enough emotional acting by some of the actors; others impressed with their excellent acting, and while most of the actors played two roles, they performed one better than the other (Groen Koring, 1951). Several scenes (there were seven) were felt to be disturbing, but the review ended with high praise for the play (Groen Koring, 1951). It seems that reviewers were becoming more critical of the acting the more they were exposed to theatre.

In 1959 the Johan Fourie Theatre Company toured through South West Africa with *Gee terug my Kindjie* [Give back my baby] by Jan Stander (Toneelgeselskap se Reisplan, 1959), It was performed on May 8, 1959 in Windhoek, no review praising or criticising the company could be found in the media.

#### **3.4.4 THE HANEKOM THEATRE COMPANY**

Hanekom Company started to produce theatre in 1925 in South Africa and was a pioneer in the development of the Afrikaans theatre (Binge, 1969; Botha 2006; Du Toit, 1988). According to Hermien Dommissie this was during a period when “there were no theatres, no theatre-conscious public, no trained actors, hardly any Afrikaans plays and no theatrical organisation” (Fletcher, 1994, p. 139). Hendrik Hanekom and his wife, actually teachers who became actors, did groundbreaking work to change the public’s perception of travelling theatre companies to more positive. Inspired by Leonard Rayne and Freda Godfrey’s productions in the main South African cities, they sold all their possessions and started a theatre company (Fletcher, 1994). Writers such as C.J. Langenhoven opposed the forming of a professional theatre company (Minnaar-Vos, 1969), while S.J. du Toit (Totius) was against theatre for money (Fletcher, 1994). They were not forthcoming with plays and Hanekom then wrote his own farce, *Oom Gawerjal se Dogters* [Uncle Gawerjal’s Daughters] and a moving melodrama *Liefde en Geldsug* [Love and Greed] (Botha, 2006).

It was out of necessity that the Afrikaans theatre began their tours. They “had difficulty in hiring a theatre, as African Theatres weren’t interested in Afrikaans plays” (Fletcher, 1994, p. 141). The Hanekoms visited every town, even the small ones, “and the audiences streamed in on carts,

in cars, and on horseback” (Fletcher, 1994, p. 145). During the Depression years the audiences dwindled and the travelling companies could barely survive, but they did (Fletcher, 1994).

Not only had South Africa benefited from these travelling theatre groups, but neighbouring countries like South West Africa had too. In 1935 the Hanekom Company performed the historical play *Oom Paul* by D.C. Postma on an extended tour that included even small villages such as Nina (Minnaar-Vos, 1969). In 1938 another historical play, *Generaal de Wet*, was successfully performed on a tour through South West Africa (Botha, 2006).

In April, 1946 it was announced that the Hanekom’s would be visiting South West Africa with the productions *Die Giftige Omhelsing* [The Deadly Embrace], *Maar Die Gereg Vergeet Nooit* [The law never forgets] and *Moleste met die Buurman* [Fracas with the Neighbour], the latter written by F.A. Fagan. The productions were advertised in the newspapers and through handbills. The company visited Windhoek on 15 June, 1946 and the Hanekom’s productions received glowing reviews. Performances from touring companies such as the Hanekom’s prepared the way for amateur theatre under the auspices of the Arts Association as it inspired local theatre practitioners and audiences, but influenced their acting style, decor, costumes and directors’ visions (Minnaar-Vos, 1969).

Every time the Hanekoms visited Windhoek and the rural areas the halls were always packed with a capacity audience (Mooi gebaar, 1949). That was the case once again when the Hanekom Youngsters performed the Afrikaans *Gods Meule Maal*. The drama was the Afrikaans translation of *Dark Victory* by George Brewer and Bertram Bloch, which was translated and altered by Charl Engelbrecht and directed by the experienced actor Hendrik Hanekom. It was performed on May 03, 1949 in the Railway Recreation Hall. Travelling with the company was a ‘researcher’,

who prior to the tour, gained information that could be of benefit to the company. The idea was that the information would be used to make decisions such as whether to have one or two companies, or whether they should decentralise.

That the Hanekom's company was in a different league than most of the other travelling theatre companies, was evident from the glowing review by L.C. for the farce *Trou is nie perdekoop nie* [Marriage is not all sunshine and roses] when the play was performed by the Hanekoms' Youngsters on their return journey to South Africa, in Windhoek in May 1949 (Trou, 1949). Sannie Visser was positive in her review and was thankful that the play did not tend towards the silly, frivolous, meaningless or absurd, but felt that the décor needed more attention to detail (Trou, 1949). It was often the case that travelling companies skimped on the décor. At times it was because of financial restraints and at times it was easier to travel with less elaborate scenery. The acting was praised in the reviews.

During one of his regular visits to Windhoek Hendrik Hanekom felt that it would be good idea if the National Theatre Organisation (NTO) could include South West Africa in their tour programmes. He had the idea that they must work from Windhoek as the centre and try to deliver all the plays performed in South Africa here as well (Grootste opkoms, 1950).

It was certainly true that Hanekom and Huguenet set a worthy example to follow on their tours to local amateurs. Ideas on the latest staging techniques or available stage make-up were brought along and passed on to local theatre practitioners. "Their plays always had artistic merit, and the players gave well-rounded performances. Their performances were inspirational and instructive to the local theatre practitioners (Minnaar-Vos, 1969).

A valuable member of the Hanekom Theatre Company was the actress Wena Naude. She made her debut as the lead actress in *Oorskotjie* [Surplus], an Afrikaans translation from the Italian drama *Scampolo* by Van Nicodemi (Fletcher, 1994). Mrs. A.E. Carinus-Holzhausen did the translation, as she did most of the play translations at the time (Fletcher, 1994). Naude was a favourite with the Windhoek audiences and visited South West Africa, often with her own company. She acted for 21 years in the Afrikaans professional theatre and was a role model for aspiring actresses (Botha, 2006). Another such outstanding woman, well known to South West Africa audiences, was Anna Neethling-Pohl who made sure that even under extremely difficult circumstances during World War II the Afrikaans theatre survived (Stead, undated, unnumbered).

On Saturday November 01, 1947 the Hanekom company performed *Vlindertjie Gewond* [Butterfly Wounded] in the Railway Institute Hall (Reisplan, 1947). The play was an adaption by Mrs. Carinus-Holzhausen of the well-known opera *Madame Butterfly* by Puccini (J.N.T., 1947). The play was already taken on tour through South Africa and Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). It was received very favourably by the South West African public (J.N.T., 1947). The performances were a tribute to Paul de Groot, one of the actors who laid the foundations for the Afrikaans theatre.

The conditions that the touring theatre companies had to endure were far from pleasant (Minnaar-Vos, 1969). This is evident from J.N.T.'s review (J.N.T., 1947). He referred to the extreme heat that the actors on stage and the audience in the hall had to endure. The acoustics of the hall were very bad and a real challenge to both actors and audiences. The fidgeting of the audience and the offensive behaviour of the children in the audience made it very difficult for the

actors to keep their focus, but also for the audience to hear the dialogue and enjoy the play properly (J.N.T., 1947).

### **3.5 THEATRE COMPANIES FROM SOUTH AFRICAN TERTIARY**

#### **INSTITUTIONS**

There were some South African tertiary educational institutions that toured with intervals through South West Africa with productions from their dramatic societies. These tours were mostly fundraising activities for specific causes for these institutions. The productions were mostly farces which the audiences enjoyed and ensured that there would be large audiences which made the tour profitable.

In 1952 the Orange Free State University Dramatic Society toured South West Africa with the hilarious farce, *Piet se Tante* [Piet's Aunt] (OFS University, 1952). The profit from the tour, according to the rector, Prof. H. v. d. M. Scholtz, was to be used for funding needy students and the development of the university (Ten bate, 1952).

The Afrikaans Theatre Society of the University of the Orange Free State from Bloemfontein, South Africa, visited South West Africa in 1953. The play *As ons twee eers getroud is* [When we are married] was written by Dr. G. Beukes, one of the university's lecturers (Afrikaans play, 1953; Vrystaatse Studente, 1953). The play received first prize in the 1952 Van Riebeeck Festival drama competition and was directed by Schalk Theron, a well-known South African theatre personality (Vrystaatse Studente, 1953). It was staged on July 11, 13 and 14, at the Railway Institution Hall.

The University of Potchefstroom toured South West Africa with their Thalia Company with *Meneer Perrichon* [Mister Perrichon] by Eugène Marin Labiche in 1955 (File 28. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). The Arts Association organised the tour for them (File 28. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

The local amateurs enjoyed these visits even though the actors on these tours were amateurs: many of them performing arts students from the university's drama department. Their techniques were much more modern and in addition staged on a shoestring budget and local amateurs were exposed to plenty of new ideas for their own future productions.

### **3.8 CONCLUSION**

The formal theatre was introduced by the Europeans into South Africa “in the form of amateur dramatics and through regular visits of touring companies from London and Australia. These events impacted heavily on all aspects of formal theatre: the physical form of the theatre spaces, the organisational system, and the fundamental principles behind theatre as a representational art...” (Hauptfleisch, 2016, unnumbered).

South West Africa's theatre, like that of most countries in the world, is a product of its history, geography, and political systems. Being linked directly to South Africa, since even before 1915, South West African culture has subsequently been influenced by South African culture because of the proximity and migration between the two countries. European theatre may have come into South West Africa with the various nationalities of missionaries and traders (English and German), but it was the influence of the South African theatre that shaped the earlier theatre, and later the Art's Association's theatre, the most. Many influences were direct; others subtle, e.g.,

the statutory impositions of the various apartheid laws of South Africa on South West Africa (see section 5.9 for some of these influences).

In the wake of the destruction of World War II there was a desperate need to rebuild. Even in the field of the arts there was a feverish creativity. Windhoek became the centre of economic, social, political and cultural revival and rapidly grew from a town into a city. This prosperity brought about a noticeable influx of Afrikaans and English speaking South Africans which stimulated the economy (Roos, 1969). With national and cultural life developing steadily after the war in Europe and South Africa, theatre's time as a major cultural activity had arrived (Stopforth, 1956).

While the political history of the country has been documented extensively by various interested parties and covered comprehensively in the newspapers; the performing arts received little attention. It is, for instance, peculiar that the media never mentioned the staging of any of the plays of Ernst Schlengemann, who was based during 1904 -1930 in South West Africa and was active in cultural activities, including the theatre.

Hauptfleisch (1997) observes that "There is a relationship of some kind between a performance and the socio-cultural context in which it occurs" (p. 1). Vedder (1937) felt that cultural development during the early part of the twentieth century seemed virtually non-existent in South West Africa due to the extreme political circumstances. Furthermore, a new awareness of the social problems, due to the complex political circumstances in South Africa and South West Africa, and a concern with the educational system was emerging. The time was right for an organisation to cultivate the arts in an organised way.

Chapter 4 will capture the next phase in the historiography of South West African theatre, namely the establishment of the South African Association of Arts (S.W.A.). The chapter focuses on the incentive for the establishment of the Arts Association, the aims, aspirations and ambitions of the Arts Association, the structure thereof and how it was funded. The Arts Association was a private initiative that functioned in service of the broader public. Understanding the abovementioned issues provides clarity on the dependency of the Arts Association South Africa.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN ASSOCIATION OF ARTS (S.W.A.)**

**Throughout time man has inevitably started some sort of club, society, organization or become a member of some or other institution where he can interact with others, creating and embellishing his social world. In Windhoek, life was no different (Bravenboer, 2004, p. 227).**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

During World War II artistic activities in Windhoek came to a standstill. (Kotze, 1990; Roos, 1969). This changed as Windhoek evolved from a town into a city and the development (Bravenboer, 2004, p. 149) attracted Afrikaans and English speaking South Africans, which significantly impacted Windhoek, both economically and culturally (Roos, 1969) .

Of the different art forms it was music that showed the first signs of revival when many musicians returned to the country (Bravenboer, 2004; Van Biljon, 1982) from Europe. The Germans were the heart and soul of the numerous musical activities, e.g., the Männergesangverein (Male Choir Society) and the Windhoek Musikfreunde (Windhoek Orchestra/Society of Music Lovers) (Van Biljon, 1982; Levinson, 1967).

More artists came to settle in South West Africa (Davis, 1977) and organised art exhibitions and music concerts followed (Davis, 1948). That desire led to the establishment of the Arts Association in Windhoek as a branch of the South African Arts Association (SAAA); this chapter will focus on the establishment, the aims and structure thereof and the growth of theatre under their auspices.

The decision to establish a branch of the SAAA was of great cultural meaning to South West Africa. The Europeans in South West Africa anticipated that the establishment of such a cultural organisation, with its link to the main branch in South Africa, would develop the various arts genres to such an extent that it would ensure recognition for artists, in South Africa too.

This organisation was envisioned to handle the complex situation of a multi-lingual society which practiced a variety of European artistic genres. Politics began to divide the inhabitants of the country. It played an indirect role in the Eurocentric composition of the Arts Association,

which excluded Non-Europeans, and contributed in strengthening cultural ties between the European communities.

There was no deliberate inclusion of the indigenous artistic expressions. “The local black population of the Windhoek and Klein Windhoek locations were practically cut off and separated from white society, thus virtually excluded from any involvement in ‘white’ social or cultural activities” (Bravenboer, 2004, p. 227). This geographical division between the inhabitants made cultural interaction non-existent. Banham, a leading theatre historiographer, claims that “these African peoples lived the greater part of their lives outside of the cultural concern and care of these colonizing languages and cultures,” (Banham, 2005, p. 5). In addition, Europeans had very little appreciation for the art of the ethnic inhabitants (Selle, 1988). “Although there was no complete ban on all traditional forms of performance, during the colonial period” (Mogobe, 1999, p. 43), the cultural activities of blacks were not encouraged, developed nor financially supported.

#### **4.2 THE INCENTIVE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ARTS ASSOCIATION**

The practicing South West African artists were aware of arts societies/associations in South Africa (Levinson, 1979) and desired to have an own organization (Davis, 1975). Art activities were for the most part limited to Windhoek due to the concentration of European artists, mainly from Germany and South Africa (Roos, 1974). Many of them were also amateur theatre practitioners, e.g. Hans Müller, Otto Schroeder and Ruthilde Hillig. Conversations between Otto Schroeder, a professional visual artist, who had recently settled in Namibia from South Africa, though originally from Germany (Davis, 1975), and Joseph ‘Pip’ Reiter, the only art dealer in

South West Africa, indicated a need for an arts society (Davis, 1977; Levinson, 1979; Madisia, 2007).

A society of visual artists was formed which included artists such as Johannes Blatt, Adolf Jensch, Joachim Voigts and art lover, Mrs. Max Pretorius (Bravenboer, 2004). In an article, *The Artistic Element*, Davis (1975) relates that not everybody wanted a formal society for visual artists. Joseph Reiter seized an imposing official visit of the South African Prime Minister, General Jan Christiaan Smuts as an opportunity to organize an exhibition of South West African art in his honour.

Joseph Reiter and Otto Schroeder traveled through the country in search of artworks for the planned exhibition (Levinson, 1979). To gain stronger support for the exhibition, Mrs. Emma Hoogenhout, the wife of the then Administrator, Col. P.I. Hoogenhout (Scheepers, 1977), was approached (Davis, 1975, Möller, 1989) on the ground of her involvement in the arts (Emma Elizabeth, 1947; Bravenboer, 2004).

Hoogenhout was eager to share her experience (gained in South Africa) and to promote the development of the arts in South West Africa (Davis, 1975). She offered help with the organisation of the exhibition (Cobalt, 1947; Data, 1973). Hoogenhout suggested that, instead of an independent group of artists forming an arts association with no outside links, a branch of the South African Association of Arts (SAAA) should be formed (Davis, 1948a). Hoogenhout was a member of the association in South Africa and a personal friend of its President, Mr. Charles te Water.

The main branch of the SAAA, to which the Arts Association was to be affiliated, was situated in Cape Town and had a rich history (Brief History, 2013) as the first organised art body in South Africa (About the AVA Gallery, 2013). This arts association resolved to acquire a gallery and a permanent art collection which would be in trust for the South African residents (About the AVA Gallery, 2013). A further aim was the formation of an art library for exhibiting and promoting art (About the AVA Gallery, 2013). These aims later influenced the Arts Association in Windhoek to acquire a non-profit gallery, a permanent art collection, and a music library (Levinson, 1973, Program).

An exhibition was held in Windhoek at the Zoo Garden Café. On Friday, July 11, 1947 the exhibition was opened by Emma Hoogenhout, in the presence of General Smuts (Davis, 1948; Levinson, 1979). The works of South West African visual artists were on display with copies of the Khoisan's rock art including the famous White Lady of the Brandberg (An urgent appeal, 1947; Levinson, 1979; Davis, 1948).

In her opening speech Hoogenhout expressed the hope that a branch of the SAAA could be established in Windhoek for the development of the arts (Data, 1973; Levinson 1979). General Smuts stressed that the future of South West Africa was indissolubly tied to that of the Union of South Arica and he repeatedly reassured the public, and artists, of prosperity to come (Van Rooyen, 1994; Visser, 1947b).

### **4.3 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ARTS ASSOCIATION**

Emma Hoogenhout organised the establishing of an arts association after the exhibition (Venzke, 1997), hoping to break the arts' isolation (Fine Arts Association, 1947). A letter was sent to the

SAAA President, Mr. Charles te Water, indicating the desire to affiliate (Letter: Emma Hoogenhout to SAAA Head Office 22 July 1947, NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

Preliminary meetings in the Windhoek High School hall, where to artists and the public were invited, took place on September 27<sup>th</sup>, 1947 and October 9<sup>th</sup>, 1947 (Data, 1973; Fine Arts Association, 1947; Roos, 1974). Several informative articles about the proposed Arts Association's functions, the arts in general and the public meetings appeared in the newspapers (Fine Arts Association, 1947; Moontlikhede, 1947). The overwhelming feeling was in favour of establishing a branch of the SAAA in Windhoek (Roos, 1974). A public meeting to officially establish a branch of the SAAA was set for October 27, 1947 by the organising committee, consisting of Emma Hoogenhout, Otto Schroeder and Joseph Reiter (History of the National Art Gallery, 2009; Kunsvereniging vir Suidwes, 1947).

Adv. J.P. Niehaus, the first chairperson, suggested that the association should include more areas than only the fine arts (S.A. Association, 1947). Though the SAAA did not promote theatre as part of its aims it was felt that the local circumstances were different. The decision was, however, of the utmost importance for the performing arts as it would be the first time that the dramatic arts would have the support of an organisation.

The number of founder members of the SAAA (SWA) was 34 (Levinson, 1979; Roos, 1969; S.A. Association, 1947) and among them Otto Schroeder, Olga Levinson, Sannie Visser and Joseph Reiter (Madisia, 2007). These persons would eventually become some of the Arts Association's most active members in the field of theatre.

The first official meeting of the Arts Association took place Monday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1947, at 20h30 in the Zoo Garden Caf  (Kunsvereniging, 1947). This caf , which belonged to the municipality, was in the centre of Windhoek, and became the Arts Association’s office (see Appendix B). The exclusive aim of the first meeting was to elect a committee and to discuss the commencement of activities.

By November 10, 1947 a complete programme for 1948’s art activities had been drawn up (Roos 1969). “— both in the art and music spheres” (Levinson, 1979, p. 13). This brisk beginning was the start of many years of enthusiastic hard work and commitment by art practitioners and art lovers.

#### **4.4 THE AIMS, ASPIRATIONS AND AMBITIONS OF THE ARTS ASSOCIATION**

The Arts Association aimed to create awareness “that people living outside this Territory will realize that South West Africa has a culture of its own ...” (Davis, 1948, p. 57); and talented artists (Visser, 1947b). The Arts Association had specific aims which Emma Hoogenhout spelled out as:

the purpose of the Association is the advancement of the Arts, holding, sponsoring or otherwise assisting exhibitions or demonstrations of the Arts and Crafts, or any other activities amenable to artistic design or treatment ... furthermore rendering financial or other assistance to Art Education, Art Students, Artists (Levinson, 1979, p. 11).

The Arts Association represented all three the European language groups, Afrikaans, English and German, spoken in South West Africa (Bedrywighede, 1947). This was an important aim for the Arts Association as it could serve to bring closer co-operation between the European groups.

The Arts Association planned to stimulate public interest in the arts through lectures on various topics, to inform and lead the public to a better art appreciation (Roos, 1969). Not only was the content chosen by the Arts Association to provide training (Davis, 1948), but it served the purpose of introducing different art forms to those in the community whose cultural experience have not previously included them. The lectures were aimed at empowering theatre practitioners and cultivate audiences.

The Arts Association furthermore envisioned exhibitions, film screenings, music recitals, dances, and theatre performances to promote art consciousness among the local population (Doelstrewé, 1949). Where possible the Arts Association aimed to assist artists or groups that showed promise financially with the planning and marketing of their art (Visser, 1947b). Windhoek was envisioned as the arts centre, but the Arts Association hoped that the rural areas would generate their own arts activities as well.

As with the SAAA (About the AVA Gallery, 2013; Brief history, 2013) the Arts Association identified the need for an art centre as a priority. The art centre would include a gallery and studios where the different art forms could be taught (Roos, 1969). Art museum was also envisioned (Visser, 1947b, p. 3).

The Arts Association wanted to expose the amateur theatre practitioners and the public to quality performing arts to enable them to appreciate work of merit (Visser, 1947b). To that effect the Arts Association aimed to bring in art experts and productions from South Africa and abroad to empower the local artists and the public.

#### **4.5 THE ARTS ASSOCIATION INCLUDES THE PERFORMING ARTS**

The SAAA restricted itself to the development, and exhibitions of paintings, graphic art, sculptures, native arts and crafts (Davis, 1977). The Arts Association included the performing arts (Davis, 1975, Fine Arts Association, 1947; Mossolow, 1967). Including all arts genres assured enough support from the small local population of Windhoek (Horne, 1985). The bigger the arts variety they could offer, the more members they would be able to attract. Olga Levinson wrote in *The Cultural Life of Windhoek in Lantern*, a South African cultural magazine:

This organisation was originally formed as a branch of the South African Association of Arts ... It is, however, a branch in name only, working as a completely independent body on completely different lines from the other branches and it includes the performing arts (Levinson, 1967, p. 42).

The Arts Association sponsored activities, and in addition provided organisational support to art organisations, e.g., assistance with marketing (Kulturele opbloei, 1947). The benefit was that the Arts Association gave the South West African artists organized opportunities to practice their art and receive exposure at the association's expense (Levinson, 1979; Schroeder, 1955). At times, the Arts Association's calendar was fully booked for months (File 27. NA, A.345.2/12.AA; Roos 1969).

Both artists and public were exposed to quality art when the Arts Association imported productions from South Africa and abroad, whenever finances allowed it (Van Biljon, 1982). Previously, these art activities were only available to South West Africans visiting South Africa. The performing arts eventually benefitted much from the Arts Association when the theatre groups were formed under their auspices and a theatre built in Windhoek.

## 4.6 THE STRUCTURE OF THE ARTS ASSOCIATION

### 4.6.1 THE COMMITTEE

The Arts Association, as a branch of the SAAA, followed the management structure of the main branch in Cape Town though differed in the language diversity as reflected in the committee (Data, 1973). Another deviation from the SAAA was that the Arts Association had sub-committees for the different art genres such as music and theatre.

With the establishment of the Arts Association, the first chosen committee consisted of a president and nine members (History of the National Art Gallery, 2009; Levinson, 1979):

President	Mr. J.P. de Mowbray Niehaus (advocate)
Chairman	Mr. Jac. A Joel (architect)
Deputy –chairman	Mr. G. Krafft (architect)
Secretary	Mrs. Sannie Visser (journalist/writer)
Treasurer	Dr. E. Pfeiffer (doctor)
Members	Mrs. Sey Davis (wife of Capt. Davis)
	Mrs. Ruthilde Hillig (neé Günter) (Music teacher)
	Mr. Joseph Reiter (art dealer)
	Mr. Otto E. Schroeder (artist)
	Mrs. Pretorius (art lover)

(Committee, 1947, p. 1,  
Nuwe bestuur van Kunsvereniging, 1948).

The committee members were people of various professions who worked during the day and had only evenings and weekends for artistic endeavours, e.g., they helped at school or church concerts, organised art talks, or were either involved in productions as stage cast or crew, or formed part of the audience (South African Who's Who, 1958). Visual artist Otto Schroeder opened a children's theatre in Windhoek (Kunssentrum in Windhoek geopen, 1949) with the blessing of the Arts Association, and involved children from the Non-European suburb Katutura in arts classes (Bravenboer, 2004).

One of the committee's important functions was to raise funds to keep the Arts Association financially sound (Levinson, 1979). They organised public lectures (Lesing, 1949; Roos, 1969) for which the public paid. Many of these guest speakers were from South Africa, e.g. Prof. Donald Inskip from the University of Cape Town (Lesings, 1949; Roos, 1969).

The sub-committees dealt with decisions, e.g. what to request sponsorship for, productions from South Africa and abroad or local theatre groups. The reliability of these small sub-committees contributed much to the success of most activities (File 39. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). One of the sub-committees was for theatre (Levinson, 1979). They had to consider the play selection and had artistic control over performances; they also determined overall policy, and to a lesser degree, dealt with the technical problems of theatre operation. For help they turned to South African theatre organisations (File 2. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

The increased level of organisation by the Arts Association created firm foundations for the affiliated societies and individual artists. Working according to a budget, the sub-committees tried to keep the cost of each production within the means available (File 39. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

The different committee members made important contributions in those early formative years (Levinson, 1979). The contributions varied from planning, organising, managing or contributing financially, to active participation in an arts genre themselves (Verskeidenheid, 1948). Some of the committee members served the Arts Association for years. Olga Levinson was president of the Arts Association 1957 – 1976 (File 23. NA, A.345.2/12.AA) and eventually she was made an Honorary Life President. With her South African cultural background and theatrical training (see

7. 5), she influenced the theatre in various ways. Her South African theatre contacts, such as Prof. Donald Inskip, in Cape Town (File 23. NA, A.345.2/12.AA) were valuable.

The positions of secretary and treasurer on the committee were important. In the beginning there was no remuneration, but the workload eventually became too much for a part-time, voluntary secretary. The Arts Association had to hire a full time secretary to attend to the administration matters and a salary was offered (File 31. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

The secretaries were the foundation of the Arts Association. The first secretary Sannie Visser used her influence as a journalist to introduce the Arts Association to the public (Doelstrewé, 1948), and to gain support for it (Visser, 1947a). Secretary Otto Schroeder had been “the driving force behind the Association” (Levinson, 1979, p. 30) for many years as the organising secretary. From the minutes of the Arts Association meetings it is clear that the secretary had to be an administrative officer: handling ticket sales, subscriptions, box office sales, house management and advertising. They were often directly involved in activities, e.g. Tatiana Boehm, the secretary of the Arts Association, directed *Max oder Bobby* and acted in it too (More new talent, 1960).

The duties of the treasurer included bookkeeping, paying out of monies, and budget making. The Arts Association had to manage the hire of venues, décor, furniture, curtain manipulator and ushers, lighting, sound, hair and make-up (Shaw’s, 1952).

#### **4.7 FUNDING OF THE ARTS ASSOCIATION**

The Arts Association was a non-profit private organisation. They certainly practiced what Henry Irving claims: “The theater must succeed as a business if it is to succeed as an art” (Cheney, 1969, p. 228). When the Arts Association formally commenced with their arts activities it was with the firm idea that, as a branch of the SAAA in South West Africa, it would receive financial support from the main branch. It soon became clear that monetary support was not forthcoming; it was in fact the South African office that financially benefitted the most, as they received a share of the members’ fee from the Windhoek branch (File 30. NA, A.345.2/12.AA; Letter: AA to SAAA, February 10, 1949. NA, A.345.2/12.AA; Minutes of AA Committee Meeting, February 17, 1950. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

The process of developing, coordinating, advancing the arts, importing art to the capital, educating the public’s taste, establishing art traditions and building an art centre, was extremely costly. To make ends meet financially remained an ongoing struggle for all the years of the Arts Association’s existence.

“The Hoogenhout’s started off the long tradition in which all subsequent Administrators (with the exception of Mr. J. van der Wath) became honorary patrons of the Association and attended many of its functions” (Bedrywighede, 1947, p. 2). This ensured the goodwill of the Administration.

To raise the standard of theatre in Windhoek, and ensure larger audiences, the Arts Association took the decision to import as many performances and artists from abroad as they could afford. Where possible, South West Africa shared productions with South Africa to curb costs. Money was spent in subsidising the theatre groups’ plays, but much more was spent on performances from South Africa, England or Germany (Files 31 & 52. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). The reality was

that one subsidised, successful foreign play's profit could sponsor perhaps three or four local amateur plays as imported productions drew larger audiences. In later years the Arts Association acted as a booking agent for the many visiting theatre companies to South West Africa. They earned a percentage of the income of the performances which helped to fund local productions.

Primarily income came from the sources below:

#### **4.7.1 MEMBERSHIP FEES**

Initially there were only a few members and the fees were kept to the bare minimum (£1.1.-) in an attempt to attract the public to join the Arts Association (File 3 & 57, NA, A.345.2/12.AA). Members were offered some privileges: like first choice of the best seats when it came to performances (File 3. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). This special privilege was important when it came to popular shows, as the seating in the halls usually left a lot to be desired.

At the end of 1947 the membership number stood at 175 (Van Biljon, 1982). The 1949 Annual Report revealed that, in December 1948, the membership number was 306. The newspapers reported on the rapid membership growth: "The S.W.A. Branch of the Association is the strongest in South Africa; with a membership of about 600 it has been in existence for just over two years" (German and English Plays, 1950, p. 7).

An issue that became increasingly pressing over the years was right of admission. From the beginning "membership in the Arts Association was nominally open to all races and all population groups" (Levinson, 1979, p. 12). The Arts Association never excluded Non-Europeans (Levinson, 1983). The Arts Association wanted membership to be a choice and because of an individual's passion for the arts. Over the years Non-European artists and art

lovers began to support the performances and some joined as members (Eins, 2012). There is nonetheless no evidence of any black individual or group or society affiliated to the Arts Association who's initiative came from the European community. A definite reason was the South African government's laws about separate development (Simon, 1983, p. 71).

#### **4.7.2 GRANTS**

According to Nico Roos, a South West African visual artist, it took the personal influence of Emma Hoogenhout to change the SWAA Executive Committee's detached attitude towards the arts (Uitstalling, 1947). This initiated future subsidies as in the following years when the Administration provided a subsidy of £250 to the Association (Levinson, 1979). The grant was to manage all the art genres (Letter: SWAA to AA, August 20, 1949. NA, A.345.2/12.AA) and "to further the cause of the arts and to introduce the citizens of South West Africa to eminent artists from the union from time to time as well as to encourage and support local talents" (Letter: AA to SWAA, February 3, 1949. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). The grant had to benefit the whole country too, as there were branches of the Association at some of the major rural centers, e.g. Swakopmund and Outjo (File 56. NA.345.2/12.AA).

#### **4.7.3 ARTS BALLS**

Instead of scaling down on arts activities when finances were limited, the Arts Association's committee in 1950 raised additional funds. The committee decided to have a Three Arts Ball. Dances were very popular among all the different European cultures (Van Biljon, 1982) and the association planned a Three Arts Ball (Gemaskerde bal, 1950, p. 9). The theme was "*Sand*,

*Stones and Stars*”, which was appropriate as the country has plenty of all three elements (Olivia, 1950b; Social News, 1950). The ball also served to make the wider public aware of the Arts Association and their functions, in order to attract more members (Three Arts Ball, 1950). In their newsletter the Arts Association announced the next ball under the name *Strato Fantasia* with the theme ‘The stars are the limit’ (Newsletter AA, 1953, p. 9. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

#### **4.7.4 SAFARIS**

The Arts Association organised safaris for those who wanted to be inspired in their art by the beauty of South West Africa (Arts, 1951; History of the National Arts Gallery, 2009). The safaris leveraged considerable funds (History of the Namibian Art Gallery, 2009) and exposed tourists to works of art such as rock paintings and engravings (Data, 1973).

The participants not only came from South West Africa and South Africa, but from Europe and America as well (File 28. NA, A.345.2/12.AA; Kunsvereniging reel nog ‘n safari, 1959, p. 16; Kunsvereniging se toere, 1959; Mossolow, 1967). “These safaris achieved great successes and publicised the Arts Association name far beyond the borders of South-West-Africa” (Data, 1973, p. 3).

#### **4.7.5 DONATIONS**

Throughout 1947 -1967 European art lovers made donations to the Arts Association. Some of the receivers of complimentary tickets, as a goodwill gesture, sent a small donation to cover the cost of the tickets after a performance to thank the Arts Association, e.g. October 22, 1958 Mrs. Viljoen, the then Administrator’s wife, donated £2-00 because she enjoyed the concert (File 57.

NA, A.345.2/12.AA). In 1957 C. F. Marais gave a donation after receiving complimentary tickets, even though he could not attend (File 23. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). Donations were an acknowledgement and encouragement for the work of the Arts Association.

“Owing to its limited financial resources, donors had to be found over the years,” (Bravenboer, 2004, p. 237). Businesses and private persons were at times approached, e.g., the Consolidated Diamond Mines promised £100 in 1955 (File 56. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). Sir Ernest Oppenheimer, a South African, donated £20,000 to build a theatre (History of the National Arts Gallery, 2009; Olivia, 1951a; Rosenthal, 1972).

The SWAA’s attitude, however, was unaligned and distant. The small grant was their official contribution. Another local institution that was apathetic was the Windhoek Municipality. Their only contribution was that they closed Kaiser Street during performances, ensuring that there was no traffic noise to disturb ongoing performances. With the growth of Windhoek the traffic was steadily increasing, and with the halls not equipped as proper theatres, noise was definitely a factor (Strate is al ‘n ou klagte, 1952; Van Biljon, 1982).

#### **4.8 CONCLUSION**

Many of the artists and art lovers in Windhoek originated from South Africa (Van Biljon, 1982), or had a strong connection with that country. The establishment of the Arts Association and their art practices were for those people, a continuation of what was culturally familiar to them. Those

artists and art lovers influenced the local arts in various ways, which will be discussed in more depth in the next chapter.

Not only did the newly established Arts Association create great opportunities for the arts, but the rapid development of Windhoek as a city indicated that the country was ready for a cultural awakening (Kulturele opbloei, 1947).

The next chapter will focus specifically on theatre practiced under the Arts Association. Special emphasis will be on the influences of the Federation of Amateur Theatrical Societies of South Africa (FATSSA) and the National Theatre Organisation (NTO) and their links to the Arts Association in Namibia. Issues such as the type of plays staged and sponsored by Arts Association, the quality and frequency thereof, as well as the theatre practitioners and audiences will be discussed. The chapter furthermore deals with the erection of the Arts Association's theatre building and some direct influences from South Africa on South West African theatre of this period.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **THEATRE UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE ARTS ASSOCIATION**

**(1947-1967)**

**Theatre is a mirror, a sharp reflection of society** (Yasmina Reza, 2012).

## **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In 1947 there were no fixed theatre groups that functioned on a permanent basis; only amateurs that occasionally grouped to stage a performance for a specific function, e.g. a fundraising for a deserving cause. Essentially the nature of productions before 1947 did not differ significantly from those productions after that date. All that changed was that it became better organized thanks to the Arts Association.

Theatre formed an integral part of the Arts Association's plans and they wanted to establish it on a more professional footing. The Arts Association from the onset aspired to develop a well-planned art programme, which included theatre, to educate the public (Kultuur in Suidwes, 1948). There was a deliberate effort to work with the other cultural societies, such as the Afrikanerkring (Dobbelspel, 1949).

To understand how the Arts Association practiced theatre this study dealt with the specific theatre groups. The Arts Association had to be sensitive as they were dealing with three divergent European groups, each with their own cultural and political background. To maintain unity in the association it was necessary to steer away from politics that could cause disharmony. Binge (1969), Botha (2006) and Du Toit (1988) relate that these were concerns dealt with by South African theatre practitioners too. The politics in South West Africa had many a time overshadowed the cultural and in most cases received preference. Rehearsals and performances had to be scheduled not to be on the same day as a political meeting.

## **5.2 THE DIFFERENT THEATRE GROUPS UNDER THE ARTS ASSOCIATION**

When the Arts Association took the lead to organise, import, support, and sponsor theatre for the European community in Namibia, the formal Eurocentric theatre practiced in South Africa was copied by the amateur theatre in Windhoek. This type of theatre was introduced to South West Africa by the Europeans and South Africans who came to visit or work in the country (Binge, 1969; Bosman, 1951; Botha, 2006).

One example of how the South African and European influences entered the South West African theatre was the case of Olga Levinson. She was born in the Transvaal (Gauteng) in South Africa and studied at the Wits University in Johannesburg as Olga Cohen. She majored in English and Arts. “She was a Fellow and Licentiate of Dramatic Arts, Trinity College (London)” (Biographies, 2009, p. 1) and she “at one time studied Dramatic Art, and has the degrees A.T.C.L. and L.T.C.L.” (Shaw’s, 1952, p. 8). She had won many awards for her dramatic art (Biographies, 2009) and she took an intense interest in the theatre; in fact “one of her hobbies was theatre going” (South African Who’s Who, 1958, pp. 8-9). Her training and acting skills would later be a tremendous asset to the Arts Association and South West Africa in general.

Levinson brought to South West Africa her knowledge and interpretation of the South African theatre, wherein she had studied, and applied it in the work that she did at the Arts Association. Not only was Levinson involved in productions as an actress or with the organisation of performances (File 57. NA, A.345.2/12.AA; Visser, 1948b), but she was in a decision-making position as chairperson of the Arts Association and as sub-committee member for theatre (File 56. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). She was thus able to exert influence on the theatre practiced by the

Arts Association through her acting style and by choice of plays, e.g. popular classical plays were chosen (File 31. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). An ethos of art for art's sake was practiced by the Arts Association as she experienced it in South Africa on her regular visits (File 31. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

Initially the suggestion was to form a tri-lingual theatre group (Bekende Danseres, 1948, p.2). The Arts Association rived that idea to three main theatre groups: one for each of the European languages to produce plays as often as they could since each group represents a cross-section of the community. The Arts Association was to develop theatre by having the groups manage their own theatre factions, each with their own structure, so that each group could function separately. The Arts Association acknowledged each group's own unique approach, but controlled the choices of what were produced.

Each theatre group had a committee that managed their activities and liaised with the Arts Association. The groups benefitted financially from the Arts Association's support and in return the groups staged productions under their auspices (File 72. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). Given that more than ten years had elapsed since in Windhoek, there was much anticipation. "A play in Windhoek is always a social event – and all too few of them we have been having lately" (Olivia, 1952b, p. 2).

The first priority of the Arts Association was to get theatre lovers and practitioners to form a theatre group and then to affiliate as members of the association. The association approached some amateur theatre practitioners to find out whether they would be interested in becoming members of the Arts Association (Doelstrewé, 1949; Visser, 1947b). The reaction was positive and eventually three theatre groups became affiliated – one group for each language.

The Arts Association offered that once a play was chosen by one of their theatre groups, and the cast on track, they would organise the marketing to lessen costs. There were in fact two options for amateur groups:

- Carry out all the organising on their own, using their own décor and costumes, and just hire the venue, as the English Theatre Group preferred to do.
- Under the auspices of the Arts Association, use the Arts Association to do all the organisation at a fixed arranged cost, such as the German and Afrikaans groups were doing (File 31. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

The Arts Association's assistance focused on the advertising and organising of the productions, and carrying the costs of the staging of plays after they received the invoices (File 53. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). The fact that there was no permanent venue for the theatre groups to rehearse and stage their productions made the hiring of venues expensive and difficult for the amateurs to practice theatre.

After the affiliation of the theatre groups a central committee that coordinated all the theatre groups' activities was structured. The association felt that the population was too small to have the theatre divided and this way each theatre group was on their own but united under the association (Doelstrewe, 1949). Each group had their own culture that had to be taken into account as a cultural expression or vision of life, and the Arts Association wanted to provide for that through theatre.

The Arts Association's archival files revealed in a sketchy, incomplete way that the newly formed amateur theatre groups varied in standards and productions, in the plays they chose, and

the number of productions they were able to offer. The groups varied in dependability, maturity and size and through the years certain strengths and weaknesses became evident. The German Theatre Group was efficient and organised, the English Theatre Group diligent and committed, while the Afrikaans Theatre Group struggled with organisational problems. Not only was their lack of leadership a problem, but infighting often caused members to stray from the Afrikaans Theatre Group (File 72. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

At times the three groups collaborated with each other, e.g. at the Show Week of 1955 (File 1. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). On the 28<sup>th</sup> of May 1955, the programme included a Variety Show by the English, Afrikaans and German Theatre Groups (File 72. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). This was not an ongoing multi-cultural approach, but at the Theatre Festivals they often had to work in harmony with each other (see Theatre Festivals).

For the sake of this study the theatre groups who were affiliated to, and produced performances under the auspices of the Arts Association, will be investigated.

### **5.2.1 THE GERMAN THEATRE GROUP**

The German Theatre Group was the first to affiliate with the Arts Association (Bravenboer, 2004). The Arts Association was very pleased to have them on board (File 72. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). Most of the German inhabitants of Windhoek saw art and culture as an integral part of their lifestyle and were very active in a variety of music and fine arts activities (Davis, 1975). The German artists put a lot of time and energy into the arts, both in enjoying it as an audience and practicing it (Prosenium, 1950). An article in *Die Suidwes-Afrikaner* mentioned

that the play was the first German performance since 1936 (Geslaagde opvoering van Duitse teatergroep, 1949; Visser, 1948d).

Under the auspices and guidance of the Arts Association, the German Theatre Group (Deutsche Theatergruppe) formed after the war, led by theatre practitioners such as Hannes Heuner who acted, directed and was a skilled backstage crewmember (File 72. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). The German Theatre Group was the first to be organised and ready with a performance: *Lotchen's Geburtstag* [Lottie's Birthday] under the direction of Hans Berker (Sr.) (Twee stukke, 1948).

Comedy was an extremely good choice for the group according to Mr. Krafft, a German Theatre Group member, as it made no taxing demands on the amateur actors (Geslaagde opvoering van Duitse teatergroep, 1949). There were, however, not only comedies staged by this group. A letter from the German Theatre Group dealt with a German play the group staged (Letter: German Theatre Group to AA, September 28, 1957, NA, A.345.2/12.AA). It seems from the letter that the local Afrikaans pastor was shocked by what was presented in the theatre. The absurd play, a 'famous one by Sartre' was called 'experiment' and 'unusual' for Windhoek. This was a style that was at that stage reigning in the European countries. The 'theatre of the absurd', a term coined by the critic Martin Esslin in 1961, is used to describe the new style of theatre which developed following the Second World War. The concept refers to the plays of the 1950's and 1960's which centres on the notion that life is illogical, without purpose and devoid of meaning (Esslin, 1977). The strange and disturbing dialogue and underlining menace must have been upsetting for the conservative audiences of the Arts Association.

When the play *Drei Männer im Schnee* was directed by Mr. Roussouw, an Arts Association member, he stated that the "primary object of putting on this play was for educational rather than

money-making purposes” (Olivia, 1952a, p. 2). It was interesting to note that a very small notice appeared in *Die Suidwester* on this local German play (Toneelstuk, 1953), while on the South African Afrikaans play by the National Theatre Organisation (NTO), *Die Ryk Weduwee*, that was touring South West Africa, there were no less than 14 articles.

The cost of performances surely had an influence on the quality and frequency of performances. Finding affordable quality texts were not easy and amateurs often had to rely on the texts they could afford. When *Parkstrasse 13* [Park Street 13] (1939) written by Axel Ivers, was staged on September 20, 1951 a number of 336 people attended that performance and 447 the performance on October 2, 1951, and made a profit of £ 258. 6. 11 due to the excellent public support. There were some of the plays that were not only an artistic success, but a financial one as well, e.g. the performances of *Die Kinder Eduard's* [Eduard's children] which was staged in 1953. The total income was £244.--.-. The expenses for the play even included the buying of duplicate keys, a padlock and the cleaning of a store room.

Throughout the German Theatre Group's existence the media praised the quality of their performances as of an extremely high standard (Visser, 1948a) for amateur productions as their production of the play *Ninotschka* written by Melchior Lengvel, testified. “This play is one of the best amateur productions of the year presented in Windhoek” (File 72. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). The group paid meticulous attention to detail and their plays were well rehearsed and executed. It was, however, impressive that this group was so active and staging plays so frequently. There were at least one or two, and at times even more, productions a year. There was a clear indication that the German performances were supported better than that of the other theatre groups (File 1. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

At times family members were part of the backstage personnel, e.g. in *Der Weg Zum Himmel*, the director was Hannes Heuner while his wife, Irene Heuner was one of the prompters. This was a typical amateur theatre trend that was implemented by local theatre practitioners as well.

Those German actors who were serious about their acting had little room to operate in as in South West Africa they could only join the amateur ranks. The position with the Afrikaans and English potential actors was easier: there were many professional companies in South Africa they could join if they wanted to rise above the amateur level.

### **5.2.2 THE ENGLISH THEATRE GROUP**

The English Theatre Group was next to join the Arts Association. This group was also referred to as the English Theatre Society or the English Dramatic Society by the media and in documents. From 1957 - 1958 the group must have changed their name as the newspapers started to talk of the Windhoek Theatre Group. The spelling of names too caused confusion, e.g. Schröder / Schröder (Prof. Otto Edward Henry Schröder, 2017, p.1), e.g., in the latter article both spellings were used. This dissertation often made a decision and used a spelling throughout, unless it was spelled differently in a quote or reference. The problem of names (and their spelling) occurred in the reporting on South African theatre as well (Hauptfleisch, 2016) and not only in South West African reporting.

The English communities were mostly business-people seconded from South Africa to work in South West Africa. They saw themselves as temporary inhabitants, but had a definite influence in the social arena with their cultivated refinement. As in South Africa, the English population was concentrated in the capital and the major towns, while Afrikaans people were mostly spread

out over the rural areas. The English Theatre Group was therefore assured of a regular audience in Windhoek.

The English Theatre Group's first meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1948 in the Emma Hoogenhout Primary School Hall (Visser, 1950b). The meeting started at 20:00; which gave working people who were interested in the group, enough time to finish their dinner and come to the meeting.

This group existed the whole period the Arts Association was involved in theatre. The fact that the group continued to exist for so many years might have been due to the contribution and strong influence of people like Olga Levinson who was a member of this group. The English Theatre Group chose to stage the hilarious farce *Dark Brown* by Philip Johnson, directed by Jack Levinson, the husband of Olga Levinson, (*Dark Brown*, 1949; S.W.A. Arts Association, 1949). It was staged with the melodrama *Russian Salad* directed by Henriette Brenner and Frank Dixon, who acted in the play as well (File 56. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). Olga Levinson was outstanding as the parliament member's wife, while the acting of the rest of the cast ranged from fair to less convincing (*Andante*, 1949). The Windhoek audience was nevertheless appreciative (*Engelse Toneel in Windhoek*, 1949; Visser, 1948e).

Texts that were staged in South Africa e.g., *Brown Sugar*, a comedy by Arthur Leaver, produced by the Eoan Group in 1944 in Cape Town, South Africa (ESAT, 2016), were staged in Windhoek by the English Theatre Group.

The English Theatre Group was constantly canvassing for new amateur talent (English Theatre Group, 1949). On April 11<sup>th</sup>, 1949 the group had their annual general meeting at 20:15 at the Art

Centre in Otto Schroeder's art class (S.A. Association, 1949). The Arts Association invited all those interested in the English amateur theatre productions to become members of the English Theatre Group and join the Arts Association (S.A. Association, 1949). This was a clever move, as not only would the Arts Association membership grow when more individuals joined, but the English Theatre Group would be strengthened by new theatre practitioners. Right after their meetings there were often auditions for the planned production (Auditions, 1949; Theatre Group Elects, 1953; Theatre Group meets, 1953).

According to a journalist the group was very efficient in organising their theatrical activities (People, 1951) and selecting strong committee members, for instance Olga Levinson as Chairperson and Margaret Baxter, a speech and drama teacher (originally from South Africa), as the secretary (Theatre Group elects, 1953). It is interesting to note that instead of performing on the Friday and Saturday evenings the English theatre group have chosen Tuesday and Wednesday. The reason might be that the weekends normally had dances scheduled at the available venues and to compete for the public's attention would have been difficult.

In 1960 Mr. Krummeck was the chairman of the English Theatre Group (File 1. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). He was an enthusiastic actor and director who, together with his wife, Joan, an actress and skilled make-up artist, made a huge impact on the local English theatre. That year the English Theatre Group staged the play *Love of four colonels* by Peter Ustinov. The director was Fiorella Holmes, and the large cast reflected the lively interest of the English community in participating in theatre activities.

The group was persistently on the lookout for suitable plays to perform. Many a time the Arts Association, on behalf of the theatre groups, turned to South African theatre specialists to assist,

e.g. in 1957 Rosalie van der Gucht, drama specialist at the University of Cape Town, was approached for plays to stage (File 28. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

*Love's a Luxury*, a comedy by Guy Paxton and Edmond V. Hoile, was staged and it was in the Arts Association's newsletter referred to as a play "which should provide good, light entertainment" (File 1. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). The group mostly staged light entertainment that was aimed at a very specific market of the public, namely the elitist upper-class citizen: audiences from the same cultural background. Farces, thrillers and musicals were popular with the English audiences and plays ranging from Shakespeare to Strindberg were staged to appreciating audiences in Windhoek.

The English theatre group participated eagerly in the theatre festivals (English Theatre Group, 1950b) and their productions were often repeated (Shaw-drama herhaal, 1952a; Shaw-Stuk tweede keer op planke, 1952). The group made special arrangements for children to attend their performances as the group saw in the youth the future of theatre (Shaw-drama ook vir kinders, 1952c; Shaw-opvoering vir die kinders, 1952). This was in line with what was happening in South Africa at a time (Rubin, 1997) when much emphasis was placed on children's theatre (Greyvenstein, 1989a).

The Theatre Group initiated a Play Reading Society (Minutes of AA Committee Meeting, June 17, 1957. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). This type of theatre had numerous benefits for the small group of theatre lovers as it needed less rehearsal time. Actors could still display their talent and acting, while sharing it with an attentive audience. Extracts were produced by the members of the English Dramatic Group of the Arts Association, e.g. an extract from Molière's comedy *Le Medecin Malgré Lui* [The Physician in spite of himself]. The narration and the production was

handled by Olga Levinson while an actor who would later make a name for himself in South Africa, Danie Smuts, was in the cast as Geronté.

Not only light comedies were staged but the group even staged satires with success (File 2. NA, A.345.2/12.AA), e.g., Noël Coward's *Nude with Violin*. The play was a good choice as the striking satire on modern art showed off the group's talent and skills (File 2. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). The English Theatre Group had this to say:

Mrs. Holmes has reported to my Committee on the close cooperation she received at all times from your Association and we would like to place on record our sincere thanks to Mrs. Böhm and the Arts Association for the friendly and greatly appreciated assistance, which did much to ensure the success of the play.

(Letter: English Theatre Group to AA, April 27, 1959. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

### **5.2.3 THE AFRIKAANS THEATRE GROUP**

The Afrikaans Theatre Group was the last to affiliate with the Arts Association. When theatre in Windhoek started to show signs of revival in 1949 *Die Suidwester* was quick to inform its readers about the resurrection of the Afrikaans Suidwes Amateur Theatre Society (Herlewing, 1949; W.A.A.T.S., 1949), which before 1947, functioned on a very loose organisational basis. The group was formed a few years earlier with the aim of producing Afrikaans plays, to discover latent acting talent which they could develop; and to let Afrikaans theatre come into its own. The group's performances were, however, infrequent.

There were various Afrikaans amateur theatre groups in South Africa during this period (Du Toit, 1988; Huguenet, 1950), and the Arts Association felt the need for such a group in S.W.A.

The Arts Association acted as the coordinator of their first meeting to revive a group (Afrikaanse toneelkuns, 1949; Teatergroep, 1948). On Thursday, July 08, 1948, in the hall of the Emma Hoogenhout School, the Afrikaans Theatre Group was officially launched (Letter: Visser on behalf of AA to Le Roux, June, 21, 1948. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). In June 1949 the Afrikaans Theatre Group indicated that it would like to become a member of the Arts Association (Visser, 1948a), but was not financially able to pay membership fees. The financially precarious situation of the Afrikaans Theatre Group was not unique; most South African Afrikaans theatre groups (amateur and professional) were in the same boat (Du Toit, 1988; Huguenet, 1950; Stopforth, 1956). The Arts Association negotiated the membership fee (Minutes of AA Committee Meeting, December 2, 1949. NA, A.345.2/12.AA) and the theatre group accepted (Davis, 1975).

Of the three theatre groups under the auspices of the Arts Association the Afrikaans Theatre Group was the least successful. Though they contributed to the development of the theatre and entertained many an audience with laughter, they did not flourish.

#### **5.2.4 THE CHILDREN'S AND PUPPET THEATRE**

There was a flourishing children's theatre in South Africa (Spector, 2007) since the 1940's. An organisation called Children's Theatre Incorporated was formed in 1944 in Johannesburg, South Africa, with its primary objectives being the development of sound artistic standards, a sense of appreciation in children for the arts and to provide children with the entertainment and instruction in the art (Hauptfleisch, 2016). A branch of the organisation was established 1950 in Cape Town under Rosalie van der Gucht (Hauptfleisch, 2016).

The Children's and Puppet Theatre joined the South West African Arts Association in 1949 as a member (File 35. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). The South African organisations inspired them enough to ask the Children's Theatre Incorporated in Johannesburg for advice on possible children's plays to stage (Letter: AA to Messers. Darters. March 3, 1949. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). The most notable two companies were the Hogarth Puppets under the director, Jan Bussell (File 35. NA, A.345.2/12.AA) and John Wright's famous marionettes (File 72. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

To gain the necessary expertise on how to run a children's theatre effectively the Arts Association knocked on various doors, like that of the National Theatre Organisation in Pretoria. The National Theatre Organisation (NTO) offered to include South West Africa in tours of productions that came to South Africa (Letter: AA to NTO, February 8, 1955. NA.345.2/12.AA).

The language used was Afrikaans, English or even both together (File 72. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). As the same languages were spoken in South Africa it was easy to include South West Africa in tours, e.g. the dramatised story, *The Little Mermaid*, written by Hans Andersen. It was presented with beautiful lighting and an artistic flair seldom seen. The Arts Association did all the arrangements and the tour proved a great success with the public (Minutes of AA Committee Meeting, September 2, 1955. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

This was the type of imported theatre the Arts Association loved to sponsor, as they wanted quality theatre performances for South West Africa (File 35. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). Two adult and two children's programmes were given at the only suitable venue, the Continental Hall (File 35. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

The John Wright puppet show went to places like Aranos, Gochas, Stampriet, and Leonardville (where they had to compete with a church bazaar and a strong wind) (File 1. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). At one place the competition was a political rally and in another town it was a South African Springbok rugby match (File 1. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). In Karasburg a prominent farmer from that district died and his funeral was at the same time. It seems that time, weather and national issues strongly influenced the attendance of theatre but could not stifle it: the rural areas enjoyed these cultural offerings (File 1. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

In August 1957 the Arts Association invited Mr. Cass from the Department of Education in South Africa to visit all the major schools in South West Africa with his glove puppet shows (File 57. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). A performance was also given on a Friday evening to interested adults in aid of the only Old Aged Home in Windhoek at that time. Unfortunately the Arts Association sponsored both local and South African productions, but never supplied any training for practitioners or playwrights. The expertise for local puppeteers had thus come mostly from South Africa and to a lesser extent from Europe.

The Arts Association felt that reaching the youth at an early stage was important and they must be appreciated and developed (Doelstrewé, 1949; Levinson, 1983; Youth Theatre, 1983). The Arts Association's members shared their theatrical experience, gained exposure and worked towards the association's aim of arts education when they helped Windhoek High School learners to stage a performance (Olivia, 1952a, p. 2).

The Arts Association saw the fostering of arts appreciation as their responsibility, but was convinced that the government had an even bigger role to play (Kunssentrum in Hoofstad, 1949). Strongly believing that Arts "should be one of their most important extra-mural subjects"

(Olivia, 1950a, p. 7) in the school's curriculum, the Arts Association urged the government at various opportunities to introduce drama activities in the schools (Olivia, 1950a).

The Arts Association wrote an article in a local paper to elaborate on drama as an educational instrument and the lack of dramatic activities at schools (Olivia, 1950a, p. 11). What the Arts Association wanted very much was "a school of dramatic art for Windhoek's children" (Olivia, 1950a, p. 11).

Various letters were written by the Arts Association to the Director of Education in Windhoek to plead for arts classes in the South West Africa school curriculum. Eventually they were successful when the SWAA Director of Education informed the Arts Association "that one hour per week was allocated by all schools throughout the Territory to singing and an hour and a half each week for instruction in Art" (Minutes of AA Committee Meeting, December 9, 1953. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). This was a major achievement for the Arts Association.

The Puppet and Children's Theatre encouraged local talent and envisioned the children themselves participating in the theatre activities as actors and making the décor (Kunssentrum in Windhoek, 1949). The Arts Association involved the children actively in the performances. Otto Schroeder was instrumental in this decision as he strongly believed that "A children's theatre by children for children ... could provide an alternative outlet for children of all ages" (Greyvenstein, 1989b, p. 32).

Mrs. Von Kleist, an active Arts Association member, organised and presented a variety of German puppet and children's performances in Windhoek, including those of Ursula Ishnen, Edgar Bohm, Wisgard Ungewetter and Dr. Heussen, under the auspices of the Arts Association,

who sponsored the performances (D.M. 1955). These performances were held at different locations (see Appendix C) such as schools or hotel halls (Girl Guide Concert, 1924).

“In 1955 the Arts Association had become a member of the International Arts League of Youth, which was represented by Mrs. Hillig in Windhoek” (Levinson, 1979, p. 18). Both Ruthilde Hillig and Sey Davis, long-standing Arts Association members, were particularly interested in the youth of the country and it is noteworthy that amongst the Arts Association’s many sub-committees, there was a Youth Committee (Levinson, 1979). During July 1955 a group of ten youngsters, under Ruthilde Hillig, an Arts Association member, went on a cultural tour to Durban, South Africa (Kindertoer, 1951; Minutes of AA Committee Meeting, July 21, 1955. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

An area where the Arts Association felt there was a strong need in Windhoek was in Speech and Drama classes for children. In the 1950’s it was quite fashionable for parents to send their children to elocution classes (Krouse, 1996). The first such teacher in Windhoek was Margaret Baxter, a South African, who was quite active in producing plays (Olivia, 1953b). Baxter, under the auspices of the Arts Association, taught drama classes and elocution at the Arts Centre in the Zoo Park (File 72. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). Parents of privileged children paid for these afternoon classes (File 72. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). As South West Africa had no training facilities for speech and drama teachers, any person in such a capacity had to come from either South Africa or Europe.

Once the Arts Association became involved with the building of the theatre, the focus was less on the puppet and children’s theatre and more on speech and drama, though the puppet and children’s theatre was never discontinued. Unfortunately the Arts Association could only spend a

certain amount of money on each of the art forms and the children's theatre eventually suffered due to limited and inadequate funds.

### **5.3 THE TYPES OF PLAYS STAGED AND SPONSORED BY THE ARTS**

#### **ASSOCIATION**

Criteria to stage specific plays from South Africa or overseas included availability of suitable texts, finances or a preference for a particular type of play. At times it hinged on issues such the number of characters in the cast, e.g. the available actors (male and female), or if the play needed complicated decor and properties. The limited venue space and backstage crew often eliminated a play from being performed in Windhoek. Popular plays seen by Arts Association members in South Africa while there on holiday or for work, were at times scrutinised for possible staging by the theatre groups in South West Africa. Frequently a play was chosen because the storyline (plot) was interesting, or because it would earn some income at the box office.

The variety of plays offered to the public made the productions under the auspices of the Arts Association popular. It was, however, not South West African theatre, but European theatre reproduced in South West Africa, e.g., the J. B. Priestley's comedy *When we are Married* by the English Theatre Group (Olivia, 1950b) that the audiences were eager to attend. The most popular forms of theatre acceptable to the broad-spectrum society were light and musical comedies, farces, and murder mysteries.

The theatre groups were persistently on the lookout for suitable plays to perform and often contacted the Arts Association who in turn decided to contact, e.g., Prof. Inskip at the University

of Cape Town in South Africa. They asked for details of possible plays, e.g. the number of players, titles and expenses etc., (Letter: AA to Inskip, February 4, 1953. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

Comedies were often staged by all three theatre groups and enjoyed by audiences. According to Mr. Krafft, a German Theatre Group member, comedies were chosen because they made no taxing demands on the amateur actors (Geslaagde opvoering van Duitse teatergroep, 1949). A typical example was the witty *Ingeborg*, a farce by Curt Goetz (Olivia, 1953a; Olivia, 1953c). It was staged on June 12 and 16, 1952 in the Continental Hall, with Hans Heinrich as the director (Olivia, 1952e). The performance was a mixture of precision and humour and reflected the idiom and customs of that period. The play was performed in aid of the local Red Cross (Olivia, 1952e).

Another example of a European comedy staged by the German Theatre Group was *Der Weg Zum Himmel*, a translation of a French comedy in four acts, written by Albert Husson and directed by Hannes Heuner. It was staged again to a capacity audience on Friday November 17, 1961 (Levinson, 1979).

Even though South West African theatre groups were at times adventurous and experimental in their choices of plays, their timid audiences did not share the theatre practitioners' desire to push the boundaries (File 56, NA, A.345.2/12.AA). A genre that the German Theatre Group explored was musicals. This type of theatre allowed the amateurs to combine theatre and music. As the Windhoek art community had many talented musicians and singers it was a logical decision The Gilbert and Sullivan's popular musical *Mikado* was well accepted in 1961 by the Windhoek theatre-lovers.

The English Theatre Group staged plays e.g., what the Arts Association's September 1956 newsletter referred to the play as one "which should provide good, light entertainment" (File 1. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). Members were informed that the *Love's a Luxury*, a comedy by Guy Paxton and Edmond V. Hoile, would be staged (File 1. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). Another performance, *Matrimonial Evening*, also referred to as *Evening Entertainment of Marriages*, was staged in 1953 (Olivia, 1953b). The programme included a variety of sketches, monologues, songs, choral works, dialogues, poems, mimes, improvisations, and a short one act farce, *Wife Required*, by F.L. Falkland & Phillip King, directed by the Elocution teacher, Margaret Baxter (Olivia, 1953b).

Not all of the Arts Association's theatre groups' performances made a profit. One reason why there was so little profit on the performances of the theatre groups came to light when *Nude with Violin* was staged by the English Theatre Group. The group has sold 200 tickets and gave out a total of 114 complimentary tickets (File 1. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). No wonder the profit margin was so small – there were just too many non-paying people in the audience.

English theatre, and indirectly Afrikaans theatre, benefitted from the expertise of British theatre practitioners, such as Leonard Rayne and Harry Stodel, who immigrated to South Africa (Fletcher, 1994). According to Stassen (Undated) the plays performed were mostly aimed at commercial success. This tradition of aiming for commercial success was adopted by the English Theatre Group.

The Afrikaans Theatre Group under the Arts Association concentrated on plays that reflected the spirit of nationalism, the Afrikaans language, the Afrikaner identity and their political aspirations (Binge 1969). Plays were interspersed with patriotism and religion as central themes. The

historical dramas were popular as it reflected the Afrikaner's interpretation of the struggle in becoming a nation, and the collective and individual aspirations of the people of this small group. According to Reyneke the historic themes that were dealt with in the Afrikaans plays of this period were typical of the feeling of national pride (Reyneke 1986).

Furthermore, the Afrikaans-speaking public was fond of sensational, romantic, sentimental farces. There was a sprinkling of crude comedies that showed that popular theatre in Afrikaans was cheerful and that the audiences enjoyed performances that entertained them. Plays performed by the Afrikaans Theatre Group were for most part, adapted translations, usually of current successes in Europe and America (Hauptfleisch, 2016) as the popular types of theatre ensured good audiences.

The Afrikaans Theatre Group preferred to produce comical farces (File 72. NA, A.345.2/12.AA), but in 1955 the Afrikaans Theatre Group staged a thriller, *Satansloon* [Gaslight] by Patrick Hamilton. At a committee meeting, July 21, 1955 it was mentioned that the play had a good text and the director was Dan Minnaar.

Information on the productions and their casts was not always available, but where possible was gathered in a list of plays done under the auspices of the Arts Association (see Appendix F). When looking at the imperfect list, one stand in awe what the theatre groups achieved.

The Afrikaans group tended to perform plays that required smaller casts (File 1. NA, A.345.2/12.AA) which might be an indication that the available talent to choose from for productions was only limited to a few actors. For the Theatre Festivals, however, they selected plays with more actors in the cast. At such times actors from the other theatre groups, who were

bilingual, acted for them. Available directors were scarce and Sannie Visser and Dan Minnaar were in great demand (Files 1 & 23. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

To compete with the bioscope (the name used during the earlier years for a place where movies were shown), and lure audiences back to the theatre the right choice of play became essential. The Arts Association's theatre committee was very cautious in maintaining a high standard and vetted possible plays (File 51. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). They either read the plays or trusted the opinion of the director of the theatre group to determine whether the play was suitable for them to sponsor (File 51. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

Finding quality texts was not easy and amateurs often had to rely on the inferior texts they could afford. The fact that German was not spoken in South Africa meant that the German Theatre Group had to rely on their play texts coming from Germany. The better the quality of a play, the more well known the playwright, the higher the performance rights were. The Arts Association at one stage claimed that "probably the only money-maker would be a German play" (File 57. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

The theatre of the Arts Association was the theatre of a leisured middle class - it was essentially a theatre which reflected fashionable tastes and morals. The audiences loved tragedy that turned into melodrama or sentimental comedy. Intended as light entertainment presentations featured popular commercial successes.

### **5.3.1 PERFORMANCES IMPORTED BY THE ARTS ASSOCIATION**

Theatre in South West Africa was mostly confined to a selected gathering of the privileged society who enjoyed what Olga Levinson (1979, p. 35) called "intellectual pleasures". The Arts

Association imported quality performances for these audiences and took the stance that the Arts Association was not geared to profit making, but more interested in the provision of ‘good’ theatre (File 51. NA, A.345.2/12.AA; Toneelliefhebbers is dun gesaai, 1952). The imported performance served as inspiration for the theatre groups.

The rationale was that even though the country did possess good talent amongst the amateurs, being in demanding professional jobs they could not deliver enough regular performances of quality to satisfy the demand. Importing theatre gave the South West African theatre practitioners opportunities to learn from.

With the money earned through imported theatre the Arts Association had financial backing for the plays of the amateur groups. That finances earned covered the electricity, marketing, tickets, cleaning of venues and even a make-up box of the local groups. The cost of imported performances was high, but the Arts Association felt if they did not import theatre, Windhoek would never have seen any work of standard.

The Arts Association managed to provide a milieu for South African theatre groups and imported theatre to flourish. As foreign influences took root in South West Africa, the European community developed a cultural snobbism (Roos, 1970). Leonard Schach (1996) described the mid-fifties as a period where the audiences’ “preference for things of overseas origin ... reached new ‘heights’ of snobbishness” (p. 28). His view was that a “.... certain snobbery came into being” (Schach, 1996, p.28). Everything imported came to be regarded as superior to the local. Schach (1996) said “the people out here themselves contributed to this snobbery by preferring the imported to the local” (p. 14). According to Ernest Pereira, editor of an anthology *Contemporary South African Plays*, the local South African professional companies were

“addicted to the imported article...” (Pereira, 1977, Introduction). The visiting South African and overseas companies in most cases contributed to the vision of Eurocentric art, or high art, for elite audiences. Though Schach was referring to South Africa, the situation was similar in South West Africa. Prof. Inskip, a theatre practitioner, visited Windhoek often with productions from the University of Cape Town (File 27. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

As in South Africa, South West African audiences favoured imported theatre. Many popular and classical performers came to South Africa and then included South West Africa in their tours (Spector, 2007). These productions set the standard of theatre the Arts Association envisioned for their theatre groups. The Arts Association sponsored as many productions they could afford: sophisticated imports, mostly by visiting companies, which exposed local audiences to a wide variety of foreign cultural manifestations (Breitinger, 1994). Roos (1970) reported that the Arts Association’s management in later years commented, in justification for importing theatre, that ‘local’ performances were mostly financial losses, while imported performances were financial successes (File 57. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). The Arts Association introduced having a director from the professional stage or a guest actor to play a leading role in approved productions (File 31. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

As the years progressed Namibian audiences became more critical in what they liked to view. One reason for that might have been that their tastes and knowledge about good theatre were influenced by the imported productions. The Arts Association tried to deliver what their members or the general public wanted and they wanted high art: the ballet, the symphony orchestras, the opera, and the Broadway shows. “It was soon evident that the public was prepared to pay for quality, but was not prepared to support lesser artistes” (Levinson, 1979, p. 16).

The Arts Association imported classical plays in an effort to steer away from the ‘political pitfalls’ and justified this decision with their aim that audiences’ tastes are educated through plays with an artistic value and standard (File 51. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). The Arts Association did not agonise over plays that were unsuitable – they just did not stage them.

The Arts Association was indirectly part of the political white dominance. In their ambition and aspiration to express the cultural being of their people they developed a ‘Little Europe in Africa,’ a practice which did little to develop an inclusive theatre for the country. “During the mid-twentieth century years theatre for white English-speaking South Africans consisted almost entirely of local (or sometimes imported) versions of plays being performed in England or America” (Creative, 2007, p. 1). ‘Well-made’ realistic plays were imported from South Africa and abroad to supplement the local amateurs’ efforts.

An example of the imported theatre is the performance of the Sherer Company of Freiburg, Germany on February 28, 1955: *North-sea Express*. Another example is the two productions of the German Theatre Company *The Brücke* (Duitse Toneelgroep, 1960, p. 6). On September 12 and 14, 1960 the group performed Kurt Wittlinger’s *Kennen Sie die Milchstrasse* and on September 13 Axel Ivers’s *Zwei im Busch*. Dieter Brammer, Joost Siedhoff, Siegfried Gloeckler and Inge Rassaerts acted all the roles.

The Windhoek-based European theatre never completely weaned itself off of foreign cultures, but rather recreated them. The researcher observed that even today many Namibians still believe in the superiority of European culture over the African culture and audiences find it difficult to watch, appreciate and participate in certain cultural forms other than European. Namibians from European descent still dominate economic life in the country and therefore only sponsor those

cultural endeavours they prefer. Judging by the numbers of theatre loving public that support the imported performances, or productions of foreign playwrights, theatre is still, at least in certain sectors, very much Eurocentric.

For South West Africa the imported productions had definite benefits. The occasional visits of theatrical groups and individual artists of international fame to the country contributed in promoting a genuine love and interest for the theatre. The amateurs appreciated the good performances, the occasional outstanding acting and directing, and the clever backstage techniques, but they themselves stayed on amateur level without the training they so desperately needed. If the local amateur theatre practitioners had more opportunities to become skilled, a unique South West African theatre might have developed sooner. The Arts Association failed to establish a South West African theatre culture that reflected the uniqueness of the people of the country with its dependence on plays from South Africa and abroad.

#### **5.4 THE FREQUENCY OF THE PERFORMANCES OF THE THEATRE GROUPS**

After the two theatre groups' (German and English) first performances in October 1949 more regular theatre performances were staged as the establishment of the Arts Association created an impetus to do so. The Arts Association in turn found inspiration in South Africa's theatre activities (Aanstaande jaar, 1947, p. 4; Avis, 1950, p. 2).

Most of the amateur theatre practitioners were doing the performances as a leisure time pursuit and mostly for the love of theatre. There were never long rehearsal periods and the group members were responsible for both acting and backstage management as could be detected from the newspaper reviews.

The reasons for producing theatre determined the frequency of performances in Windhoek. Not all theatre was produced by the theatre groups under the auspices of the Arts Association. Often members participated in school or church productions (Opgang van die toneel in Suidwes, 1950, p. 8). This practice made it possible for even more theatre to be produced in Windhoek.

Finances influenced the frequency of performances, as can be seen from a Memorandum of Activities, dated July 21, 1955. The German Theatre Group stated that the group was planning two plays (File 57. NA, A.345.2/12.AA):

Mr. Berker during middle August and Mr. Heuner end September/  
beginning October. Mr. Berker is producing *Auf Anruf Mord*,  
approximate costs £100 or under, and Mr. Heuner *Ninotschka*,  
costs £150 or under. Both have a good cast and both shows  
should also show financially a success.

At that meeting it was stated that the theatre groups should make an effort to make at least a little profit to carry their costs as it would be less of a financial constrain on the limited funds of the Arts Association. Ironically it was reported that both the plays incurred a loss (Minutes of AA Committee Meeting, October 19, 1955. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

At times social and political events too had an influence on the frequency of the theatre performances. Even rehearsals had to succumb to those factors, e.g. auditions of the English Theatre Group to be done at the house of Mr. C. St John (Tommy) Thomson, but had to be postponed as a political party meeting was scheduled at the same time in Windhoek. With the politics of the country in turmoil, linked as it was to South Africa at the time, the theatre groups

knew that politics would always be of more importance. Rehearsals and performances had to be scheduled around political meetings and rallies.

An event that increased the frequency of theatre in Windhoek was the Arts Association's initiative to provide its own theatre. The venue created the opportunity for more and larger local and South African productions to frequent South West Africa.

An own theatre stimulated public support, but also increased related events such as lectures and films. Lectures on art appreciation and the practice of theatre organised by the Arts Association were given by local and South African art experts, e.g., at the Windhoek High School, Olga Levinson spoke on theatre (Lesing, 1949; Olivia, 1950a, p. 2).

The theatre groups increased the exposure of their performances by finding the time to take their productions to some of the major towns, e.g. in 1953 on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of April, the English Theatre group performed the play *Blithe Spirit* by Noël Coward. The group performed first in Windhoek and then in Swakopmund and Keetmanshoop (File 50. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). This play was performed again on June 4<sup>th</sup> at the Continental Hotel in Windhoek. The first two performances were well-attended (the income was £ 116. 9.-), but the last performance only had a handful in the audience. There was indeed a limit to how many times a play could be performed in Windhoek. Windhoek only had a small group of theatre lovers and the frequency of plays had to be limited. Especially if one takes into account that there were three different language groups actively producing theatre, plus various visiting and local cultural groups' random performances to attend.

The average number of performances that would show a profit was usually two evenings. At times a play would only be performed once (Opvoering net op een aand, 1952, p. 14), or on special request (Op spesiale versoek, 1949, p. 13).

New theatre talent arriving from South Africa to work in Windhoek was immediately incorporated (Belangstelling, 1949, p. 1). If any of the amateur theatre practitioners left Windhoek, or even died, it was traumatic for the theatre group (Alwyn van Heerden, 1950, p. 3; Heengegaan, 1950, p. 15; Onherstelbare verlies, 1952, p. 8; Toneelverlies, 1948, p. 1). Many of the actors were only in Windhoek for a short period, often due to being transferred for work reasons to South West Africa from South Africa, or vice versa. When there were skilled theatre practitioners to drive the theatre activities there were more frequent staging of performances.

Throughout the theatre groups' existence they aimed for extremely high standards of performance for amateur productions, as the staging of the play *Ninotschka* testified: "This play is one of the best amateur productions of the year presented in Windhoek" (File 72. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). Some of the theatre groups indeed paid meticulous attention to detail and their plays were well rehearsed and executed.

There were, however, some plays that were not only artistically successful, but financially as well, such as the performances of *Die Kinder Eduard's* [Eduard's children] which was staged in 1953. The total income was £244 (File 56. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). The aim of the theatre groups was not only to attract huge audiences that would ensure financial success, but to stage particular plays that would speak to the serious theatre lover. The plays produced in Namibia did not challenge the political and social order of things, but aimed to entertain the audiences rather than evoke a thoughtful reaction. A rather apt example is when the Arts Association chose not to

stage Peter Shaffer's *Five Finger Exercise* (1958) because it could have annoyed the German population (File 31. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). The Arts Association had to be sensitive towards challenging issues, e.g. religion or politics, as they were dealing with three divergent European groups, each with their own cultural and political background. To maintain unity in the Arts Association it was necessary to steer away from issues that could cause disharmony or alienation.

The eager audiences and their appreciation of the theatre productions, confirmed to the Arts Association that their decision to include and develop theatre too (often at huge costs) was the correct one. It was, however, impressive that the theatre groups under the auspices of the Arts Association were so active and staged plays so frequently. There were at least one or two, and at times more productions a year.

## **5.5 THE THEATRE PRACTITIONERS**

In South West Africa there were no training venues available for those interested in theatre. Most local theatre practitioners were either self-trained or received theatrical training outside the borders. The Arts Association concentrated more on the finished product they sponsored or imported, than the cultivation and training of local actors or playwrights. A career in theatre was not seen as high priority and therefore the amateurs practiced it as a leisure time diversion.

The elocution classes, organised by the Arts Association at the Zoo Park in the early years, concentrated on Voice and Speech elocution and were aimed at children. Most of the theatre practitioners relied on their experiences gained over the years through trial and error, or the occasional workshop and lecture. At least observing visiting theatre companies created learning

opportunities for the local theatre practitioners as they could gain valuable insight in the practicing of theatre.

Actor-training was thus one area that the Arts Association could have featured more strongly. Much more could have been done locally to develop local actors as there were opportunities created for training in the fine arts, music and ballet. It was only under the patronage of SWAPAC that the local theatre practitioners got the opportunity to act with professionally trained actors and directors who let them raise their own standards (Horne, 1985). The Arts Association created opportunities for the amateurs to perform and audiences to appreciate their efforts, but no professional company was established.

The position of Afrikaans and English actors was easier as there were some professional companies in South Africa they could join if they wanted to rise above amateur level. One actor who left South West Africa to pursue his career in South Africa was Danie Smuts (Danie Smuts, 1952). He joined a South African company, the Hanekoms se Jongspan (The Hanekoms' young team) with Eghard van der Hoven and Tilana Hanekom (Botha, 2006; Minnaar-Vos, 1969) and showed not only talent, but professionalism. He joined the NTO after they came into being (Botha, 2006).

At times the theatre groups were very fortunate in that they had a variety of excellent amateur directors at their disposal. One of them was Otto Schroeder who was a director of German productions (Visser, 1948b). Besides his own busy schedule as a professional painter he also participated in theatre activities, especially with the youth theatre (Greyvenstein, 1989c). Other directors who made a name for themselves with their outstanding plays were Hannes Heuner

who directed, acted in and handled the stage decorations of German productions (File 72. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

Many of the theatre groups' members not only acted, but also directed plays. Dan Minnaar, editor of *The Windhoek Advertiser* and a popular actor directed *Die Jaar van die Vuuros* [Year of the Fire-ox] by W.A. de Klerk (Minutes of AA Committee Meeting, November 10, 1960. NA, A.345.2/12.AA) and *Satansloon* [Devil's Reward] (File 1. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). Others followed this trend of both acting and directing, often in the same production. Sannie Visser for instance directed *Nag het die wind gebring* (Night brought the wind) for the Afrikaans Theatre Group (Letter: Sannie Visser to Japie van Niekerk, August 14, 1948. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). There was thus ample opportunity for local theatre practitioners to test their own visions and become aware of their own strengths and weaknesses.

The public was expecting (in fact, demanded through the letters in the media) a higher quality of theatrical work. That need caused the Arts Association, as more money became available, to move from self-directing to bringing in professional directors and stage managers in an effort to raise the standard of stage productions. The Arts Association moved from self-directing to getting professional directors and stage managers that brought with them theatrical knowledge and training.

From their very first production theatre groups had talented local amateur actors who would become stalwarts on the stage, e.g. Henriette Brener and Frank Dixon in *Dark Brown* (Geslaagde opvoering, 1949). *Die Suidwes-Afrikaner* of July 7, 1949 made special mention of the fine acting in *Russian Salad* of Tommy Thomson and Olga Levinson (Andante, 1950a).

As with the years before 1947, there often were couples acting together or helping with the backstage technical activities in the theatre groups. In *Love's a Luxury* Neville B. Krummeck was the director while his wife, Joan, played the role of Mrs. Harris, and handled the cast's make-up (File 1. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). In the same production two other couples, Bernard Opperman (stage manager) and Margot Opperman (Molly), and Johan Lambrechts (Dick Pentwick) and Cynthia Lambrechts (prompt) shared in the theatre activities. In *Lotchen's Geburtstag* (Twee stukke, 1948) too there were two couples, Wilhelm Kellner and Sigrid Kellner, and Hildegard Berker and Hans J. Berker, who acted together. As theatre rehearsals and performances are a lengthy process it was convenient for couples to spend time together in a leisure time activity they both enjoyed.

Actors were indeed a factor when choosing a type of play for a successful outcome. There always was the hope that new undiscovered talent would emerge from the new arrival from South Africa (Herlewing, 1949). At the 1959 Theatre Festival all three theatre groups succeeded in introducing new amateur talent to audiences, while established names proved to be old favourites (File 1. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

Audition notices in the media made the public aware of theatre activities. They also revealed that there were enough theatre practitioners making it possible for theatre groups to choose between them to find the right actor for a role. The theatre groups were largely dependent on talent that was often only temporarily available. In some of the groups, like the Afrikaans Theatre Groups, there was seldom stability within the group (File 1. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). The productivity of the groups fluctuated, depending on whether there was a strong theatre person who could organise the group into action. In many cases it was an individual, skilled or unskilled, that gave impetus

to the theatre (Levinson, 1979). In 1963 Freddy Frewer, a well-known figure in Windhoek's art circles gave the German Theatre Group new life when he started to direct and act for the group.

Playwriting was however a neglected area that the Arts Association could have developed with more urgency. It is a pity that no South West African playwright ever came forward to deliver substantial work for the stage during the years of the Arts Association. Unfortunately "the development of community theatre and playwriting was not high on the agenda" (Philander, undated, p.7) of the Arts Association. Before the late 1970's there was no published playwright in the country. Even today most Namibian plays that are staged are unpublished.

It is indeed a pity that reporting in South West Africa was so vague that we do not know who the new theatre practitioners were. Over the years this incomplete reporting on theatre was criticised by South West Africans (Van Biljon, 1982) and South Africans (Botha, 2006).

## **5.6 THE AUDIENCES**

In 1947 when the Arts Association came into being audiences were in the forefront of their mind. At that time the European population in South West Africa was approximately 8,000. This meant that the number of people actively supporting the arts was minimal (Levinson, 1979; S.A. Association, 1947). Few people had seen a play performed by live actors at a level higher than school theatricals (S.A. Association, 1947). With the Arts Association's organising theatre, there was more theatre available for audiences to attend. The Arts Association supported the theatre groups, financially and in an advisory capacity, but soon realised they need paying audiences to keep on financially supporting the theatre groups (File 57. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). The Arts Association knew that a relationship with the community was important, not only financially, but

in the development of the arts as well (Levinson, 1979; Roos, 1969). This vision required educating audiences in the theatrical arts and develops the standard of the art form itself (Doelstrewé, 1948, p. 16).

In 1948 and 1949 the Windhoek audiences flocked to the S.A.R. Club for performances with a strong local flavour (Theatrical Event of the Season!, 1949). *Karakul Kapers 1948* and *Karakul Kapers 1949* were the type of light-hearted revue shows that were very popular with the audiences (It's Gay, 1949; Karakul Kapers, 1949a). "We have seldom seen an audience so convulsed with laughter..." (Karakul, 1949b, p. 3). These kinds of shows were referred to as "productions that drew record audiences and revealed an amazing amount of talent in Windhoek" (Visser, 1948f, p. 16). The distinctive musical and vaudeville style theatre was very popular in South Africa after the English introduced it to the music halls (Encyclopedia, 2012; Slide, 2012).

Visits from touring companies were highlights for South West African audiences. The Hanekom-company, one of the South African touring companies that visited the country regularly, gave the kind of entertainment they needed, like patriotic plays about heroes, such as Genl. De Wet and Paul Kruger (Minnaar-Vos, 1969). Almost every performance of the theatre groups was well received by appreciative audiences (Man injured laughing, 1953; P.V., 1953). The audiences were mostly willing to overlook certain inevitable failures of the producing amateurs, not looking for artistic perfection.

The Arts Association educated audiences through lectures (Visser, 1947b) when they realised that most of the audience members had no idea of the responsibilities, intricacies and cares of the

theatre groups. Audiences developed the ability to be critical in a positive way, while those participating learned to improve the standard of their performances (Naude, 1949).

At times individual audience members were outspoken on play choices, the acting or stage settings (Engelse Toneel vanaand, 1949). Such criticism helped to improve the quality of future plays, but showed little understanding of the harsh reality of the theatre groups' plight to stage productions. The Arts Association sometimes wrote short reviews of performances to be staged to stimulate the audiences' appreciation (Engelse Toneel vanaand, 1949).

The Arts Association considered the three language groups culturally different in their expectations of what should be offered to their audiences to establish faithful followers to sustain the existence of local theatre. An opportunity such as Theatre Week cultivated audience support for local theatre performances (Theatre Week opens, 1957).

The Arts Association knew what was happening in South African theatre. On July 20, 1950, Sannie Visser wrote a long article in her regular Arts column *Gerwe uit die Kunsakker* [Sheaves from the Art field] in *Die Suidwes-Afrikaner* on the National Theatre Organisation (Visser, 1950b). By writing such articles on South African theatre activities, it was hoped that the interest of South West African audiences in the local theatre would be sufficiently fuelled. It was part of the audience education programme.

Visser discussed the role of the audience at a performance, stressing their critical, yet appreciative response (Visser, 1950b). Visser felt that audiences were created by local amateurs, imported shows, and travelling companies from outside the borders. It was her belief that an audience at a local amateur performance differs from that of a professional performance (Visser,

1950a). She indicated that people went to local performances out of loyalty and friendship to the actors who were well known to most, while with the other performances it was to experience quality theatre.

The main branch of the Arts Association in South Africa had a newsletter (About the AVA Gallery, 2013; Brief History, 2013); and the Arts Association followed suit by creating its own. It was to entice audiences to attend performances and make productions financially viable, the theatre committee created an address list of members, and to interest them and the public, regular information of future activities was sent via a newsletter (Arts Association now has newsletter, 1953).

The Arts Association at one stage wrote a letter to Miss Juff, secretary of the SAAA telling the Cape Town branch about their forthcoming Play Festival (Letter: AA to Juff, September 7, 1953. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). “Seeing that most of the audience is German, this is quite important to make a good choice, and I am afraid we haven’t much to choose from” (File 29. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). This reveals that the Arts Association was aware of the tastes of their audiences and did take them into account when planning.

The average South West African theatre audience was well behaved, but there were exceptions: there were some complaints about the noise during performances made by uneducated and unappreciative audiences (Toneelopvoerings en lawaai, 1952). In an amusing snippet, a *Windhoek Advertiser* reporter addressed the thorny issue of inconsideration when he said:

How many times have audiences not been annoyed by late-comers distracting attention from the stage and making a general nuisance of themselves. There are no traffic problems or buses to catch in Windhoek, so arriving late can only be construed as plain bad

manners! (Nibs, 1952, p. 8).

The obnoxious behaviour of rowdy audiences was addressed by an upset reader in a letter to the editor who complained about the audience at the concert of Eve Maxwell Lyte, an imported show (Disgusted, 1952). “I have been to many concerts and ballet arranged by the Arts Society, and always notices how beautifully the audience was turned out. Men either in dark suits, or dinner jackets, women also well turned out” (Disgusted, 1952, p. 4). This time the matter was the shoddy appearance of the audience at the specific performances.

Another letter-writer complained about young people who kept on yelling all kinds of suggestions to the actors; Inappropriate laughter; babies who cried through the whole performance without their parents doing anything to keep them quiet; cool drink bottles that kept falling over on the floor (Verontwaardig, 1953).

In an article in a South African literary journal, *Die Afrikaanse Skrywerskring* 1936 -1937, A.M. van Schoor (1936), elaborated on the inconsiderate behaviour of the audiences, especially those in the major towns. This was applicable in South West Africa as well (Olivia, 1953c), where the difference in cultural tastes and lifestyle among the inhabitants was even more apparent:

This is not the first time that one has noticed that at any cultural event in Windhoek , whether it be a recital by a world renowned artist, or an Art Exhibition ... or in fact, anything more educational than a ‘braaivleis’, both the English and the Afrikaans Sections of our South West population is conspicuous by their absence.

One would need a Sir Thomas Beecham to rouse them out of their apathy. He is the one person with courage enough to conduct a campaign ‘against

the dry rot that one observes everywhere'. He has 'shushed' audiences for covert whisperings, or told them outright to shut up. Over an outraged shoulder, he has hissed at them as savages for untimely applause.

... What, oh what, would he say of Windhoek? (Olivia, 1952g, p. 2).

It was obvious that the reporter was not Afrikaans, but rather English or German. In fact there is a strong suspicion with the researcher that the reporter "Olivia" might have been a pseudonym for Olga Levinson.

Other delicate matters came to the fore: there was friction between the different language groups (Delwer, 1953) according a newspaper article in *The Windhoek Advertiser* of September 26, 1953. After a recital programme of the English actress, Eve Maxwell Lyte, a reporter took up arms against the Afrikaans and English audiences. Of the fifty odd people in the audience 90% of them were of German decent and "it would seem that the English section of our population is completely disinterested in an English artiste" (Olivia, 1952g).

The German and English community supported each other's plays, but not in droves; the language barrier probably had an influence on the support of the performances. The Arts Association, though, complained that the Afrikaans community did not support the activities of the other language groups (Olivia, 1952g). In South Africa, Jack Stodel, theatre manager and actor, said: "One of my most disappointing observations in a long theatrical career has been the lack of support of the theatre by the Afrikaans-speaking population" (Fletcher, 1994, p. 141). The Arts Association agreed with this observation; the Afrikaners did not seem as interested in the arts as other language groups.

Though the Afrikaans-speaking inhabitants were the largest group in the population of Windhoek, they attended the theatre the least (Olivia, 1952g). This caused financial constraints for the Arts Association who depended on that income, as it wanted the theatre groups to be self supporting (File 57. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). The lack of support for the theatre by the Afrikaans-speaking population was a concern (Volbloed-Afrikaner, 1949). In defense of this section of the public Schach (1996) explained that “the physical problems of separation of an agricultural people with puritan backgrounds living in inaccessible geographical areas remote from cultural contact with the towns and cities are mostly to blame for this” (p. 61). The Afrikaans-speaking people in South West Africa were mainly farmers and were spread out across the large country. They were not people who visited the towns often for reasons other than provisions and church. The Afrikaans-speaking inhabitants, spread out over the rural areas, could not attend every performance due to the vast distances they needed to travel to attend. When there was a touring theatre company visiting they did however make the journey to Windhoek or the nearest town to see the performance.

In later years more plays on social problems, historical themes and plays about general human joys, woes and struggles (Nel, 1972) started to draw attention. The Afrikaans theatre realised they had to compete with the English and German theatre groups for audiences and had to be more contemporary and sophisticated. “Critical observers, like drama critics, evoked unexpected, heated reaction from people who were sensitive to insinuations that Afrikaans audiences were still naïve and not fond of reading” (Stals, 2008, p. 120).

An evening at the theatre, especially gala evenings, demanded a formal dress code. This was in line with what was happening in South Africa (Minnaar-Vos, 1969). The Arts Association made

theatre-going a special occasion and certain social attitudes towards the theatre developed (Strydom, 1993). Indeed, an element of snobbery was recognised within the higher strata of society. This caused many people to regard the theatre as elitist.

In Windhoek, going to the theatre provided an occasion for social gathering. Theatre was an important event; surrounded with glamour and grandeur (Strydom, 1993). Many of the productions of the Arts Association were charity premieres and those opening evenings were gala events. If the Administrator and other dignitaries attended the performance and reception it added to the prestige of the event (Administrateur, 1950). Going to the theatre on opening night was rather like going to a party. It seems like some of the audience came to be seen rather than to see the performance (Strydom, 1993). Curtain-up was usually at 8:30 and no latecomers were allowed in before first interval (Olivia, 1952a). This was an indication of how professional and serious the Arts Association was in their duty of producing quality theatre and educating the audiences on proper theatre etiquette.

According to Strydom (1993) quite a few people were not interested in the cultural enrichment on offer, but saw the social event as an opportunity to dress up. An evening at the theatre involved stoles, long evening dresses, gloves, shoulder bouquets and boxes of chocolates. The theatre seems to be directed towards a select few, a group of elite – the better educated members of the community of Windhoek. Rubin (1997) agrees that “the audiences are eclectic, but tend to be drawn from the upper middle classes” (p. 279).

However, it would have been far more believable that the Arts Association wanted everybody to be interested in the theatre, rather than to target just the elite, as there was only a small

population in Windhoek. Going to the theatre was no longer primarily an activity for the educated intermediate classes; it was entertainment for all theatre lovers.

The price of the seats played a role (Brown, 1997) when it came to audiences' decisions to attend performances. The Arts Association took this fact to heart when they decided on ticket prices. For the association there was more than money to consider. They did not want to make a loss, but wanted audiences because they were genuinely interested in theatre. To achieve that, the Arts Association knew that the cost of production had to be kept within the means available to keep ticket prices low.

Another way of cultivating audiences was to concentrate on an important section of the public, namely the youth. They hoped to breed appreciative young audiences who could value theatre for its aesthetic, educational and entertainment value. Children's theatre and puppet shows were among the means of introducing young audiences to children's stories and to the beauty of scenery and costumes.

In September 1950 there was a small, but significant article on the front page of *Die Suidwester* declaring that South African theatre companies would no longer be allowed to play to mixed audiences of white and non-white – if they did, they would not receive any state subsidy according to a stipulation of the government (Geen gemengde gehore, 1950). Issues like these certainly rubbed off on South West Africa as it was linked with South Africa. The Arts Association, as recipient of a small grant from the SWAA, had to adhere to this stipulation as well. This issue was later made worse when in South Africa the Group Areas and Separate Amenities Acts of 1965 confirmed that no racially mixed casts and no racially mixed audiences would be allowed. Though there was no indication that audiences or casts ever were racially

mixed under the Arts Association management of South West African theatre, the new resolutions were not going to allow mix casts in the future.

In an interview with *Die Suidwester* Wena Naude, one of the leading actresses of a company which visited South West Africa at intervals, commented on the extraordinary hospitality of the people, the small size of the stages and that much of the furniture for the performances had to be borrowed from the public (Wena Naude, 1953; J.N.T., 1947; Reisplan, 1947). Nothing, either negative or positive, was said about the actors, play choices or audiences.

Occasionally a production was such a success that audiences flocked to the theatre and the production made profit. Some shows certainly had more audience appeal, such as the popular satirical German cabaret programme *Die Importierten*, which had five sold-out shows in Windhoek (Olivia, 1952g).

The Arts Association reflected on the tastes of their audiences and adjusted their choices of plays to suit the audiences best. There was a lack of artistic appreciation among audiences, but on the other hand there was a desire for the elitist, high arts too. Gradually the audience numbers have grown from 34 (Levinson, 1979; Roos, 1974) in 1947 to 600 (German and English Plays, 1950) in 1949. In 1962 there were 550 members: 330 Germans, 137 English, 65 Afrikaans and 18 Honorary (Levinson, 1983).

## **5.7 TWO SOUTH AFRICAN THEATRE ORGANISATIONS THAT INFLUENCED**

### **SOUTH WEST AFRICAN THEATRE UNDER THE ARTS ASSOCIATION**

### **5.7.1 THE FEDERATION OF AMATEUR THEATRICAL SOCIETIES OF SOUTH AFRICA (FATSSA)**

In 1928 Paul de Groot “lay before the then (South African) Minister of Education, Dr D. P. Malan, a memorandum in which he advocated a state-subsidized theatre” (Stopforth, 1956, p. 229). The idea of having a national theatre was kindled by theatre practitioners throughout South Africa. Huguenet, a well-known actor supported Leontine Sagan, an actress and producer, who drafted “a memorandum which she submitted to the Union Government, in which she advocated the advisability of a national theatre” (Stopforth, 1956, p. 229).

The Krugersdorp Municipal Dramatic and Operatic Society’s chairperson, Breytie Breytenbach, lead the way for a state-subsidized body “to strengthen the amateur groups and link their activities” (Konya, 1993, p. 61). In 1938 he was elected by the affiliated societies as first president (Banham, 1988; Breytenbach, 1950; Stopforth, 1956). There “were vice-presidents from each province, the Rhodesias and South West Africa.” (Stead, 1967, p. 62). Mrs. Helen Avis, an Arts Association member, was the representative for South West Africa (Amateur-toneelspelers, 1950) allowing South West Africa representation in the central executive committee (Konya, 1993).

FATSSA’s Union Congress and the annual theatre festivals soon became the highlight of the amateur theatre calendar. Outstanding was “the wonderful spirit of co-operation which exists in amateur theatricals” (Konya, 1993, p. 61). The same spirit became evident among the amateur groups in Windhoek after the establishment of the Arts Association. The Federation’s aim was that “a record of activities would regularly be sent to the Federation and that the Federation, in turn, would offer guidance when necessary. Thus local problems could be aired as well as ideas

and amenities shared wherever possible” (Konya, 1993, p. 62). In South Africa it worked quite well for most of the amateur theatre societies, but due to the vast distance between FATSSA’s main office and South West Africa the possibility that local amateurs could share their problems with FATSSA or receive financial aid sadly never materialised.

Many leading theatre practitioners of South Africa were involved in FATSSA’s theatre activities. Some of them, like prominent actors Andre Huguenet (FATSSA, 1950) and Leontine Sagan (Social News, 1950), visited Windhoek over the years on invitation of the Arts Association. Their input was invaluable to the South West African amateurs as they offered practical guidance and advice on theatre production (Avis, 1950).

In an article *Ons Toneel – ‘n Oorsig* [Our Theatre – an Overview] Breytenbach (1950) revealed that every city should have a theatre with 300 – 400 seats. The Arts Association already had a vision of its own theatre from the start of their arts activities in Windhoek (Doelstrewre, 1948) and FATSSA’s views on this matter only strengthened the resolution to acquire it.

Due to the fact that South West Africa was so closely linked to the amateur theatre activities in South Africa, the country was included in FATSSA’s planning and was allowed to affiliate November 28, 1947 at the rate of £2.2.0. per annum (letter: AA to FATSSA Des 9, 1949, File 23. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). Helen Avis wrote an article (Amateur-toneelfees, 1950) to explain the function of FATSSA in South West Africa as aiming to develop amateur theatre, as well as the procedure of participating in the different rounds of the theatre competitions.

Ultimately it was a pity that South West Africa benefitted so little from FATSSA. No scholarships were given to any South West African persons, conferences were not held in South

West Africa and training was restricted to South Africa. FATSSA dissolved in 1960 (Du Toit 1988; ESAT, 2016). A report, which integrated the activities of FATSSA, conducted by the National Council for Adult Education on educational and social needs for the country, of which Namibia was part, indicated that a fresh mediatory controlling theatre organisation was needed (Stead, 1967; Stopforth, 1956).

### **5.7.1.1 FESTIVALS LINKED TO FATSSA**

Two areas where the Arts Association followed the pattern of South Africa was eisteddfods and theatre festivals (Du Toit-Pearce, 2009; Groot toneelfees, 1949; Teatergroep in Windhoek, 1948). Eisteddfods were in South West Africa since 1928 (Van Wyk, 1960) and included a large variety of cultural items from different art genres. Otto Schroeder, under the Arts Association, followed a new practical approach to theatre for the young. He encouraged exploration and enriching experiences using natural talents within an informal environment (Greyvenstein, 1989c). This shared theatre group experience was a counterpart for the formal eisteddfod competition atmosphere where only a few children could receive prizes.

FATSSA's contribution to the development of South West African theatre lies in the fact that the Arts Association was encouraged to organise theatre festivals for amateurs as promised to Windhoek audiences and theatre practitioners (Data, 1973). The influence thereof was evident in the fact that the choices of plays improved. e.g., *Man of Destiny* by George Bernard Shaw, and the amateur theatre groups raised the standard of their productions by paying more attention to specific aspects of theatre production (Outjo gaan na FATSA-Fees, 1950). The annual play

festivals in South Africa were open to South West African theatre groups, but the long distances and the enormous costs prohibited amateurs from participating regularly. The Arts Association themselves financed and organised the play festivals in Windhoek as part of their theatre programme.

On July 29, 1947 an article appeared in *Die Suidwes-Afrikaner* on a forthcoming FATSSA theatre festival in Bloemfontein where it was mentioned that South West Africa was included in the Cape Province group. Articles such as these served to keep the public informed of opportunities for the amateur theatre practitioners to participate.

At the Theatre Festival P.P. Breytenbach announced that South West Africa was first on FATSSA's programme to introduce the activities of FATSSA to the inhabitants of the country (Binge, 1947). Mrs. Helen Avis, an Arts Association member from Outjo, was South West Africa's observer for FATSSA at this annual festival (FATSSA, 1950). Avis addressed the congress in a special time slot on the state of theatre in South West Africa (*Amateur-toneelspelers*, 1950). She highlighted several of the problems of the remote country, but also talked of the enthusiasm for this art form. She mentioned the newly established Arts Association that would assist the amateur theatre groups in South West Africa (*Amateur-Toneelfees*, 1950).

Helen Avis draw attention to the many hurdles that amateur theatre had to overcome, such as long distances, a sparse population and lack of proper facilities (Avis, 1950). She elaborated on the amateur status of the actors who had to find the time to rehearse the plays with much personal discomfort and sacrifice without any remuneration (*Toneelfees*, 1950). She was positive that the festival would enrich the theatre life of South West Africa and that the theatre as a cultural endeavour would develop.

There was constant communication between FATSSA and the Arts Association on the topic of theatre development and the Union Festival. FATSSA even offered to accommodate the German Theatre Group (Letter: FATSSA to AA, November 28, 1949. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). FATSSA stated that:

If you wish to produce a one-act play in German this could be done for the current year by sending a team to the Provincial Festival in South West Africa and producing it as a guest performance. In this way your cast will gain valuable experience, but will not be adjudicated with the other entries (Letter: FATSSA to AA, January 26, 1950. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

The Arts Association eventually decided to hold an own Theatre Festival (Groot toneelfees, 1949; Shaw-drama in Windhoek binnekort, 1952b; Toneelfees vir Suidwes, 1949).

The first S.W.A. Play Festival is being organised by a Play Festival Committee, the members being Mrs. H. Avis, representative of FATSSA for South West Africa, the Outjo Art and Cultural Society, Mrs. Levinson representing the English Group of the Arts Association, and Mr. Gaum, representing the Afrikaans Theatre Group of Windhoek (FATSSA, 1950, p. 3).

Another article in one of the Afrikaans newspapers made a strong appeal to the public to support the theatre festival for the reason that people had put time and effort into the productions (Toneelfees, 1950). Good audiences would ensure that the event was a financial success, as the money was needed to enable the winning play to travel to Cape Town to participate in the Union Theatre Festival in August (Toneelfees, 1950). From the article it seems that South West African theatre practitioners had to carry the financial burden themselves.

It was made clear to the theatre groups who wanted to participate that the chosen texts must not include central themes that involve religion, politics or colour –issues (Groot Toneelfees, 1949, p. 2). Seeing that these were burning issues that had the potential to divide the public, it was understandable that the Arts Association would rather avoid such dramas.

For the first theatre festival the received entries were:

- \* *Sewe Vrouens* [Seven Women] – J.M. Barrie by the Windhoek Afrikaanse Amateur Theatre Society (WAATS)
- \* *Vername Mense* [Important People] – Fritz Steyn by the Windhoek Afrikaanse Amateur Theatre Society
- \* *Ontvlugting* [Flight] – W.A. de Klerk by the Outjo Theatre Society
- \* *Hellersee* – W.A. de Klerk by the Outjo Theatre Society
- \* *All the Tea in China* – by the English Theatre Group
- \* *In die Wagkamer* [In the Waiting Room] –by the Kalkfeld Debate Society
- \* *Die Swakker Vat* [The Weaker Vessel] – H.A. Fagan by the Omaruru Art and Culture Society
- \* *Ruwe Erts* [Rough Ore] – H.A. Fagan by Tsumeb Theatre Group  
(Toneelstukke 1950, p. 11)

Except for the English play *All the Tea in China*, and *Sewe Vrouens* (*Seven Women*, 1917) by the Scottish playwright, J.M. Barrie), all the other plays entered were Afrikaans plays written by South African playwrights. Not only was the content of such a nature that the audiences could relate to it, it also influenced the South West African theatre practitioners to copy the style of acting and decor. It was interesting that though the Afrikaans Theatre Group was perceived as the weakest of the theatre groups by the Arts Association, they dominated the theatre festival with entries.

A number of interesting articles appeared in the newspapers as publicity for the festival. In one of these articles there were revealing facts about the earlier theatre activities and of the current situation regarding theatre in South West Africa (Andante, 1950b):

- there were independent, isolated groups since the earliest of times in the country
- they experienced periods of rising, flourishing and destruction
- a group depended many a time on a few, often one, enthusiast(s)
- thinking back on the theatre of the last 25 years certain names came to mind:
  - In the English theatre the names of Messers. Lamb and Levebre stood out;
- in the German group the talented Hans Berker was a leading figure;
- the Afrikaans group boasted names such as Mrs. De Waal,
  - E.A. Schlegemann, Dr. Hans Trümpelmann, Mr. Van Dam
  - and Francois Marais
- in 1950 the leaders in theatre were:
  - English – Charles St. John Thomson and Olga Levinson
  - German – Otto Schroeder;
  - Afrikaans – Frikkie Gaum
- there was talent in the country, but not enough stage exposure
- the enthusiasm of the actors was not enough to develop the theatre; the interest of the public was essential
- the educational importance of theatre was immense.

For South West Africa the FATSSA festivals were valuable in the sense that small societies like Outjo and Kalkrand could produce theatre in Windhoek (Nuwe groep, 1951; Visser, 1951).

These remote groups had to cope with scant facilities and little finances. At least Windhoek's halls, though still inadequate, were so much better to perform in.

There was criticism by some of the public because the entrance tickets were only printed in English. It was expected that Afrikaans would receive preference as only one English Theatre Group participated (Engelse kaartjies, 1950, p. 4). The Arts Association assured the public that it was not done intentionally (Engelse kaartjies, 1950). A reader, under the name *Handhawer* [Maintainer], wrote in a passionate letter to the newspaper stating that the Afrikaner wants to support the Afrikaans theatre and saw the Festival as an ideal opportunity (Handhawer, 1950). He felt the fact that the tickets were printed only in English was a slap in the face to the Afrikaner, who for the last fifty years fought a battle to maintain its language and had to take second place in the past. The reader questioned FATSSA's approach in their quest to promote Afrikaans theatre and was upset about their poor attitude. This was an indication of how the Afrikaans language group felt and emphasised the dilemma the Arts Association found itself in.

The theatre festival was opened by the Mayor, Mr. Edgar Sander, who praised the Arts Association for their sponsoring of overseas artists and important work done; Col. Hoogenhout opened the Afrikaans evening (Amateur-Toneelfees, 1950). Leontine Sagan (for German and English) and Andre Huguenet (for Afrikaans and English), both South Africans, came to act as judges (Avis, 1950). The two theatre practitioners were guests of Jack and Olga Levinson - who lived in the Heinitzburg Castle - during their stay in Windhoek (Social News, 1950). It was standard practice that artists or adjudicators from abroad would be the guests of the Arts Association committee or members, as it helped to curb the cost of having well-known artists in

Windhoek, a general practice in the early days of theatre. This was an excellent opportunity for conversations with the visiting artists on the latest technology, methods etc.

The practice of bringing adjudicators from South Africa for the theatre festivals in Windhoek ensured that the kind of theatre that developed in South West Africa was consistent with the heritage of both South Africa and Europe. These adjudicators contributed much to the uplifting of the standard of theatre with their criticism and lectures. For example, during her stay in Windhoek Leontine Sagan gave a recital of German and English poetry; as well as a lecture '*The Art of Acting and Production*' (Eerste, 1950; Leontine Sagan, 1950).

*The Windhoek Advertiser* further reported that the English Theatre Group's *All the Tea in China* under the direction of Charles St. John Thompson, according to Leontine Sagan delighted everyone (Dramatic Festival, 1950; Kan hoogs voldaan wees, 1950). As the winning group they would take part in the Annual National Contest of FATSSA held in Cape Town (Avis, 1950).

The South African judges had some valuable criticism and advice for the amateurs of Namibia. The comments of Huguenet was at times harsh, e.g. of *Ruwe Erts* staged by the Tsumeb Dramatic Society, he said "it was insufficiently practiced, consequently the characterisation was bad" (Dramatic Festival, 1950, p. 3). For other productions, e.g. *Hellersee*, staged by the Outjo Dramatic Society the comments were more favourable: "it was a pleasure to see the actors perform spontaneously. The tempo was good and the interest of the audience never waned" (Dramatic Festival, 1950, p. 3). There was talent, but it needed direction and experience (Amateur-Toneelfees, 1950; Toneelspelers, 1950).

According to the judges the plays were well staged and could be regarded as “average plus” (Dramatic Festival, 1950; Toneelwedstryd, 1950). The critique of the two judges was aimed to build the amateurs. The judges gave excellent advice on the choices of plays to help the groups make informed choices in the future (Amateur Theatrical Contest, 1950).

In a interview with *Die Suidwester* Huguenet claimed that he was pleasantly surprised with the quality of the performances, but would love to see more original pieces staged, rather than translated plays (Kan hoogs voldaan wees, 1950). He spoke particularly to the Afrikaners to lend their co-operation to the theatre. Less positive was a comment that South West Africa saw too few quality theatre performances; the judges said that the Union of South Africa was in the same weak position half a century ago (Amateur toneelfees loop ten einde, 1950).

The 1950 festival was hailed as extremely successful and made a profit of £134.10.6. The final figures reflected that 584 people attended the performances. (File 50. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). The successful event was brought to a close with a mayoral cocktail party held in honour of the judges and festival participants (Eie teater, 1950). In *The Windhoek Advertiser* on May 13, 1950 a letter from a person who used the pseudonym ‘Theatre Enthusiast’ asked for the staging of the plays again (Repeat, 1950). The fact that the public wanted the plays to be repeated was encouraging to the Arts Association. The letter had the desired effect and soon the Arts Association announced that the plays would be staged again (German and English Plays, 1950; Toneelgroepe, 1950).

Breytenbach remarked at the 1950 Annual Theatre Festival in Cape Town that, under exceptionally difficult circumstances, a theatre festival was organised with great success in Windhoek, and that the winning group came to Cape Town to participate in the Union theatre

festival at the costs of the Arts Association (Breytenbach, 1950; Olivia, 1952d; Olivia, 1952c). The English Theatre viewed their participation in the Annual Theatre Festival as a learning opportunity; as it was common practice that after the festival the performances were discussed in public after they were judged. This practice stimulated critical ability and taught both the players and audience to distinguish between average and excellent performances (Breytenbach, 1950, p. 49).

The next Play Festival in Windhoek was to be sponsored by the Van Riebeeck Tercentenary Committee where the winner would participate in Cape Town (Olivia, 1951c; Suidwes sal deelneem, 1951). To ensure that the theatre groups sustained a high quality with their performances the Arts Association specified that the play choices “should be of the serious type and nothing flippant or inconsequential.... although good comedies are not excluded” (Olivia, 1951c, p.2). The implication was that unsuitable play choices had previously been made by the theatre groups. The Arts Association offered their selection of plays to those who might need a play (Olivia, 1951c). To get local theatre lovers excited an article in a local newspaper elaborated on a theatre lecture, sponsored by NTO, by Leonard Schach (Olivia, 1951c).

Fred Fobian, an Arts Association member and local photographer, and a Windhoek Committee of Management consisting of Olga Levinson and Helen Avis, were the organisers (Avis, 1952; FATSA-fees van die baan, 1951; Toneelfees verskuif, 1952). There was one play each for the English and German Theatre Group participating and the rest were Afrikaans (Play Festival, 1951). The adjudication was done by the South African poet and playwright Uys Krige (Olivia, 1952d). He gave a reading of his work and a very informative lecture as part of the Play Festival (Olivia, 1952e). The lecture touched on the theatre problems of the territory, as well as the NTO

theatre development that should be more beneficial to South West Africa (More, 1952). Krige emphasised that an Art Centre for Windhoek should include a proper theatre, and in that reiterated what the Arts Association had aimed for since its establishment.

It was felt that the standard was higher than the previous year (Olivia, 1952f, p. 2). The adjudicators' critique at the previous festival must have influenced the theatre groups positively. On Saturday, February 23, 1952 at 20:15 the opening of the theatre festival was handled by the Administrator, Dr. A. J. R. van Rhyn. In his speech he said that he was thankful "to see that the theatre was coming into its own again and had taken precedence over the cinema. People were realising it was more stimulating to see live performances" (Windhoek play selected, 1952, p. 4).

The English Theatre Group performed an extract from George Bernard Shaw's *Man of Destiny*, which Olga Levinson directed (File 24. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). To help the audiences to understand the play, a very detailed historical background to the *Man of Destiny* was given in the programme (Man of Destiny, 1953; Mooi stuk van Shaw, 1952). Theatre programmes which included summaries of plays and other relevant information was another thing borrowed from South Africa.

The Outjo Art and Culture Association performed *As Die Nefie Kom Kuier* [When Cousin Comes Visiting] by Gerhard Beukes under the direction of Helen Avis who was also the leading actress (Drie toneelstukke, 1952). The second play too was directed by Helen Avis, namely *Die Goeie Hoop* [The Good Hope], by the South African playwright J.F.W. Grosskopf. Unfortunately, according to the adjudicator both these plays were not a wise choice (Windhoek play selected, 1952). *As Die Nefie Kom Kuier* was much too frivolous and not worthy of a

competition entry, while *Die Goeie Hoop* was a poorly written play, according to a reporter who wrote under the initials A. H. (Windhoek play selected, 1952).

*The Windhoek Observer* wrote that the festival marked a big advance in the theatrical activities of this country (Olivia, 1952c). During the adjudicating Uys Krige gave valuable advice and criticism and stated that he was aware of the difficulties of staging plays in South West Africa (Afrikaanse Toneelgroepe, 1952; Windhoek play selected, 1952). The English play, *Man of Destiny*, won first prize (Drie toneelstukke, 1952b; Windhoek play selected, 1952).

The winning play was sent to South Africa to participate in the annual FATSSA theatre festival (Levinson, 1979; Olivia, 1952c). A whole contingent left Windhoek for Cape Town by air, train and road (Toneelgeselskap, 1952). The cast flew down to stage *Man of Destiny* on March 27, 1952 (Voorstel, 1952). At the FATSSA Play Festival in Cape Town the English Theatre Group made South West Africa very proud. Their performance, *Man of Destiny*, “was applauded for five minutes after the fall of the curtain at the Little Theatre in Cape Town” (People and Events, 1952, p. 2). Sannie Visser, the Arts Association’s secretary also mentioned that the play was received very well (Visser, 1952). After the Cape Town festival a local Windhoek reporter stated that “having seen both theatre and ballet in the Union, there is no doubt in my mind that the work done here in each sphere compares more than favourably with the standard there” (Olivia, 1952e, p. 2).

The Windhoek theatre groups received useful guidance from the adjudicators from South Africa at the competition rounds in Windhoek, and again at the annual play festival. The advice contributed to making Windhoek audiences more aware of the development of local theatre.

Between July 1949 and June 1950, 107 theatre plays were performed, with 605 participants and an estimated 10,000 people as audience under the FATSSA banner in South Africa (Du Toit, 1988). South West Africa took part in these celebrations of theatre; showing development in amateur theatre. South West Africa contributed six performances to these festival one-act plays (Du Toit, 1988). A benefit for those who attended the congresses and festivals were the papers delivered at these events, e.g. the paper *Die kritikus in die teater* [The critic in the theatre] that Ms M.I. Murray delivered at a congress (Nel, 1972).

On December 6, 1952 the Arts Association informed FATSSA that owing to a lack of support from the federation and the expenses of sending a team to any Union Festival they would unfortunately have to cancel their membership. The Arts Association still received the FATSSA newsletter regularly, which informed the members of drama courses, play festivals and general theatre news (File 26. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). The festival rules that FATSSA supplied were invaluable to the Arts Association for when organising their own festivals.

#### **5.7.1.2. FESTIVALS ORGANISED IN WINDHOEK BY THE ARTS ASSOCIATION**

The next theatre festival was announced in 1955, as a Theatre Week and was introduced by the Arts Association in lieu of the FATSSA play festival. Mrs. Levinson reported on the council meeting of October 16, 1955 the difficulties which were encountered in connection with the Theatre Week. There was the 'unsuitable' English one-act play proposed by the Experimental Theatre Group which was formed independently from, but not in opposition to the Arts Association's English Theatre Group (Minutes of AA Committee Meeting, October 16, 1949. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). It is so frustrating that one could not find any other information on this issue (and many other matters). It seems as if there was indeed a flickering of new developments

in South West African theatre. Unfortunately exactly why the play was unsuitable was never mentioned and nothing was heard on the outcome of this issue.

For the Theatre Week Mr. Mills (who would later play a major role in the building of the Arts Theatre) directed a three-act play *Intent to Murder* and Mr. Dan Minnaar a one-act play *Die Swakkere Vat* [The Weaker Vessel] by H.A. Fagan. The German Theatre Group staged *Max oder Bobby*. The encouragement of the Arts Association had no doubt given impetus to the three language theatre groups, and a large group of newcomers got the chance to participate in Theatre Week (More new talent, 1960). To keep expenses as low as possible it was decided to print one joint programme and poster in all the languages. It was hoped and anticipated that “with a trilingual public, such as is found in Windhoek, the theatre-goers would seize the opportunity to attend all three plays” (Shows you must see, 1957).

The Arts Association gathered some statistics on audience attendance at the Theatre Week, kept by Pep Reiter, to assist with their future programme planning (Culture test, 1960; Theatre Week opens, 1957). This practice to gain information from audiences was borrowed from South Africa: Hendrik Hanekom had used it years earlier while on tour through Namibia.

The outcome of the theatre survey was published and reflected that 386 people attended the four performances: 163 English, 121 German and 104 Afrikaans (Culture test, 1960). The English play evening 250 people attended: 124 English, 63 German and 63 Afrikaans, while the Afrikaans/German evening was supported by fewer people: 39 English, 41 Afrikaans and 56 German (Culture test, 1960).

The 1960 Theatre Festival reached its pinnacle with the South African Afrikaans four-act play *Die Jaar van die Vuuros* [Year of the Fire-ox] by W.A. de Klerk. It was a long, gripping drama with a timely theme: the racial issue. The play “takes a complex and disturbing look at the Afrikaner and his relationship with the land, his English-speaking compatriots and the African claimants to the land” (Hauptfleisch, 2016). It was set in South West Africa (Hauptfleisch & Steadman, 1983). This play was staged by the Arts Association’s Afrikaans Theatre Group on April 25 and 26, 1960 in Windhoek. The experienced director of this play was Dan Minnaar (Minutes of AA Committee Meeting, November 10, 1960. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

The play won first prize from the Department of Adult Education in South Africa in 1952. The first performance of this play was in March 1952 at the Van Riebeeck Theatre Festival in South Africa by the NTO. W. A. De Klerk’s treatment of sensitive subject matter, land and racism, introduced a new critical note, though from a somewhat conservative point of view (Toneelstuk met Suidwes agtergrond, 1952).

The play had a strong political undercurrent and was a type of theatre never produced before in South West Africa. It “showed the people the times they were living in. It wasn’t pretty, but it was soul-stirring and relevant” (Fletcher, 1994, p. 149). As the play was an award-winning play the Arts Association allowed it to be performed.

### **5.7.2 THE NATIONAL THEATRE ORGANISATION (NTO)**

An organisation that would influence the theatre under the Arts Association was NTO, a state-funded association for professional theatre. While FATSSA was still functioning, NTO came into being official on 21 June 1947 (ESAT, 2016). NTO received a state subsidy of £80,000,

made available by the Adult Education Department, to provide professional theatre performances nationwide and to develop and promote theatre (Dommissie, 2001; Vandenbroucke, Undated). From the beginning it was envisioned that South West Africa would be included in the activities of the new theatre organisation (Breytenbach, 1997), and the Arts Association hoped that they too would benefit (Nasionale Teater kan Suidwes ook help, 1952; Spesiale beurse, 1949). According to Stopforth (1956) and Rubin (1997) NTO was a bilingual (Afrikaans and English) organisation and intended to provide professional theatre, training and work for performers, directors and stage technicians and serve as an outlet for developing new talent in playwriting.

The numerous articles in a weekly South African magazine, *Die Huisgenoot* and some South African newspapers, available in South West Africa, stimulated theatre aspirants in South West Africa (Editorial, 1949; Tuiste, 1948).

As with FATSSA the benefits were of an indirect nature on the theatre practitioners of the Arts Association. No money or bursaries, stage equipment or training opportunities ever came the association's way. Two travelling professional theatre companies, Afrikaans and English, toured through South Africa and South West Africa (Nasionale Teater, 1948). The aims were to provide professional theatre for audiences to enjoy; building a theatre-going public that would grow in their appreciation of theatre and, through the productions, encourage the theatre practitioners to raise the standard of performances (Nasionale Toneel besoek Suidwes binnekort, 1949). Seeing the performances of the professional actors gave the amateurs ideas for own productions (Retief, 1966).

The Arts Association liaised with NTO to be included in the NTO's tour (Letter: NTO to AA, December 3, 1949. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). NTO indicated that they would appreciate it if the Arts

Association could give advice on how to run a tour smoothly in South West Africa. It is clear that the two countries were in sync on the type of theatre they produced. The Arts Association realised that the tour would bring new life into the theatre groups (Files 56. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). Sannie Visser confirmed with Andre Huguenet that the Arts Association was willing to assist as coordinator of the theatre activities in South West Africa (File 2. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

1950 NTO toured South West Africa with two plays (First visit, 1960, p. 4; Letter: NTO to AA, October, 13, 1960; NA, A.345.2/12.AA; Levinson, 1950b). The Afrikaans play, *Oupa Brompie* [Grandpa Grumpy] was a translation of the detective comedy-thriller *Grumpy* by T.W. Percival and Horace Hodges, while the English play was *Candida*, a drama by George Bernard Shaw (Binge, 1969; Nasionale toneel se toer, 1950; National, 1950; NTO kom na Suidwes, 1953).

Both plays were directed by Marda Vanne, a producer of high-quality plays (Nasionale teater na S.W.A., 1950). Hendrik Hanekom acted the lead in the Afrikaans play (File 51. NA, A.345.2/12.AA; Levinson, 1950a; Levinson, 1950b; NTO Afrikaans play opens, 1953). The success of the performances (*Oupa Brompie*, 1950) served as an example to the amateur theatre practitioners of how to stage a production. The English play was performed five times, while the Afrikaans one was staged more than a dozen times (*Grootste opkoms*, 1950). The public in Windhoek supported the South African performances with much appreciation (Levinson, 1950b).

It seems not all the arrangements (of which some were handled by the Arts Association) went smoothly at the venues. A reporter related how a NTO company struggled to find a hall in Mariental, and after eventually obtaining one had to build a stage and find lights themselves (*Oupa*, 1950, p. 1). The reviews were often glowing and commented on the exquisite costumes

while praising the acting as being of a high quality (Masker, 1950). The South West African amateurs certainly benefited from observing these productions.

The NTO tours influenced not only the actors, but audiences as well. The fact that the productions came from South Africa lent some prestige to attending the theatre (Brunette, 1953; D.M., 1953). The company was wined and dined in style by the Windhoek Amateur Players in the Café Zoo – though the Afrikaans dramatic society was short on money and a prominent businessman had to lend them some funds (Onthaal, 1950). It was common practice to host a reception for visiting actors and usually the privilege of one of the theatre groups. These receptions were taken very seriously and were seen as a token of honour and appreciation of the artists' work. At the reception Col. Hoogenhout, the Administrator, praised the progress of the arts, hoped that the country's own theatre would be enriched, and made an appeal to the younger generation to contribute to South West Africa's drama literature (Lede, 1950). It was an opportunity for the Arts Association theatre practitioners to socialise with the touring company and in an informal way gain insight into and knowledge of the theatre practices of South Africa which were applied to the local theatre practices.

A reporter observed that NTO “besides catering for the more sophisticated public of the town, they rightly insist also on bringing the theatre to the country audiences, who differ completely in mentality and outlook towards the theatre, and wish primarily to be entertained in a more obvious manner” (Candida, 1950, p. 8). In South West Africa *Oupa Bromptie* was received well in the smaller towns where the audiences were largely Afrikaans (Dommissie, 2001).

The public approached the Arts Association to enquire whether Namibia could be a permanent part of their tour programme (Nasionale teater geve, 1948). The public wanted professional

theatre: technically and artistically polished productions (Report, 1977) and examples of good stagecraft. The public's attitude encouraged the Arts Association to import more theatre from other companies as well.

The Arts Association's secretary wrote to NTO about the possibility of NTO sending people to present lectures on topics such as stagecraft. The Arts Association even offered to carry the financial costs of a small scale theatre production with a small cast that could serve as an example of how a play should be performed (Letter: AA to NTO, March 9, 1949. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). Pity that this never materialized as the NTO only came with tours.

One aspect that both NTO and the Arts Association had in common was how difficult it was to practice theatre in a country as vast and sparsely populated as South West Africa. As with FATSSA there were many unfulfilled expectations from the NTO too as was mentioned. The influence from both organisations can however not be disputed. They inspired amateur theatre practitioners.

NTO ceased to operate as an organisation when it was officially dissolved on 12 June 1962 (Dommissie, 2001; VandenBroucke, Undated). It was replaced by the different provincial art councils. NTO developed the performing arts on a professional foundation when the organisation received state recognition and financial support (Horne, 1985). Eventually it was the Performing Arts Council, born out of NTO, established in 1966 in South West Africa as SWAPAC, that would end the Arts Association's involvement in theatre.

## **5.8 THE ART THEATRE – THE ARTS ASSOCIATION'S LEGACY**

### **5.8.1 VENUES BEFORE THE ERECTION OF THE ART THEATRE**

The immediate need of the Arts Association was a workplace. Theatre facilities in South West Africa were not effective, especially in the smaller towns (Minnaar-Vos, 1969). In most places the town hall was equipped with a stage, totally inadequate for practicing theatre. In Windhoek the amateur groups hotel halls or the Railway Hall. The Arts Association, from the outset, worked towards acquiring a properly equipped theatre building. “Before the theatre was built the association had to hire and transport the necessary chairs whenever any recital took place in a venue like the Railway Institute hall” (Levinson, 1979, p. 33). In order to achieve high-quality theatre, some type of professional stage had to exist.

The Arts Association operated from the Zoo Garden Café (Venzke, 1997, p. 18). There were no backstage facilities, storage space for decor and costumes, no proper lighting, weak acoustics, or adequate audience seating: all of which were perceived as problems by the Arts Association. Proper facilities to fulfill their mission of providing quality theatre, was at that stage a major concern.

Over the years the Association had submitted various memoranda, prepared by Otto Schroeder addressed to both the Administration and the Municipality of Windhoek to convince them of the need for a cultural centre. It became obvious however that we would have to depend on our own initiative (Levinson, 1979, p. 31).

With very little financial aid from the SWAA, the Arts Association initiated the building of the Art Centre, which would host the theatre, a gallery and studios. Only after the Arts Association had done the preparatory work, such as getting funds, the SWAA came on board. In a letter, dated July 12, 1953 the Administration, under Dr A.J.R. van Rhijn, stated it is considering the

erection of a public library, museum, archives and an Art Centre (Letter: SWAA to AA, July 12, 1953. NA, A.345. 2/12. AA). The Arts Association was invited by the SAAA to forward requirements for preliminary plans. An inspired Arts Association in their reply (an undated and water damaged archival document) specifically mentioned the urgent needs of the amateur theatricals in Windhoek.

Magazine articles on the possible building of theatres in all the major cities in South Africa must have been of special interest to the Arts Association (Bou van teaters, 1950). The Arts Association agreed with Hendrik Hanekom's comment, after one of his tours in South West Africa, when he said that South West Africa must build first-rate halls and more theatre companies will tour the country (Grootste opkoms, 1950).

### **5.8.2 THE FUNDING OF THE THEATRE BUILDING**

The success of a theatre in Windhoek rested on the financial backing, benevolence and blessing of the government (Annual Report of AA, 1959. NA, A.345. 2/12. AA). Generous donations were made by Sir Ernest Oppenheimer and Dr. Erich Lübbert to the Arts Association (Levinson, 1983; Minutes of Meeting between the Arts Association and SWAA, July 31, 1958. NA, A.345. 2/12. AA). Unfortunately most of the donations had been spent on the Library and Museum, leaving only £2, 000 for the theatre (Minutes of Meeting between AA and SWAA, December 2, 1957. NA, A.345. 2/12. AA).

A fund for the building of the theatre was set up after it became clear that the Administration would not contribute anything towards the interior, not even the curtains (File 1. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). When the costs of the stage became known, uproar erupted from a dissident

faction in the Arts Association (Alle kunsvorme, 1958; Botes, 1958). “Some members felt that what was being spent on the stage could have provided a Gallery” (Levinson, 1979, p. 33). The SWAA wanted to spend less, but the Arts Association said they would find the necessary funds “rather than allow a half-hearted job to be made” (File 1. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

It was decided that the Administration would be responsible for the maintenance of the theatre. The Arts Association would manage it and could charge for the usage of the building (Minutes of AA Committee Meeting, October 3, 1957. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

“In 1959 a tender of £45 500 for the theatre was accepted and the Arts Association was asked to pay a further £1 850 for the carpeting and lighting,” (Levinson, 1979, p.32). At least a third of all the money required for the building of the theatre was contributed by the Arts Association if all the amounts are added together. This money was raised by donations, building-fund contributions, safaris, income from the box office and loans.

### **5.8.3 THE LOCATION OF THE THEATRE BUILDING**

Discussions with the then Administrator Daan du P. Viljoen, regarding a suitable site were ongoing (Levinson, 1979). On the Arts Association’s committee meeting of December 9, 1953 it was announced that the Windhoek City Council would transfer property in the Zoo Park for an Arts Cultural Centre to the Arts Association (Art Centre, 1953; File 2. NA, A.345.2/12.AA; Letter: SWAA to AA, September 10, 1957. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

The Administration proposed the building be erected on the site adjoining the Museum and Archives in Leutwein Street — extending to Francois Street (now John Meinert Street) (Letter:

SWAA to AA, October, 24, 1957. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). The then Administrator, as representative of the SWAA, met with Levinson on behalf of the Arts Association in October 1958. The SWAA would retain ownership of the building while the Arts Association would become the lessee at a nominal rental of £1 a year for the next 25 years (Levinson, 1979).

#### **5.8.4 THE ARCHITECTS OF THE THEATRE BUILDING**

The Arts Association, with no theatre building to use as a model, turned to experts in South Africa for information and advice. The Arts Association, in their quest for a proper theatre building, even made contact with NTO who sent a brochure, *Suggestions for Planning and Equipping Stages for Small Halls* to assist them in the planning (File 56. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

Olga Levinson, who was instrumental in the erecting of the theatre (Horne, 2001), reported to the Arts Association committee about an outstanding South African architect, Mr. Vels, who had built many theatres already (Minutes of AA Committee Meeting, July 26, 1955. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

Eventually the architects assigned to the project, D. K. Bartsch and Brian Mills, were both originally from South Africa (Annual Report of AA, 1959. NA, A.345. 2/12.AA; Minutes of AA Committee Meeting, July 26, 1955. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). Both architects were art lovers and Bartsch later joined the Arts Association as a member and served on the committee (Levinson, 1979).

Although the Administration was the main overseer in the building of the theatre, the Arts Association was involved in every aspect of the process. It was after all on the insistence and

initiatives of the Arts Association that the theatre was built (Files 56 & 57. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

### **5.8.5 THE THEATRE BUILDING ITSELF**

This theatre was to be “the first civic theatre built for the city of Windhoek by the regional government at the instigation of the South African Arts Association (South West African Branch), under the presidency of the dynamic Olga Levinson” (Hauptfleisch, 2016). This theatre was the legacy of the Arts Association to the development of theatre in South West Africa.

The full-sized auditorium was designed for the newest methods of production. The design mimicked the architecture of South Africa’s theatres (Hauptfleisch, 2016). In South Africa “theatre buildings were built in the European style and according to European specifications,” (Hauptfleisch, 1983, p. 40). Ludwig Binge referred to the theatre as one of the best in South Africa; claiming that Windhoek and its arts are part of that country, being on the same standard as the theatre buildings in that country (Binge, 1959).

The dimensions of the theatre, according to Terence Zeeman (2000), an erstwhile manager of the National Theatre of Namibia in the post-SWAPAC era, indicated that the theatre was more than adequate for the needs of the Windhoek community (Zeeman, 2000).

“At one stage the Director of Works, Mr. T. Loots, inquired whether we wanted “a little gem of a theatre with a seating capacity of 250/300 or a theatre with a cheaper finishes with 450 seats” (Levinson, 1979, p. 32). Olga Levinson’s reply was they “wanted a little gem of a theatre with 450 seats!” (Levinson, 1979, p. 32).

At the Committee Meeting of November 27, 1958 the members planned to call the theatre the Ernst Oppenheimer Theatre because of the donation received from Oppenheimer (File 57. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). The theatre eventually became known as the Art Theatre (Levinson, 1979).

### **5.8.6 THE OPENING OF THE THEATRE**

The Arts Association had a sun-downer prior to the gala opening in 1960 (Levinson, 1979). It was for members, supporters, the University of Cape Town Ballet Company, the contractor and architects. It was an occasion with much glitz and glamour to see the completed theatre and thank everybody for their involvement.

The Arts Association decided to show off the large stage's excellent facilities and engaged the University of Cape Town Ballet Company to open with Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker* (Letter: AA to Andre Huguenet, October, 13, 1960, NA, A.345.2/12.AA; Programme of Gala Performance, 1960). The public responded with unbelievable enthusiasm. "There were seven sold-out performances" (Levinson, 1979, p. 37). The media observed that those opposed to the expensive stage enjoyed the ballet performed on it immensely (Opposition in show, 1960). October 3, 1960 Mr. D. T. du P. Viljoen officially handed the theatre over to the Arts Association (Administration of S.W.A., undated, unnumbered; Hauptfleisch, 2016).

### **5.8.7 THE NEW THEATRE BUILDING INSPIRES THE ARTS ASSOCIATION**

Once the Arts Theatre opened it played host to a myriad of productions, ranging from German, English and Afrikaans classics to modern plays (Nuwe opbloei wag op die Kunsvereniging, 1959). Under the enthusiastic management of the Arts Association a new era dawned in 1960.

South West Africa became even more part of the South African professional as well as amateur productions (Levinson, 1983).

The theatre was fully booked and the Arts Association had to turn down requests to hire it. Sadly there were still no plays from any South West African playwrights. There was a fully equipped theatre, but the Arts Association was still practicing theatre the same old way, albeit on a larger scale.

The Arts Association managed the theatre like a business. The Johannesburg Repertory Players' Alexander Theatre (Johannesburg, 1986) served as an example of how to properly manage a modern theatre. The Arts Association took their duty seriously as the custodian of the theatre building, as can be seen from correspondence with the Windhoek Theatre Group:

This theatre has been entrusted to our care and management by the Government, who as owner of the building, expects us to keep the place in an impeccable condition and not to run it as a loss, in all probability regarding it as their future contribution towards our cultural efforts.

(Letter: AA to Windhoek Theatre Group, November 23, 1960  
NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

The Arts Association saw the new theatre building as important for their performing arts activities and an institution which would provide a social centre where people could mingle. In South Africa, Stopforth argued, theatres were built for a purpose: to become a definite force in the recreational life of the community, a notable social asset, and an institution citizens could be proud of. In his opinion, theatres should become an integral part of a city's cultural life and well-being (Stopforth, 1956); sentiments which were shared by the Arts Association.

“Thanks to the Association of Arts, Windhoek is in the possession of a theatre such as not all European towns of the same size can call their own” (Lempp, 1964, p. 170). With a well-equipped theatre at their disposal the Arts Association was ready to become more adventurous in their offerings. They invited the University of Cape Town Opera Company with a cast of 60 members, including an orchestra under conductor Dr Erik Chisholm who performed Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* and Puccini’s *Tosca*, starring Desiree Talbot (Levinson, 1979).

It was possible for a dramatic society outside South West Africa to approach the association and hire the theatre to stage a play. Levinson stated that Windhoek was ripe for theatre performances of that high standard (Letter: AA to Huguenet, March 20, 196. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

With the phrase ‘high standard’ the Arts Association was referring to South African and European productions. When one studies the following statement on European theatre it summarises the theatre that the Arts Association practiced quite comprehensively:

Theatre as public activity is most commonly literary drama performed at public theatres; it is public theatres; it is usually commercial or else state-supported for the general public. Theatre as an elitist art form is mostly defined by its intended audience, a limited group with specialized tastes (Drama, 2009, p. 1).

A number of companies and societies, local and foreign, applied to use the theatre for a variety of productions. A memorable event was the Coloured Choirs’ Festival *Let the People Sing* under Mr. A. J. Kloppers. Some 20 choirs consisting of about 560 members participated, showing tremendous natural talent (Levinson, 1979). The Arts Association felt that the theatre building should be available to all in the community (History of the National Art Gallery, 2001). According to Lempp (1964) “The theatre in Windhoek advanced from the production of farces

and criminal thrillers to good modern plays ... The development away from the primitive is, however, remarkable". (p. 170). Talitha Bhoem, erstwhile secretary of the Arts Association, agreed when she claimed that "top shows of international quality...would raise the cultural standard of the country" and in order to do so "elite shows must be brought to Windhoek" (File 30. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

## **5.9 SOME INFLUENCES ON THE ARTS ASSOCIATION'S THEATRE**

The South African Government gradually imposed segregation at all levels of social, political and cultural life (Hauptfleisch, 2016). As a social and cultural practice theatre cannot be separate from the fields of the social, cultural, economical or the political everyday practices and experiences, thus a brief look at the South African policies that were applicable in South West Africa too.

### **5.9.1 PROCLAMATION NO. 54 OF 1921**

In July 1947 the editorial staff of *The Windhoek Advertiser* thought it good to discuss the law which prohibited all public entertainment, including exhibitions and performing arts events, on Sundays, namely Proclamation no. 54 of 1921 of South Africa. The law was also applicable in South West Africa, as the country was under mandate of South Africa (Diener & Graefe, 2001). The newspaper felt that this law on public entertainment had become obsolete.

There was immediate controversy amongst the South West African public on the issue when some indicated that they would welcome the scratching of the law. Others felt Sunday was sacred and the law protected it. The Arts Association, as a cultural organisation was aware of Proclamation no. 54 of 1921 of South Africa, and there never were performances on Sundays.

“Opposition to the theatre by the highly influential Dutch Reformed Church was strong early in the century” (Vandenbroucke, undated, p.48). The church, especially the Dutch Reformed, had an influence on the play choices of the Arts Association. The Afrikaner religion and political aspirations were embedded in the Afrikaner history and promoted by patriotic Afrikaners (Pretorius, 1994). According to Stals (2008) religion was a serious issue and tied strongly to the idealistic viewpoint of the Afrikaner nation’s past and future. Allowing theatre on a Sunday would have been sacrilegious. According to Owen Williams (1993) the stage and the puritans are traditional enemies.

### **5.9.2 ENTERTAINMENT TAX**

Entertainment tax became a millstone round the neck of every company attempting theatre (Steadman, 1981; Stopforth, 1956). According to Stopforth (1956) this form of tax was levied in England “as a temporary war measure and it was slavishly copied by the South African Government who conveniently forgot to abolish it again after the war” (p.139). All entertainers who performed in public, in both South Africa and South West Africa, were compelled to pay this tax (see Appendix F).

Roughly one-third of the box office receipts, (not a third of profits), were paid to the provincial authorities in South Africa (Botha, 2006). In South West Africa the entertainment tax was paid to the SWAA (File 28. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

Leonard Schach claimed with utter disgust: “How incredible and how puritanical to tax entertainment of all things, especially when the people providing and seeking it were already paying taxes on their own incomes” (Schach, 1996, p. 105).

The Arts Association had to apply for tax exemption every time they wanted to stage a theatre performance (see Appendix F for an example). As the theatre groups under the auspices of the Arts Association were already not making profit on most of the performances, the entertainment tax made theatre a liability to the Arts Association. On May 7, 1955 the Arts Association wrote to the Receiver of Revenue, stating that

the Arts Association is basically a non-profit making organisation devoting all its funds for the promotion of cultural activities in South West Africa. It is for this reason, and in order to make up any deficits which may, and often do, occur in the presentation of artists to the public, that some profit must be made out of other functions. We would therefore appreciate it very much if you could grant us exemption from entertainment tax in respect of the enclosed applications (File 28. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

All theatre, whether imported or local, had to pay the entertainment tax (Botha, 2006; Grootste opkoms, 1950). Stopforth (1956, p.239) referred to the entertainment tax as an “exorbitant and unfair Provincial tax levy; on the average, taxation allowed between 14% and 15% of the total takings.” If one takes into account that a theatre group had other costs such as advertising, the leasing of a hall, the organiser’s commission, royalties to the author of the play, local expenses (like hotels, accommodation, travel and salaries), it seems like it was hardly worthwhile to produce a performance.

### **5.9.3 CENSORSHIP**

Robert Mohr, a South African actor, director and drama professor, (1973, p. 10) said “Laws created barriers between people and cultures.” Leonard Schach agreed when he observed that:

When censorship tries to act as a watchdog of public morals, it becomes a form of Puritanism.... When censorship is directed against ‘isms’ with which it does not agree, it becomes political censorship. When it disapproves of things that threaten its

immediate surroundings it becomes social censorship..  
(Schach, 1996, pp. 110 – 111).

Censorship has always been a reality in the arts and was molded as a tool under apartheid. The South African laws certainly did just that in South West Africa.

In 1963 the Publication and Entertainment Bills gave the Publication Control Board in South Africa “the power to prohibit any public entertainment when it deemed that it was indecent, obscene, offensive, or harmful to the public morale; opposed to religious convictions; or liable to bring ridicule or contempt on any section of the public” (Vandenbroucke, undated, p. 47). Pereira (1977, p. 3) claims that “the terms of reference of the present Act are so wide that a case against any ‘offending’ publication can very easily be made out.”

Pereira (1977, p. 3) also observes

A work may *inter alia* be deemed offensive if it brings any section of the community into ridicule or contempt; if it is considered harmful to relations between sections of the community; or if it is prejudicial to the safety of the State, the general welfare, or peace and good order. These criteria, universally applied, would certainly condemn a large portion of the world’s literature – and almost all its classics of satire. In effect, though this is not its intention, the Directorate of Publications and its committees are not only proscribing what they regard as undesirable, but prescribing what they regard as desirable.

Pre-censorship/self-censorship was done out of fear of prosecution and financial loss. Due to the cultural differences between the different language groups, the Arts Association had chosen to practice restraint in their play choices from the beginning of their involvement in theatre.

There was one part of the 1963 law that laid explicit restrictions on the performing arts: “A cast must be racially homogeneous, perform for an audience of the same race, in a theatre designated for the use of that race. Changes in any of these variables required a special permit”

(Vandenbroucke, undated, p. 47). As the theatre groups affiliated to the Arts Association had only Europeans as members this law was not that much of a restriction to them, but the association was fully aware of the law that was in place as a prerequisite for performances (Geen gemengde gehore, 1950). There were, however, coloured audience members who regularly enjoyed the theatre performances and who were in later years affected by the law (Eins, 2012). The Group Areas Act of 1965 restricted theatres in a similar way – no mixed casts or audiences were allowed.

The Arts Association opted to follow the safe route and only staged ‘safe’ productions that would be acceptable to the European community. Especially as “it is not only the State which can act in these matters: any private individual who finds anything offensive to his taste in any kind of publication can lodge an objection with the Directorate” (Pereira, 1977, p. 3).

#### **5.9.4 CULTURAL BOYCOTT**

In 1960 “the British Musicians Union decided that members should not perform in South Africa as long as apartheid existed.” (Cultural Boycott, 2016, p. 1; Some important developments, 1983, p. 1). A declaration was signed by some prominent British playwrights which stated that they refuse performing rights in any theatre "where discrimination is made among audiences on grounds of colour" (Some important developments, 1983, p.1), in other words as long as apartheid existed (White, 2015).

The anti-apartheid activist Ahmed Kathrada wrote an article and said “that at this stage of development international pressure against South Africa's racial policies coupled with the local struggle, will greatly further the cause of freedom” (White, 2015, p.13). Baker (1965, p.7) agreed

that “Imposed discrimination restricts access to ...entertainment, to economic equality and to dignity and progress”. The South African playwright and apartheid-activist, Athol Fugard, supported the international playwright’s boycott (Hauptfleisch, 2009; Schach, 1996). There were many that shared his perspective on apartheid’s injustices and wanted to see change.

The Playwrights Boycott intended to effect change and force the South African Government to review its political maneuvers on apartheid. Alan Paton explained it as follows:

We must face a hard fact if we want a colour bar, whether it is called Apartheid or separate development, we must expect to pay a price for it. Cultural isolation is one of the prices. It was clearly the Government (by a great section of the electorate) that brought politics into the theatre, and we, the producers, the actors, the theatre-goers, must pay the price for it. (Vandenbroucke, undated, p.46).

The boycott was followed up with the British Equity ban which forbade their members working in South Africa or to play to segregated audiences in South Africa (Rubin, 1997). The “British Equity ban on their members performing in South Africa was serious enough, but the international playwrights’ boycott was far more serious” (Schach, 1996, p. 109). The effect was that the play choices became limited.

When the apartheid laws of South Africa compelled the Arts Association to adhere to restrictions where it concerned the theatre, as the SWAA was technically the owner of the theatre building and the association only the managers, the Arts Association was not pleased.

Namibia, to the world part of the apartheid state and included in the boycott, was virtually cut off from its European entertainment sources. The Arts Association had to rely on more productions from South Africa and started a close relationship with the University of Cape Town’s Little

Theatre, which was under the direction of Prof. Donald Inskip (Inskip, 1972), to bring productions to Windhoek. “The playwrights boycott has deprived the commercial theatre of the latest hits, directors and actors of some demanding (and expanding) material, and audiences of the stimulation of new ideas and techniques” (Vandenbroucke, undated, p. 53).

The deluge of South African talent was a direct result of the cultural boycott (Hauptfleisch, 2009, p. 3). The South African writers and performers were forced into making their own theatre. In the absence of work and influences from abroad, the South African theatre practitioners and in particular the playwrights were forced to draw on their own resources. It was a pity this stimulus did not inspire South West Africans to become playwrights.

### **5.9.5 THE BIOSCOPE**

Most people in South Africa used the term “bioscope” when referring to the cinema, “both in the sense of the art form and more specifically as a name for the building” (Hauptfleisch, 2016, unnumbered). The term was also used in South West Africa (Nuwe bioskoop geopen, 1951). Bioscopes were also called theatres (Hauptfleisch, 2016), which must have been quite confusing, for example the caption in *Die Suidwester* read “Afrikaanse Klugspel in Plaaslike Teater” [Afrikaans Farce in Local Theatre], referred to a film *Die Kaskenades van Dokter Kwak* [The Frolics of Doctor Kwak] that was showing in the Metro Bioscope (Afrikaanse klugspel, 1949).

In 1896 the first film was shown in Johannesburg, South Africa at the end of a variety show (Bode, 1981). Hotel halls in South West Africa that previously housed theatre performances became bioscopes. According to Andreas Vogt, a historian,

movies also found their way into our country in the late

German colonial period, which ended in 1915. Silent movies would be shown in the large banquet halls provided by the numerous family-run hotels such as the 'Grossherzog' or the 'Hotel Stadt Windhuk' which were also for theatre performances ... (Vogt, 2007, p. 16).

Before long the bioscope was a popular leisure pursuit and the open-air bioscope at Stadt Windhoek Hotel was especially frequented by soldiers (Bristow, 1968). "The oldest proper movie house in town was the Acme Cinema" (Vogt, 2007). This bioscope opened its new premises on Friday, July 17, 1925 and more than 600 people attended (Over six hundred attended, 1925). According to Vogt (2007) both the Odeon and the Alhambra, two other bioscopes, were popular as well. The old Community Hall in Katutura also functioned as a movie house (Pendleton, 1994).

Many Afrikaans films (from South Africa) made their appearance in South West Africa. These films were often visual portrayals of popular South African radio dramas or plays like *Tamboer in die nag* [Drum in the night], which was a detective story broadcast daily on the radio in both South West Africa and South Africa. Films such as *Simon Beyers* and *Geboortegrond* [Homeland] appealed to the Afrikaans-speaking public and awoke nationalistic feelings. Many of the well-known South African actors in the Afrikaans films were familiar to South West Africans. Many of those actors had been on theatre tours through South West Africa with the Hanekoms or NTO. The actors and their films ensured that there was some interest in the theatre.

The directing and acting on the live stage by amateurs could often not compare, nor compete, with the realistic adventures films offered. Nevertheless, a core of theatre lovers remained loyal to the theatre. Theatre possesses that special dimension that film cannot replicate. When the farce *Die Wildsboudjie* [The Haunch of Venison] was performed in 1941 in Cape Town, South Africa,

the media reported that this play was an indication that Afrikaans playwrights can write successful satire (Nel, 1972). When *Die Suidwester* announced that Union Films would show the comedy, *Die Wildsboudjie*, an adaption from Fritz Steyn's play with the same title, audiences in Windhoek were aware of the play as the Afrikaans Theatre Group had performed *Die Wildsboudjie* with great success in Windhoek (Aangename klug, 1947).

The live theatre was under much pressure in its competition with films, because the seats in the cinema were sold at much lower prices than the tickets for live theatre. The Arts Association realised that it was necessary to sell the seats at a similar or lower price (File 51. NA, A.345.2/12.AA), if they wanted to lure people back to the theatre. "From a novelty of the 1890's the cinema grew, by about 1910, into a feature of the country's entertainment world. But it did not begin to throttle the theatres until the event of talking pictures in 1929" (Performing Arts, 1969, p. 10).

People did not cease going to the theatre, but at the same time found the bioscope a new stimulus, entirely different from their experience as theatre audience (Hauptfleisch, 2016). After the novelty had worn off, audiences found new reasons to attend live theatre.

## **5.10 CONCLUSION**

For all practical reasons the theatre that the Arts Association practiced was South African theatre. The South West African theatre practitioners, especially the Afrikaans and English theatre groups, copied the theatre traditions and trends of South Africa.

The Arts Association did not encourage local playwrights enough to open themselves to the influences from the country itself. The theatre of the Arts Association was structured, premeditated, elitist imported high art. It was a borrowed theatre tradition wherein commercial productions featured most prominently. No initiation was taken to create indigenous theatre.

The Regulations of the Arts Association, governing the lease of the Arts Centre Theatre, stipulated clearly that no political and religious meetings were allowed in the theatre (File 31. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). The norm of non-confrontational theatre worked for the Arts Association was therefore enforced. Many issues such as censorship, politics and religion (each with its South African links) had a direct influence on the South West African theatre. The reality was that the political aspirations of the wider community were harshly repressed by the Administration of the South African Apartheid Regime (Madisia, 2007). In fact “the distress of the black population was aggravated by the introduction of South Africa’s apartheid laws after 1948” (History, 2007, p. 3).

The association organised their theatre activities into two channels. The one leg was the local amateur theatre groups under their auspices whom they supported and sponsored. The other leg of their work was the sponsoring of imported productions. Each visiting touring company made their own arrangements for the staging of their performances. The companies usually had a contact person to make the local arrangements, e.g. hiring of a venue, liaising with the Arts Association who handled the performances at a percentage of the profit or a flat fee.

Under the Arts Association’s management the local amateurs contributed to improve standards of the local art and theatre. The theatre has experienced progress, but realised that a great deal more needs to be done. Performances often were less successful, because the public did not

attend them or appreciate the theatre as an art form. Most of the public still needed to develop the culture of going to and paying for theatre.

The Arts Association should always be remembered for initiating the building of the Windhoek Theatre and Art Centre (Levinson, 1979). Establishing “a civic theatre complex that was versatile and could accommodate a wide range of artistic productions” (Bravenboer, 2004, p. 239) created symbols of the force of theatrical art and the creative spirit behind it. The Arts Association established that Windhoek was the focal point of cultural development in the country. In the words of Olga Levinson “It was a milestone in the cultural history of Windhoek when we opened the Arts Theatre” (Levinson, 1973, Program).

Chapter 6 will introduce the South West Africa Performing Arts Council (SWAPAC) which was the last phase of the South West African theatre under the Arts Association.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **THE SOUTH WEST AFRICA PERFORMING ARTS COUNCIL (SWAPAC)**

#### **REPLACES THE ARTS ASSOCIATION**

**The theatre will only be dead when the desire to see it is dead** (Margaret Inglis).

## 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The Arts Association was a private organisation and the major provider of commercial theatre in Namibia from 1947 until the SWAA in 1966 established a governmental institution to control the country's performing arts, following guidelines from South Africa.

The transformation in theatre was set in motion with the disbanding of the National Theatre Organisation in 1961. The South African Department of Education, Arts and Science was then instructed to create councils “to provide our performing artists with a fixed income, to present operas and ballet performances, to perform music and plays – in English and Afrikaans” (Joyce, 1981, p. 125). Andre Strauss, a Director in the Arts Directorate of the Ministry of Youth and Culture in Namibia, relates that the “performing arts councils were established in South Africa with the formal institutionalisation of Apartheid in that country. Every one of the South African provinces had a performing arts council” (Strauss, 1999, p. 89). The provincial art councils in the four South African provinces were Cape - CAPAC; Free State - PACOFS; Transvaal - PACT; Natal – NAPAC (Banham, 1988; Vandenbroucke, undated).

The decision was that each of the councils would be responsible for its own administration, duties and functions, including the training of artists and technicians in proper facilities (Dommissie, 2001). “Their commission was to work towards the advancement of the performing arts on a professional basis within their designated regions” (Hauptfleisch, 2016, unnumbered).

“Namibia, then known as South West Africa, being governed by South Africa as the fifth province, ... also got her own performing arts council, SWAPAC” (Strauss, 1999, p. 89). As these Performing Arts Councils were created for the performing arts, and that was a large portion

of the Arts Association's work, the Arts Association supported the South West Africa Performing Arts Council (SWAPAC) in developing the arts for the interim period. "These semi-autonomous, state-funded councils were responsible for Drama, Ballet, Music and Opera," (Dommise, 2001, p. 83).

Without consulting the Arts Association, decisions were taken by the SWAA that vastly influenced the association. The South African state-subsidised council was to be implemented with an enormous subsidy in South West Africa to manage the performing arts, especially theatre. The contribution of the Arts Association, which built an appreciative audience for quality productions, and struggled for thirteen years to provide an appropriate venue for the performing arts was not even acknowledged properly by the SWAA.

Where the Arts Association put theatre on a sound organisational footing, SWAPAC aimed to take South West African theatre to a professional level on par with South Africa. The Arts Association sponsored amateur and foreign productions, but SWAPAC, besides sponsoring similar productions, was to create a professional acting company in South West Africa.

To understand the Arts Association's decisions taken in their last years of their involvement with theatre, as well as their relationship with SWAPAC, it is necessary to take a closer look at the establishment, structure and funding of SWAPAC and both organizations' theatre activities during this period of transition. The Arts Association shared their years of experience and intimate knowledge of the Windhoek theatre-goers with SWAPAC by saying "We know that your association/organisation can make an active contribution towards the advancement of the performing arts in South West Africa." (File 56. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). According to the opinion of the Administration, (Letter from C.A. de Wet, convening secretary, SWAA, to the AA. (File

56, NA. A.345.2/12.AA) the Arts Association was included in the committee of SWAPAC for that reason.

Under the then white administration of South Africa SWAPAC was formed with that Performing Arts Council exclusively for whites only. The Arts Association was effectively elbowed aside to only handle the Visual Arts. It was this exclusive apartheid attitude amongst other factors that caused the Arts Association to leave the stage in 1966.

## **6.2 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SWAPAC**

“The Performing Arts Councils came about as a result of a growing government awareness of the cultural needs of our nation, at that time certainly only of its European component” (Dommissie, 2001, p. 219). That was the situation the performing arts found themselves in, in South Africa in 1963. It was envisioned that “each council (would) acts as an entrepreneur, sponsoring programmes” (Vandenbroucke, undated, p.48).

The political state of affairs, in which South West Africa was administrated as part of South Africa (Stals, 2008, p. 19), dictated that even in cultural matters South West Africa should be treated as part of South Africa. In practice this meant when South Africa established Performing Arts Councils in their provinces and South West Africa had to get a similar council. No evidence of prior discussions with the Arts Association about the council could be found.

In 1966 the South West Africa Performing Art Council (SWAPAC) became a reality (Horne, 1985) in South West Africa. C.A. de Wet was appointed as the part-time secretary and treasurer to do SWAPAC’s administrative work (Horne, 1985). Administrator at the time, Mr. Wennie du Plessis, on behalf of the SWAA, chaired the first founders’ meeting in Windhoek on June 25,

1966 (Bravenboer, 2004; Engelbrecht, 1973; Van Biljon, 1982). SWAPAC's constitution was tabled by the first executive committee on the 25th of September 1966 in the Legislature (Horne, 1985). Like with so many of the documents of this period no copy of the constitution could be found: we only have secondary sources referring to it.

The art councils were established to improve the quality of theatre, provide work opportunities and produce theatre performances, drawing from the classics as well as contemporary works (Rubin, 1997). It is interesting to note that up to this point the Arts Association was indeed providing theatre, in much the same way as what was envisioned for the councils. What the Arts Association lacked was professional actors and playwrights creating true South West African theatre – not only amateur theatre practitioners re-producing or importing the work of South African and European playwrights. Proper funding hampered the Arts Association's expansion.

For SWAPAC (as for the Arts Association) there were two cardinal reasons why the performing arts should be developed in South West Africa: firstly for sake of the art itself – art for art sake, and secondly that the arts have much educational value (File 56. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). In principal SWAPAC followed the template of the Performing Arts Councils in South Africa with regard to theatre practices. There were, however, major differences to the model created in South Africa at the commencement of SWAPAC's existence. In South Africa the councils had a company of professional actors and trained backstage crew available (Botha, 2006). South West Africa only had amateur theatre practitioners who, as members of the Arts Association, produced infrequent performances. SWAPAC was therefore at a disadvantage with no professional actors or trained backstage staff.

While each of the South African councils responded to the languages and culture of its province (Afrikaans and English), in South West Africa the Performing Arts Council included all three the European languages (Vandenbroucke, undated). SWAPAC realised that the German section of the South West African society was an important part of the theatre-going public and amateur theatre practices (File 56. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

### **6.3 THE FUNDING OF SWAPAC**

Like the National Theatre Organisation, the Performing Arts Councils received South African state funding” (Vandenbroucke, undated). In South West Africa the funding for SWAPAC came from South Africa, channeled through the SWAA. On September 06, 1966 the Arts Association was notified that the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Namibia has voted R25, 000 in the financial year 1966-67 for the advancement of the performing arts in South West Africa to SWAPAC (File 56. NA, A.345.2/12.AA; SWAPAC, 1979, unnumbered). This indeed was a major breakthrough for the performing arts in the country as this improved the financial situation of the South West African performing arts greatly. The grant the Arts Association was receiving, about a tenth what SWAPAC received, was in future only for the development of the visual arts. The Arts Association’s grant in 1963 was £2000 for the all the art genres (File 56. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). All the years the Arts Association had to apply annually for a grant to develop all the different art genres, unsure if they were even going to receive it.

After the establishment of SWAPAC the Arts Association had to approach the SWAPAC Board for funding, made available by the SWAA, for planned theatre activities and to bring more productions of note to South West Africa (Van Biljon, 1982; Mossolow, 1967). In the beginning

there was no fixed pattern in allocating funds to the various art groups – it went to those who were interested enough to apply for financial support (Engelbrecht, 1973). The funding SWAPAC received was used to finance local amateur theatre groups (Engelbrecht, 1973). The funding was also used to import South African productions from the other art councils.

Much of the initial funding of SWAPAC was spent on obtaining offices: first in the Marie Neef Building in Kaiser Street, then closer facilities next to the theatre building itself (Horne, 1985, p. 101 -102). That gave SWAPAC its own post office box and telephone (Engelbrecht, 1973, p. 1).

#### **6.4 THE STRUCTURE OF SWAPAC INCLUDES THE ARTS ASSOCIATION**

On September 25, 1966 an executive pilot meeting of SWAPAC was held (Mossolow, 1967). The control and executive authority rested with the following members who were chosen as the first Executive Committee of the council (Van Biljon, 1982). Three Arts Association members served on the committee (\*):

Mr. Wennie du Plessis – chairman  
Mr. J.J. Klopper  
Mr. C.A. de Wet – secretary / treasurer  
Mr. K. Dahlman (\*)  
Mr. P.L. Hattingh  
Mr. G. Isaacson (\*)  
Mrs. Olga Levinson (\*)  
Dr. J.T. van Wyk

On a regular basis there were representatives from the Arts Association on the Executive Committee of SWAPAC. In 1967 it was Mrs. Ruthilde Hillig, Mr. Fredi Frewer and Mr. Kurt Dahlman (Letter: AA to SWAPAC, March 2, 1967. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). The Arts Association

thus had a small share in the discussions on how the money, granted by the Administration to SWAPAC, should be distributed.

Mr. Fredi Frewer, an Arts Association's member, resigned in 1967 but was promptly appointed on the Executive Committee of SWAPAC's drama sub-committee, which functioned in an advisory capacity to the Board of the Executive Committee (File 56. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). SWAPAC realised the value of this accomplished director's experience and felt that he should stay involved in the local theatre activities. Skilled theatre practitioners were scarce in South West Africa and it would have been a loss if he was not on the committee.

Even though the Arts Association was no longer active in organising and sponsoring theatre, the theatre groups did not cease to exist. From an overview on SWAPAC's first ten years it became evident that members of the Arts Association and their theatre groups continued to serve on SWAPAC's committees, e.g.

Olga Levinson and George Collins – Arts Association  
E.N. Terblanche and J. Egan – Windhoek Afrikaans Theatre Group  
Chris Dorman and M. Sobkowski – Deutsche Theatregruppe  
Joel Klutsky and Gershon Isaacson – Windhoek English Players  
W.E. von Kleist and D.J. de Witt (Children and Puppet Theatre)  
(SWAPAC, 1979, unnumbered).

The structure of the Executive Committee required representation by three members that would form a sub-committee to discuss problems, find solutions, make amendments to the constitution, and report to the Executive Committee (File 56. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). On September 1968 the SWAPAC Executive Committee deliberated with delegates of the SWAPAC Board under the chairmanship of Mr. W.C. Du Plessis (File 56. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). The document, of which

only the first page was available, gave valuable insight into the structure and ambitions of the council: SWAPAC was created to serve the whole of South West Africa, as the funding came from the taxpayers of the country (File 56. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). The deliberation pointed out that more attention should be paid to the rural areas as they were deprived from quality arts performances. The report of the deliberation admitted that although there were problems within SWAPAC, once they were fixed it was envisioned that the young company could fill the voids that existed in the theatre practices, such as their inability to take productions to the towns in the rural areas (File 56. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). The Arts Association over the years tried to take theatre to the rural areas, but finances were the biggest drawback in developing the theatre in those areas.

At the deliberation it was announced that the SWAA already saw some growth and felt that it justified a full-time secretary for the council (File 56. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). “Between 1966 and 1970 the secretarial and administrative work for SWAPAC was the responsibility of a part-time secretary and treasurer, C.A. de Wet” (Horne, 1985, p. 102).

The Arts Association’s Annual President’s Report of 1968 showed their positive attitude, but also their severe reservations when it was stated:

we are very delighted at the prospect of much needed financial assistance being given to the Arts by SWAPAC. We must confess, however that we were not so delighted at the composition of the General Council Commission and the constitution. However, as it is still in the process of teething troubles, we can only wish SWAPAC ‘alles van die beste’ [all of the best] for the future (File 35. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

## **6.5 THE ARTS ASSOCIATION AND SWAPAC TOGETHER CONTINUE**

## **WITH THEATRE ACTIVITIES PROMOTING SOUTH AFRICAN**

### **THEATRE**

After the establishment of SWAPAC the Arts Association had to make a difficult decision: either to be part of SWAPAC for the sake of the arts development of the country, or decline to become involved and be excluded from the performing arts activities, specifically the theatre. Namibia at this stage could not sustain two rival organisations managing the country's performing arts. Each of the organisations had a distinct advantage: the Arts Association had the lease for the Arts Theatre and SWAPAC had the benefit of the Arts Association's groundwork and expertise in organising theatre in Namibia and the financial support of the SWAA.

Initially SWAPAC handled very little of the organisation of the performing arts. In contrast to the South African Performing Arts Councils, SWAPAC did not create any productions themselves until 1967. The variety of activities and projects which came to South West Africa were organised by the Arts Association (Van Biljon, 1982). As the theatre which the Arts Association produced and practiced was in effect South African, or what South Africa imported, SWAPAC accepted the status quo. They financed and arranged for productions to be taken to the rural areas.

In the beginning of the Arts Association–SWAPAC partnership both organisations made a huge effort to accommodate each other and work together harmoniously in the process of cultivating South West Africa's performing arts. The Arts Association took a deliberate decision to be supportive of SWAPAC's activities (File 35. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). They continued to handle administrative duties, the complimentary tickets of which there were a considerable number

distributed to the press and dignitaries, and the communication with the press. The Arts Association remained firm in their aim of providing for all the arts genres even though SWAPAC was named the official organiser of the performing arts by the SWAA. To confirm that the Arts Association was still the main arts organiser of the arts, Olga Levinson wrote an article, *The Cultural Life of Windhoek*, which gave a glimpse on the arts in Windhoek of this crucial period. She claimed that

Visitors to Windhoek are invariably surprised at the Kultur consciousness of the city, for music, theatre, ballet, and art flourish there out of all proportion to the size of the population. The cultural heart of Windhoek beats in an imposing building with an equally imposing name, the Dr Erich Lubbert Stiftung, brainchild of the local Arts Association... and [it] is from the headquarters there that the South West Association of Arts administers the art gallery and adjoining theatre. (Levinson, 1967, p. 42).

In a letter Mr. W.C. du Plessis, chairman of the Executive Committee of the S.W.A. Performing Arts Council and then Administrator, thanked the Arts Association for their “excellent services rendered by your theatre staff during the presentation of the Pact performances” (Letter: Du Plessis to AA, May 3, 1967. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). He mentioned that

your admirable theatre – acclaimed by Pact professionals to compare most favourably with any of its size in the Republic – which you so kindly put at our disposal, as well as the services rendered by your staff contributed in no mean way to the success attained, especially the unstinted assistance extended by your Secretary, Mrs Dahlmann. On behalf of the Committee a special word of thanks to her. (File 35. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

From this letter it is again apparent that the theatre was spoken of as if it was still under the direction of the Arts Association and only used by SWAPAC with the consent of the association. This made the situation complex and confusing indeed. The SWAA tried, a little late, to mollify

the Arts Association, by saying “We know that your association/organisation can make an active contribution towards the advancement of the performing arts in South West Africa” (Letter: SWAA to AA, September 6, 1966. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). The Arts Association was invited to send a representative to the convener’s meetings.

The Arts Association was still offered various performances by overseas companies and individuals (of whom many visited South Africa and wanted to extend their tour to South West Africa as well), but was hesitant to accept any offers before cleared with SWAPAC. Lotti Dahlmann, Arts Association secretary, at one stage sent word to a Miss Cato Brink, in South Africa, that the Arts Association was fully committed for 1968, (Letter: AA to Brink, December 4, 1967. NA, A.345.2/12.AA), and reiterated this to a Mr. Peter Cooper in London on March 01, 1968. The secretary explained that the SWAA sponsored numerous local events (through SWAPAC), including the productions of the local theatre groups, which left little available time for other performances from abroad.

### **6.5.1 THE ARTS ASSOCIATION PERSISTED WITH THEATRE**

After the establishment of SWAPAC the Arts Association carried on with arts activities as in the previous years; for instance, at the invitation of the Arts Association, the University of Stellenbosch presented lectures under the auspices of the Department of Education, S.W.A., in the Arts Theatre, Windhoek, July 1966 (File 35. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). Throughout the existence of the Arts Association the reliance was on products theatre practitioners from South Africa had available. The Arts Association used their own income to sponsor these South African activities, until SWAPAC’s funding became available for productions and related activities.

There were performances, sponsored by SWAPAC, from the Arts Association theatre groups as well. In July 1966 the English theatre group, which was for several years dormant, performed the production, *The Rape of the Belt* by Ben Levy. It was produced by Tersia Holmes with a local cast. Normally the theatre groups tried to keep the number of people involved as low as possible, but this play had a fairly large cast (10). It was heartening that there were enough amateurs in the English community to support this demanding play. One can only speculate as to why the English Theatre Group was inactive for some years, but the lack of a strong leader/director to step forward to actually come up with a text is most definitely a major contributing factor. In August 1966 the German Theatre Group under the auspices of the Arts Association performed the play *Die Braufartzu* [The Braufartzu] by N. Gogel, directed by Fredi Frewer.

1968 was an important year for the Arts Association. Due to the fact that all the arts were still for all practical reasons under the auspices of the Arts Association, they decided to include all the different genres in the 20th anniversary festival. After some consideration the Arts Association committee approached CAPAB with the suggestion that “because of the language difficulties we feel that an opera would have greatest appeal to the public” (Letter: AA to CAPAC, July 13, 1966. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). They had their 20th anniversary celebration on September 15, 1967 (File 35. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). Once again it was a South African production opera, *Madame Butterfly* that would be staged in Windhoek, as South West Africa was nowhere near to producing anything similar.

The Arts Association was still heavily booked, mostly for music recitals with a few theatre productions in between (File 56. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). With the fair amount of performances – sponsored by SWAPAC – available to the public, the Arts Association was concerned that too

much would be expected from their audiences who were supportive, but small in number. They were concerned that such a small group of culture lovers would not be able to attend all the performances in a way that was viable and cost effective. For the Arts Association it was important to have good audiences as they were dependent on the income to sponsor their arts activities.

The Don Hughes Organisation, theatre consultants from South Africa, mentioned to the Arts Association that persons from Windhoek pointed out that (especially during show week) Windhoek was highly organised when it came to braaivleis and beer-drinking, but not in terms of culture (Letter: Don Hughes Organisation to AA, March 7, 1969. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). For the Arts Association the choices of plays and the frequency of theatre productions were thus vitally important and the audience had to be kept in mind in order to make a profit. For such a small capital Windhoek had a variety of art activities, but still the number of people to support it was limited.

### **6.5.2 SWAPAC SPONSORS SOUTH WEST AFRICAN AMATEUR THEATRE**

For the interim SWAPAC was not providing training and handled the local theatre practitioners as the Arts Association had - by sponsoring the theatre groups. This situation compelled SWAPAC to be a mere “funding organisation for amateur productions, outside organisations and local talent” (Horne, 1985, p. 101). The local theatre groups benefited from SWAPAC’s generous funding: *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare, directed by Hans Andrup, was performed on March 25, 1967 by the English Theatre Group (File 35. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). The Children and Puppet Theatre Group in June 1967 was next to receiving sponsoring: R3, 700 for the

performances of *Puss in Boots* (File 35. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). SWAPAC's financing for one performance was more than the annual SWAA grant to the Arts Association. In November 1967 Mr. Hans Andrup announced that the German Theatre Group received R600 for the performance of the musical comedy *Prairie Saloon* by Heinz Wunderlich. The production was under the direction of Fredi Frewer (File 56. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). SWAPAC sponsored European theatre familiar to the audiences that the Arts Association had cultivated and the plays similar to what was staged in South Africa (Spector, 2007). These theatre groups were still members of the Arts Association, but no longer produced theatre under their auspices (File 56. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

With more money available through SWAPAC, the Arts Association were putting on popular plays from abroad with professional directors and guest artists to play leading roles, mostly from South Africa or Europe. These directors, e.g., Mees Xsteen, worked with local amateurs who were not remunerated, but received an honorarium (File 56. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

SWAPAC aimed to develop the amateur theatre in South West Africa, which under the Arts Association's auspices remained on an amateur level, to a more professional level. With no professional actors available, SWAPAC formed its own acting company (as PACT, CAPAC, PACOFS and NAPAC had) by bringing in actors from South Africa (SWAPAC, 1979, unnumbered). As the theatre of South West Africa was on a much smaller scale than in South Africa's provinces, the company was smaller and made use of local amateur talent when more actors were needed (SWAPAC, 1966 -1990). As SWAPAC's offices were situated in Windhoek, and the only location with a fully equipped theatre, it was logical that the amateurs mostly came from the capital (SWAPAC, 1979, unnumbered).

The Performing Arts Councils in South Africa staged Afrikaans and English productions and SWAPAC imported some of them to South West Africa. This was to expose the theatre public to quality productions, and serve as an inspiration and teaching-school for the amateurs. In March/April 1967 three Afrikaans productions, *Die Paradysboot* [The Paradise Boat] by Karl Wittlinger; *Uit die Oude Doos* [Being Old-fashioned] by a South African playwright Melt Brink, a programme of three of his plays, and *Oom Wanja* [Uncle Wanja] by Anton Chekhov were staged (SWAPAC, 1976, unnumbered). They were from PACT. This trend of importing productions was an extension of the Arts Association's practice. Not only were translations of plays brought to South West Africa, but also works of South African playwrights.

SWAPAC worked in close co-operation with the four South African Performing Arts Councils (Horne, 1985, p. 101 -102). From 1967 – 1974 SWAPAC brought in six productions from these councils to elevate the standard of theatre in South West Africa (SWAPAC, 1979, unnumbered). Nine independent South African productions were also imported during this period (SWAPAC, 1979, unnumbered). With the commencement of SWAPAC's own theatre company in 1967 all the major Namibian towns were visited with some of their productions (Horne, 1985).

### **6.5.3 DIFFERENCES EMERGE BETWEEN THE ARTS ASSOCIATION**

#### **AND SWAPAC**

Though the Arts Association was initially positive in working with SWAPAC there were unfulfilled requests and a lack of consultation. The Arts Association explained to SWAPAC how difficult it was to do their planning due to the fact that they had to wait for a response from SWAPAC on their funding applications and suggestions (Letter: AA to SWAPAC, November

10, 1966. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). SWAPAC responded by informing the Arts Association that their proposals would serve at the Council's first meeting "after it has been constituted" (Letter: SWAPAC to AA November 15, 1966. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). The Arts Association had to wait for SWAPAC's approval and they were often frustrated with the slow pace. The Arts Association offered help to SWAPAC, claiming "We are aware of the difficulties of SWAPAC undertaking the organisation of the opera (*Barber of Seville*)" (Letter: AA to SWAPAC, March 6, 1967. NA, A.345.2/12.AA) and offered to do the administrative organisation. It is clear from the correspondence that the Arts Association was involved in and organised performing arts events, received funding after applying for it, and had to work closely with SWAPAC to create a sustainable arts programme. The correspondence also reveals how committed the Arts Association was to theatre, as well as how they tried to manipulate SWAPAC: "this year no opera has been arranged and this is something that appeals to all three languages" (Letter: AA to SWAPAC, March 6, 1967. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

The sensitive issue of treating the three languages equally raised its head during this period again. F.M. Willemse, the secretary of the Afrikaans Taal- en Kultuurvereniging (S.A.S. & R), an Afrikaans cultural organisation, complained to the Arts Association that the Afrikaans language group supported the recent performances by SWAPAC/PACT (Letter: Willemse to AA, May 22, 1967. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). The society, which acted as champions for Afrikaans, was, however, disappointed to see that only English was used on the admission tickets (File 35. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). Responding to the complaint the Arts Association said "this was solely done because almost the entire support of cultural functions at the Theatre has been given by English and German sections of the population" (Letter: AA to Willemse, May 27, 1967. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). With this remark the Arts Association implied that the Afrikaans community

was not the Arts Association's largest support group, even though statistics indicated that they were the largest group of the European populations in Namibia. The Arts Association indicated that they would "gladly print tickets in Afrikaans in the hopes that the Afrikaans community will now give it's support to all cultural activities in the Arts Theatre" (Letter: AA to Willemse, May 27, 1967. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

In the letter Afrikaans was written with a small letter, but German and English with capital letters – might have been an unintentional oversight, but a significant one. The Afrikaners mostly supported performances in their own language, and seldom the other languages' performances, in the opinion of the Arts Association (Letter: AA to Willemse, May 27, 1967. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). Reasons might have been that they did not understand the other languages, but in a multilingual country like South West Africa where most of the inhabitants, even those from South Africa, spoke two or three, languages, it is doubtful.

What is revealing about this incident is that the society complaining, contacted the Arts Association and not SWAPAC. The artistic and cultural community must have found the situation perplexing and was surely irresolute about whom to approach concerning the performance arts activities.

During this period the Administrator's attitude was a thorn in the side of the Arts Association. Since the founding of the Arts Association they had requested the reigning Administrator to be their patron. Such a request – which implied endorsement and support of the Arts Association – was forwarded to Administrator J. G. H. van der Wath. He promptly replied:

Your association is however now a member of SWAPAC of which I am the Chairman in my capacity as administrator and I am of the opinion that the Administration should not accept the patronage of

anyone of the members of the organisation of which he is the chairman or patron (File 35. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

The Administrator made it very clear that the Arts Association now only played a minor role in the cultural development of the country: no longer the organiser and leader of all the arts in Windhoek, but a mere member (with a single vote) in a committee of which SWAPAC was at the helm (File 35. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

There were also some administrative problems that soured the Arts Association–SWAPAC relationship. It seems that the Arts Association was handling the shows from South Africa and abroad, for SWAPAC which made a certain amount of money available for those performances.

A letter from the Arts Association to SWAPAC dealt with the issue of non-payment of monies.

May we draw your attention to the fact that we have not been paid by the Ballet Committee of SWAPAC for the show *Mantis Moon*, and also not by 'Little Theatre' for *Brecht on Brecht*, and 'Children's and Puppet Theatre' for *Where the Rainbow ends*. The outstanding sum of all three shows amount R748.15. As all shows are sponsored by SWAPAC we would appreciate your assistance in this matter, otherwise unless payment is made by the 10th of August, 1970, we shall be forced to cancel the forthcoming shows *Die Kadi* and *Die Kuiper*, again under the auspices of 'Little Theatre'. We trust, however, that this will not be necessary  
Letter: AA to SWAPAC, August 1, 1970. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

A footnote referring to Clause 15 of the Regulations governing the lease of the Arts Theatre, draw SWAPAC's attention to their financial responsibilities: "Rental shall be payable strictly in advance; one half thereof upon booking and the balance one hour before any performance"  
(Letter: AA to SWAPAC, August 1, 1970. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

Little issues like these troubled the relationship between the organisations. The Arts Association had a large investment in the theatre building and was thus possessive about the property. When the stage lights were misused and some went missing, the Arts Association investigated the

matter (Letter: AA to SWAPAC, August 1, 1970. NA, A.345.2/12.AA), because “all moveable lightings, curtains, chairs, screens in the Theatre are the property of the Arts Association” (Letter: AA to SWAPAC, August 1, 1970. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

At times there was a rivalry between the two organisations. The Arts Association wanted to book the theatre for a Spanish dance group only to be informed by SWAPAC that another Spanish dance group was already booked for the same week in March 1974 (File 56. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). It was obvious that there was not enough communication between the two organisations. It seems as if each of the two organisations was trying to run its own programmes, without the assistance of the other.

#### **6.5.4 THE ARTS THEATRE REPLACES THE WINDHOEK THEATRE**

The theatre building itself – showing various degrees of wear and tear – presented an opportunity for fresh blood to take over South West African theatre in its totality and revitalise the performing arts scene. As the stage had become splintered and dangerous for ballet the Arts Association, as lessee of the building, asked the SWAA in 1968 for the needed renovations (Levinson, 1979). Dirk Mudge, a local politician, was keen on making improvements to the theatre and requested information and suggestions from the Arts Association (File 35. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). The Arts Association was no longer involved in theatre, but requested if the SWAA could spend R10, 000 on the building (Levinson, 1979). The South African Government made funds available for the building of theatres in their major cities (Eichbaum 1992) and was thus compelled to treat South West Africa the same way in upgrading the theatre in Windhoek.

In 1970 the SWAA made the decision to build a new theatre (Madisia, 2007) around the old one with a budget of more than R1 million, virtually knocking down the entire theatre and rebuilding it (Venzke, 1997). It was decided to enlarge the theatre, but ironically the renovated theatre had a seating capacity of 473 (Selle, 1988), only 20 seats more than the original theatre when it was completed.

Reconstruction and enlargement of the Arts Theatre was scheduled for the beginning of 1971, but due to circumstances (not detailed) it was delayed until June. The work on the theatre was envisioned to take about two years after it closed on the 1st of June 1971 (Letter: AA to S. Niehaus, May 13, 1971. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). When it reopened it was planned that the theatre building would be administered by SWAPAC and no longer by the Arts Association.

The most important event for Windhoek in 1973 was the opening of the new theatre. In a letter to SWAPAC (March 29, 1972, File 56. NA, A.345.2/12.AA) the Arts Association suggested that the name of the theatre, namely Arts Theatre (a name used since 1960), be used for the newly renovated theatre in Leutweinstreet (Robert Mugabe today). The Arts Theatre was however renamed the Windhoek Theatre (Horne, 1985; Levinson, 1979). Today it is still called that or the NTN.

As a goodwill gesture to the Arts Association, and in view of the fact that the original theatre was initiated and largely financed by them, the SWAA and SWAPAC decided to ask them to plan the gala opening. That was an acknowledgement of the excellent and valuable work done by the Arts Association in the past (Administration of S.W.A. (Undated); Van der Walt, 1973, Program).

Given the privilege of organising the gala opening the Arts Association indicated that they would love to bring the opera *The Tales of Hoffmann* to Windhoek to be staged in the new theatre. The Nico Malan theatre in Cape Town was, however, twice the size of the Windhoek Theatre; transporting the set and cast would be a logistical nightmare, plus the exorbitant cost of R40, 000 to bring it to Windhoek made the plan impossible (File 57. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

The Arts Association eventually settled for Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* by CAPAC's Opera Company. The producer was Gregorio Fiasconaro with Desirée Talbot in the title role, while David Tidboald conducted the CAPAB orchestra for the event (Levinson, 1979). With their choice of the specific arts production for the opening the Arts Association made a bold statement: the Arts Association was committed to the arts, which include theatre, and would always have the interest of the public at heart. According to Olga Levinson, Windhoek have never seen this type of performance on such a scale and

the interest of the public was so great that when booking opened a long queue had formed, stretching all through the building and outside onto the pavement. All performances were soon sold out and irate members of the public who could not obtain tickets vented their frustration in the press. The production was another memorable highlight in our history (Levinson, 1979, p. 60).

The Gala Premiere was on April 10th, 1973. The ushers were dressed in Japanese garments and a beautiful souvenir programme was printed for the occasion. A hundred and fifty honoured guests were brought over from South Africa by air especially for the occasion (Levinson, 1979). The new theatre gave Windhoek “a magnificent and extremely well-equipped building, thanks to the generosity of the Administration” (Levinson, 1979, p. 60).

At the opening of the restructured theatre in 1973 Olga Levinson said

the story of this theatre is intimately linked with the history of the S.A. Association of Arts (S.W.A.). For twenty-five years now we have been responsible for most of the highlights in the cultural life of Windhoek, covering both the performing arts and fine arts (Levinson, 1973, Program).

The then Administrator of South West Africa, J.G. van der Walt too expressed the hope that the SWAA and the Arts Association would carry on working together. He expressed his thanks to the Arts Association for the valuable work they had done over the years to develop culture and the arts in the programme (Van der Walt, 1973, Program).

There were mixed feelings about the new theatre. The Arts Association was happy for the Windhoek public that they had an upgraded theatre with better stage facilities, but it was painful to bid farewell to the old Arts Theatre that, as Windhoek's very first theatre, had served the capital excellently. With the renovations completed control of the theatre was handed over by the SWAA to SWAPAC (Madisia, 2007; SWAPAC, 1979). The replacement of the old theatre building with a new one symbolised the shedding of the old dispensation for a new one.

The Arts Association was compelled in 1973 to forego the 25 years' lease which would have lapsed in 1985 (Letter: AA to Grobbelaar, October, 24, 1975. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). The SWAA made it clear that the Arts Association should confine itself in future to fine arts and leave the performing arts to SWAPAC (Levinson, 1979).

From this time on there were no theatre productions scheduled by the Arts Association. The choices and organisation of productions no longer rested with the amateur societies (indirectly

the Arts Association and the theatre groups), but exclusively with SWAPAC (Engelbrecht, 1973).

The new building, however, had some financial implications for the users, as prices were raised steeply. The Arts Association members, at least, received a discount on their tickets for the SWAPAC performances (File 35. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

On July 21, 1973 SWAPAC informed the Arts Association of the substantial increase, since tariffs for the hire of the theatre for performances were last adapted in 1967 (File 56. NA, A.345.2/12.AA):

Basic charge .....	R75 – 00	per performance
Ushers and Firemen .....	R20 – 00	“
Piano Rental .....	R20 - 00	“
Full Dress Rehearsal .....	R25 – 00	“

The theatre situation became complicated with the underlying tension between the Arts Association and SWAPAC. Sometimes an event was first offered by a group, who wanted to perform in Windhoek, to the Arts Association and only if they refused was it offered to SWAPAC who would accept it. Many artists knew the Arts Association to be the organiser of the arts in South West Africa from previous dealings and naturally turned to them. To diffuse this uneasiness, the Arts Association reiterated that the association was concerned with promoting “all the arts in South West including music, opera, ballet, but primarily interested in promoting Fine Arts” (Letter: AA to SWAPAC, June 26, 1973. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

A letter from Gerrit Geertsema, manager for theatre of PACOFS, to R.J. Engelbrecht, secretary of SWAPAC, about a festival–theatre production for 1971, revealed that SWAPAC’s intentions

for the theatre were similar to those of the Arts Association (Letter: Geertsema to Engelbrecht, October, 19, 1970. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). From this letter it can be detected that there were close relations between the Performing Arts Councils of the two countries; that SWAPAC wanted performances suitable for the rural areas and that instead of only using local productions, they imported theatre.

Since 1971 SWAPAC had had its own office, when Mr. R. J. Engelbrecht became the new secretary/treasurer of SWAPAC (SWAPAC, 1979, unnumbered) after Mr. de Wet left Windhoek to join the Bantu Development Corporation (File 56. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). It was, however, only in 1973 when SWAPAC took up their responsibilities as performing arts provider that more staff was appointed and the rebuilding of the theatre was completed (Van Biljon, 1982).

In 1974 SWAPAC appointed the first drama organiser, Johan Botha (ESAT, 2016; Horne, 1985). SWAPAC's first independent production was *Drie Engeltjies op Duiwelseiland* by Sam and Bell Spewack, directed by Johan Botha in 1974 (SWAPAC, 1979). Eight years after the establishment of SWAPAC the organisation was eventually operating in ways similar to the other Performing Arts Councils in South Africa. SWAPAC acquired its own professional acting company to develop productions and tour Namibia (Horne, 1985). This crucial development of a Namibian acting company placed the country's theatre under SWAPAC's management. The actors/directors for this company, like Antoinette Kellerman and Lida Botha, came from South Africa.

## **6.6 THE END OF THE ARTS ASSOCIATION'S INVOLVEMENT IN**

## **SOUTH WEST AFRICA'S THEATRE ACTIVITIES**

The transitional period brought extraordinary challenges for both the Arts Association and SWAPAC. SWAPAC was now fully in control of the theatre activities of the country (SWAPAC, 1979). Some of the Arts Association's members were still involved in theatre productions, but now for SWAPAC.

SWAPAC wrote a letter to the Arts Association stating clearly that SWAPAC has as its aim to develop the performing arts in South West Africa (Letter: SWAPAC to AA, October, 7, 1975. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). SWAPAC took theatre and music out of the hands of the Arts Association to have it "under direct South African control" (Diener & Graefe, 2001, p.211). The Arts Association was seen as a private initiative and not as an organisation created or funded by the SWAA. It was clear that SWAPAC was drawing a line and suggesting that the Arts Association bow out.

In the light of the new developments SWAPAC wanted to present the upcoming performances that the Arts Association had lined up and was therefore asking permission to proceed with the arrangements (File 57. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). SWAPAC decided to sugar-coat the effect of their suggestion by making the 'grand' gesture of assuring the Arts Association of its co-operation and that the association's help was much needed.

Another letter followed, dated October 8, 1975. This one touched on the financial assistance of SWAPAC (requested for musical performances by the Arts Association via letter, dated June 27, 1975) (File 57. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). Not only had SWAPAC taken three months to answer, but

they refused it on the grounds that both organisations were offering the same projects. SWAPAC offered an olive branch by saying:

The Executive of my Council has decided, however, that should you wish to present some of these projects on your own in the Theatre, we will be prepared to make a contribution of R50,00 per project towards the cost of the Theatre. This offer is limited to 2 projects per year for the next 2 years (1976/77 and 1977/78).

In a letter to Dr E.P. Grobbelaar, the director of SWAPAC, the Arts Association worded their feelings and views strongly:

It is with great disappointment that we have to acknowledge receipt... We are unable to share the sentiment expressed in your letter which seems to indicate that this Association acts in competition with your Association. We feel that there cannot really be any question of competition in the realm of performances offered to the public, especially if one correlates these events. We would in this connection like to point out that this Association has for almost 30 years sponsored concerts in South West Africa, and as much as we support the activities of SWAPAC cannot see why this Association should cease its activities... We do hope that you agree our respective associations should complement each other and work harmoniously together to enrich the cultural life of the Territory ... You will therefore understand that the present position is not a very happy one for this Association (Letter: AA to Grobbelaar, October, 24, 1975. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

The Arts Association ended their letter by listing those future musical performances they would be able to cancel and those for 1976 they could not. The association hoped that SWAPAC would show some goodwill in scheduling them into their programme.

Another bone of contention was the right to admittance. According to Terence Zeeman “Institutions were set up and financed by the colonialists to further reinforce the supremacy of white culture. The mechanisms of apartheid precluded the vast majority of Namibians from having access to institutionalized culture. The old SWAPAC (now NTN), SWABC (now NBC), the Conservatoire (now the College of the Arts) closed its doors to blacks” (Zeeman, 2000, p. 1).

The theatre reflected the political situation of South Africa and South West Africa. “Blacks were not allowed into the theatre as patrons” (Strauss, 1999, p. 89). SWAPAC, in line with the rigid South African apartheid laws, adhered to this. “European political dominance, therefore, was reinforced by cultural policies in which the theatre played an important role” (Banham, 1988, p. 906).

The banning of Non-Europeans from the theatre was unacceptable to the Arts Association who by now had persons of colour, like Dr. Ben Africa, and other Non-Europeans as members (Eins, Personal interview, June 13, 2012). Though they were Arts Association members, government facilities were off-limits to them (Eins, Personal interview, June 13, 2012). The Arts Association refused to adhere to the directive of the SWAA to operate for whites only (History of the National Art Gallery, 2001, p. 4). The association insisted that the Arts Center and theatre be open to anyone, whatever their race or colour (Venzke, 1997). During their reign the theatre was used by Non-Europeans gospel or school choirs on occasions, and Non-Europeans attended music concerts or theatre performances (Eins, 2012).

For the majority of the Arts Association’s existence it focused on the European groups, but there was never a restriction on who could be a member (Eins, 2012). The Arts Association became quite vocal on this: “One of the aims of the Arts Association is to provide an ideal, multi-racial platform where all language groups, individuals and nationalities can unite in a common aesthetic endeavour for the good of the community” (Levinson, 1983, p. 103). As a result the SWAA told the Arts Association that it was on its own (Venzke, 1997) as an association with no ties to the government. Financially the Arts Association was forced to survive on its own with the help of the private sector, but still kept up the full programme it had planned (Venzke, 1997).

With SWAPAC, on instruction from the SWAA, the situation was different. “Black Namibian performers had no access to the theatre, its programming, to its funding or to any subsidised training in theatre, just as they had no access to any institutional cultural controls” (New Namibian Plays I, 2000, Preface).

In 1979 the Arts Association’s members held a peaceful demonstration in front of the theatre building with candles to protest against the closure of the theatre to Non-European audiences and theatre practitioners (Eins, 2012). This rebellious behaviour of the Arts Association became an embarrassment to the main branch of the SAAA in South Africa and in 1980 they forced the Arts Association to become an independent association with no link to them (Venzke, 1997). The Arts Association became an independent body “in view of Namibia’s ‘impending’ independence and the political developments” (Levinson, 1983, p. 103). The Arts Association decided to remain an arts organisation with its own constitution in place (History of the National Art Gallery, 2001, p. 4). The Arts Association was appointed to manage the country’s National Arts Gallery that included the permanent collection the Arts Association collected since 1947 (Venzke, 1997). In 1993 the Arts Association started to record the valuable collection according to international standards (Venzke, 1997).

## **6.7 CONCLUSION**

SWAPAC was impressed with the enthusiastic theatre-going public that the Arts Association had developed in Windhoek, as well as the small, but adequate theatre building (Engelbrecht, 1973). The organisation built on the firm foundation laid by the Arts Association (Data, 1973). SWAPAC relied heavily on the experience and knowledge of the Arts Association and the members of the Arts Association’s committee still played important roles in the arts activities of

Windhoek. Many of them served in the SWAPAC committees and brought years of experience and knowledge of the Namibian arts field to the meetings.

Both the Arts Association and SWAPAC aimed to help the amateur theatre societies, especially as the principles guiding the performance of plays were the same for both the amateur and professional theatre. The Arts Association in the interim supported SWAPAC by doing all the administrative work and upkeep of the theatre building.

In a sense the creation of SWAPAC can be seen as the result of South Africa's intention to bring all spheres of the South West African society directly or indirectly under its control (Strauss, 1999). With institutions such as SWAPAC, South Africa through the SWAA, implemented policies and structures to cement white control over certain areas of public life. "Shortly after SWAPAC had severed ties with the AA and assumed full control over performing arts (1975), steps were taken to introduce the system of ethnic second tier authorities. According to this, key areas of cultural concern for whites were reserved, first by the SWAA and thereafter by the Administration for Whites" (Botha, 2016, p.1).

SWAPAC initially established itself as a semi-professional company as professional actors from South Africa and local amateur actors shared the stage in Windhoek in the same performance. Theatre was not a profession in South West Africa before the arrival of SWAPAC, after which a company with professional actors was established.

It was not easy for the Arts Association to withdraw from the performing arts and difficult to let go of the theatre building. The Arts Association had served mostly the Windhoek area, though many people came to the capital especially from nearby, over-nighting with family, friends or in

hotels, for specific productions. The Arts Association certainly indicated to SWAPAC that there was a definite need for theatre amongst the public, who came to expect regular theatre of a high standard.

Both organisations recreated the South African, European and American theatre for the Windhoek stage. In the process a unique South West African theatre, closer to heart and hearth, was neglected. During the period under discussion no South West African plays were developed, nor an own South West African style of theatre. Though the writing of texts was encouraged, developing local playwright skills never received enough attention from the Arts Association, nor from SWAPAC, to result in plays of value. For both organisations it was easier to use available texts from South Africa and abroad, many of which were translated.

Both the Arts Association and SWAPAC's theatre was entertainment, a leisure time diversion, a means to raise funds. It was high culture: Eurocentric, elitist notions of art. The style of theatre was largely conventional, rooted in European realism. Where the Arts Association put amateur theatre on a sound organisational footing SWAPAC took it to a professional level by importing actors and directors.

An article in *Scenaria*, a South African theatre magazine, stated that "from being merely a sponsor to touring artists SWAPAC has grown into a body capable of supplying the demands in virtually all spheres of the arts" (Goodall, 1979, p. 42). This was the role that the Arts Association had previously fulfilled. According to SWAPAC their aim was to get the public to think that the theatre (building) was really their own, and to be entertained there by SWAPAC (Goodall, 1979). This assurance to the people by SWAPAC was ironic as the Windhoek Theatre

was built by the Arts Association for the theatre lovers of South West Africa; and the Arts Association supplied entertaining theatre to the community.

What was needed was a different kind of theatre, a theatre independent of the government, so that the company would be able to experiment with a range of expressive possibilities such as the Alternative Theatre that was making an impact in other countries during that period. The audiences during the Arts Association's theatre involvement were not ready for controversial productions; neither had the association the financial means, expertise or the blessing of the Administration to stage such productions.

SWAPAC managed and used the Windhoek Theatre until with Namibia's looming independence "the Council became independent of the South African Performing Arts Councils, and in 1989 was incorporated as an Association Not For Gain and renamed the National Theatre of Namibia" (Horne, 1985, p. 102).

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **PERSONS WHO INFLUENCED THE THEATRE OF THE ARTS ASSOCIATION**

**It is remarkable how virtuous and generously disposed everyone is at a play** (William Hazlitt).

#### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

Over the years there were numerous persons involved with theatre in South West Africa. To exclude names of people who made a particular contribution to theatre in Windhoek will be in a sense unfair, but the practicing of theatre can be compared to a machine. Some parts are bigger than other; others might be smaller. Each part is essential to the working of the machine. There were many local and foreign artists and art lovers who made to a greater or lesser extent a contribution to the theatrical arts. Each person's contribution, however small it might be, contributed to the lively, vibrant and colorful history of theatre of South West Africa.

As not every person can be discussed this dissertation will suffice with a few outstanding personalities, mainly those involved in the establishment of an own Arts Association and

members who contributed to the theatre practices of the association. Each member of the Arts Association had in his/her own way tried to promote and develop the arts with their own special talent; be it in acting, directing, organising or managing. Amongst the people who brought along change there were some that took the lead, namely Emma Hoogenhout, Olga Levinson, Otto Schroeder and Joseph Reiter (S.W.A./Namibië Vandag, 1981, pp. 99-100).

## **7.2 FOUNDER MEMBER OF THE ARTS ASSOCIATION**

### **7.2.1 ELIZABETH EMMA HOOGENHOUT (1892 – 1962)**

Emma Hoogenhout, neé Muller, was born December 07, 1892 in South Africa. She was married to Colonel Petrus Imker Hoogenhout. He was appointed from April 1, 1943 to succeed David G. Conradie as Administrator of South West Africa (Dierks, 2004; S.W.A. Annual, 1977). As his wife, Emma Hoogenhout, accompanied him and they were welcomed during the customary garden party. Until November 30, 1951 the Hoogenhout couple lived in Windhoek during the political disturbing years (Pretorius, 1977, p. 79). Both husband and wife had a profound effect on the social life of the growing Windhoek (Moller, 1989, p. 30) and supported and contributed to the art activities.

She was the Benevolent Society's honorary-president and attracted much interest and funds for the charity (Emma, 1947). According *Die Suidwester* of April 20, 1945 she was the under-provincial leader of the Voortrekkers, an Afrikaans cultural organisation similar to the Boys and Girls

Scouts. Her involvement with the community was greatly appreciated and in 1946 a local primary school was named after her (Emma, 1947).

In June 1947 she was instrumental in the establishment of the Windhoek Music Society. This woman was so versatile and interested in all that was artistic and aesthetic that it was no surprise that she was also one of the founder members of the Hikae Flower and Garden club in Windhoek.

She was president of the Windhoek Teachers and Parents Society. Under her hand many children's concert and exhibition were launched successfully (S.W.A. Annual 1977), e.g., November 21, 1946 the Windhoek High School pupils, under the guidance of adult direction, gave a variety concert. The one act play *Birds of a Feather* was performed. She was patron of various societies and organisations, even of a special school in Cape Town. All these positions of authority were testimony of her intense interest in the community. Her strong personality helped to influence people in participating and contributing to different causes.

It was especially in the area of arts that she found an involvement that brought her immense pleasure and she regularly arranged exhibitions. She made an earnest appeal to the Windhoek community to work together – especially the different language groups. The arts were seen as one area where they could unite and contribute to the country's culture.

In spite of the difficult circumstances after World War II, especially in the economic sphere, Emma Hoogenhout saw the desirability of an Arts Association as of vital importance for the spiritual and cultural wellbeing of the country. The growing economy and the increasing number

of cultivated adults that entered the country to work here, and most importantly the increasing art awareness among the inhabitants of Windhoek, was inspiring.

She started important projects and made sure they were executed. The Emma Hoogenhout Primary School was named after her. She maintained an amazingly high standard in what she did. Over and over she came forward with practical ideas on how to overcome the many obstacles the societies and organisations had to face.

The establishment of the local Arts Association in October 1947 was under her leadership (Madisa, 2007) and the involvement was a magnificent experience to her (Pretorius 1977). Her inspirational impetus set the pace for the establishment of the organisation (Davis, 1975; Bravenboer, 2001). After its creation the Arts Association had immediate effect in Windhoek and the flurry of ballet, music concerts, arts exhibitions and theatre, changed the town into a cultural haven. National and international art opened artistic doors for the local artists and audiences. The Administrator's pair was the patrons of the new association (Bedrywighede, 1947). As the Arts Association was so dear to her she was involved and her practical advice was invaluable to the growing association. The unbelievable enthusiasm and cooperation under the local art lovers astounded her (Pretorius 1977).

A fellow art lover, Max Pretorius, referred to her as "Queen Emma" (1977, p.79), and claims that to have known Emma Hoogenhout "was to hitch your wagon to a star" (1977, p. 79). It seems as if she enjoyed much respect and her opinions were held in high esteem (Möller, 1989). The departure of the administrator and his wife in November 1951 was a blow for Windhoek and South West Africa. She left, however, with the knowledge that she left a legacy with the local

Windhoek community as a cultural leader who had a vision. Emma Hoogenhout died September 26, 1962 in South Africa at the age of 69.

### **7.2.2 OTTO EDWARD SCHROEDER (1913 – 1975)**

Otto Edward Henry Schroeder was born in London in 1913. He was a young, gifted free-lance fine arts artist educated in England and Germany (Roos, 1974) where he studied Commerce. He practiced art in his free time. He was sent to Cape Town in March 1939 by the German export business whom he worked for in Hamburg (Levinson, 1976). Soon he was established in Cape Town art circles and became tutor to private students in painting. He ignored the South African politics and was outspoken about contentious matters, causing some of his students to leave him.

World War II caused him to be interned for a period in the Transvaal, in South Africa. After the war he came to Windhoek in 1947 as an outstandingly gifted professional portrait painter (Davis, 1975; S.W.A. Annual, 1977). In 1948 he had his first one-man exhibition in Windhoek for which he received much praise.

Schroeder immediately, after his settlement, started to feel the lack of an organised art life. He, in addition, felt strongly that the gifted artists in the country must receive acknowledgement for their work. He believed in the latent art potential in the country and that it was only waiting to be developed (S.W.A. Annual, 1977). His strong conviction made him one of the founder members of the Arts Association (Madisa, 2007). With the steadfast support of his wife, Lucie, who was one of the first Arts Association members, he developed his ideas of a lively arts organisation in South West Africa into a reality.

He was the first secretary of the Arts Association (Bedrywighede, 1947; Committee, 1947; History National Art Gallery, 2009; Levinson, 1979). This work was done with diligence and commitment. For many years he and the rest of the enthusiastic and committed committee worked unremittingly to fulfill the aims of the Arts Association.

Schroeder had a dynamic personality (Davis, 1975) and was very inspirational. His inextinguishable enthusiasm was of great benefit to the young association and Windhoek's youth. With the same dedication he revealed in establishing the Arts Association, Schroeder moved to establish the Youth and Art Centre in Windhoek.

After his success with an art school for children at the Zoo Café, which he established with the help of the Arts Association, Schroeder turned to the under-privileged children in the township, Katutura, to establish the same youth project there (S.W.A. Annual, 1977). He developed the Lions International Art School for black children with the help of the Lions International group. He was determined to stimulate the creativity of the young children, to expand their imagination and knowledge and to give them an interest outside the often dismal home life many of the children led. His vision and staunch approach to children's art bore fruit when it led to a very successful exhibition of native art from South West Africa that was taken abroad and to the USA (Davis, 1977a).

In 1962 Otto Schroeder and his family left Windhoek when he accepted a post as professor in Creative Fine Art at the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa (Roos, 1974). He was an important link for the Arts Association. He was a member of the South African Council of Artists and designed some of South West Africa's stamps (South African Who's Who, 1958). He was a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.

Part of his legacy and influence is to be seen in the area of the theatre. Schroeder decided that as an art form children's theatre had much to offer the children in Windhoek. He wanted children to participate no longer passively, but share in the action. It was felt "that children living in large cities had few opportunities for self-expression and this was directly responsible for aggression and delinquency. A children's theatre by children for children, it was believed, could provide an alternative outlet for children of all ages" (Greyvenstein, 1989, p. 32). Schroeder followed this approach to theatre for the young: to explore and have appropriate enriching experiences using their natural talents and informal environment of pretending. This sharing theatre group experience was an antidote for the formal Eisteddfod where only a few children could receive a prize. His untimely death in June, 1975 in South Africa was a great loss to the Arts Association and the art community.

### **7.2.3 JOSEPH J. 'PEP' REITER**

Reiter opened the only art dealership in Windhoek soon after the Second World War (Davis, 1975; Roos, 1974). It was never flourishing as after the war the economy of the country took years to recover, but offered the art lover a haven (Levinson, 1979). He and his wife, Otilie Nitzsche, were both keen photographers (S.W.A. Annual 1977). The latter made her name when some of her photographic work was exhibited in July 1947 in Windhoek (Levinson, 1979).

Talks between Joseph Reiter and Otto Schroeder revealed a need for an arts society which could bring about appreciation for local artists (Levinson, 1979). They have discussed this issue and when Emma Hoogenhout indicated that she was interested in their idea of an arts society, they immediately gathered other art enthusiasts (Davis, 1975; Bravenboer, 2001). It was Reiter who proposed the exhibition which took place during the Smuts visit.

Joseph Reiter was a founder member of the Arts Association (Madisa, 2007). His business, Nitzsche -Reiter, acted as a booking agent where the public could obtain tickets for shows (Art Lectures, 1949). As the Arts Association had no booking office before 1960 this was a much needed service.

For many years he was a committee member and together with Olga Levinson and Hans Heuner he served on the Theatre Committee of the Arts Association (File 2. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). Reiter was also instrumental in the planning of the theatre building (Annual Report of the Arts Association 1955). After the erection of the theatre he was still actively involved in the industry.

#### **7.2.4 SANNIE VISSER**

Visser played an important role in the realm of art and culture, especially in the area of theatre. She was a local Afrikaans novelist who had just published her fourth novel *Lena* in 1947. Visser was also a journalist who wrote regular articles and reviews on the theatre performances for the Afrikaans newspaper *Die Suidwester*. It is interesting that Sannie Visser's articles often appeared in both the Afrikaans newspapers; maybe to ensure that the content reached all those it should. At times she contributed to the English newspapers as well.

She was an enthusiastic art lover and used her writing skills to further the cause of arts in South West Africa. Before the official establishment of the Arts Association in October 1947, Visser wrote a bunch of articles on arts to introduce and promote the idea of an association among the local public. She wrote a long article on theatre under the significant caption *Aspoester van die*

*Kunste: Die Toneel* [Cinderella of the Arts: The Theatre] to prepare the public (Visser, 1948a). This article highlighted the rise of an own art life, and that there were activities, but no organised theatre.

Visser was one of the Arts Association's founder members. She was also the first secretary of the association (Committee, 1947; History National Art Gallery, 2009; Levinson, 1979). She was well-known in Windhoek and dabbled in directing as well as acting at regular intervals, e.g., The Kruger Day Celebrations in Windhoek where she organised an evening of poems and sketches, participating in it as well (Krugerdagviering, 1952). When the English theatre group staged the comedy *Brown Sugar* as their contribution to the theatre in Windhoek it was the first English production in Windhoek for many years. The play was carefully chosen to suit the general public's taste. Sannie Visser, secretary of the Arts Association, had decided, on recommendation of Japie van Niekerk, to handle the directing herself (Letter: Visser to AA, August 14, 1948. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

Visser participated in the 1952 Van Riebeeck Festival. She set up symbolic historic portrayals, as well as *Suid-Afrika, Bruid van die Toekoms* [South Africa, Bride of the Future] with Mrs. Loteryman and Jose Esterhuizen, which was the highlight of the evening (Fees in Windhoek, 1952; Hoogtepunte, 1952). She was part of the cast in the performance of an extraction out of the South African poet, N.P. van Wyk's *Die Dieper Reg* [The Deeper Justice] (Groot skare, 1952; Hoogtepunte, 1952). The atmosphere was sanctified and the audience was enthralled (In feesstemming, 1952).

She was instrumental in the forming of the Afrikaans Theatre Group and served on their Theatre Committee for years with Otto Schroeder, and a Mrs. Brener. It was evident from Visser's articles that there were developments in the area of theatre.

Sannie Visser represented the Arts Association in establishing new branches of the association in other areas of the country. She was very successful in this, e.g., three days after Swakopmund became a branch, Keetmanshoop in the south of South West Africa, became the next new branch (Bedrywigheid, 1948).

Her articles revealed the importance of theatre and the public's much-needed support to both theatre and the Arts Association. She made a huge contribution in keeping the inhabitants aware of the arts. Her passion and enthusiasm for theatre made her a valuable member of the Arts Association.

### **7.2.5 OLGA LEVINSON (1918–1989)**

For more than 18 years (1957 - 1976) Olga Levinson was the president of the Arts Association. Her involvement with the arts in Windhoek however started long before this position.

As mentioned she was born in 1918 as Olga Cohen in the Transvaal (Gauteng) in South Africa and studied at the Wits University in Johannesburg. She majored in English and Arts. "She was a Fellow and Licentiate of Dramatic Arts, Trinity College (London)" (Biographies, 2009, p. 1) and she "at one time studied Dramatic Art, and has the degrees A.T.C.L. and L.T.C.L." (Shaw's, 1952, p. 8). Her training and acting skills would later be a tremendous asset to the Arts

Association. She has won many awards for her dramatic art (Biographies, 2009). She took an intense interest in the theatre and one of her hobbies was theatre going.

Levinson married Jack Louis Levinson in 1943. The couple was active in the community and shared a love for the arts. For the period 1963 - 1965 he was the mayor of Windhoek. From within her position as mayor's wife Olga supported and promoted the Arts Association whenever there was a chance (Biographies, 2009). They lived in the Heinitzburg Castle which stood on a hill overlooking Windhoek; with their son Orde (Biographies, 2009; Jenny, 1976).

Levinson was active in journalism. She regularly wrote articles and reviews for *The Windhoek Advertiser* as a reporter. She was an avid writer and published a number of books, e.g., *Call Me Master* (1961). The country was very dear to her heart and she wrote numerous popular books on South West Africa: *South West Africa* (1976), *Story of Namibia* (1978), *Diamonds in the Desert: The Story of August Staunich and His Time* (1983) and *Adolf Jentsch* (1973) – the latter was changed into a film script, capturing Adolf Jentsch's work in a documentary (Biographies, 2009). Her play *Forcible Love* was based on the life of the Namibian artist John Muafangejo and staged in 1991 (Rubin, 1997). That she loved the country, theatre and the arts in general with an unbelievable passion is clear from the amount of literature she produced.

She contributed to the arts awareness in the country by writing various articles to cultural journals, e.g., *The Cultural Life of Windhoek* in the *Lantern*, December 1967 and *Willi Sander: South West's Best Known Architect* in *SWA Yearbook 1959*. Multi-talented as she was, she was active as a free-lance broadcaster at the SABC where she produced the 'Woman's World' series (Biographies, 2009).

She was a culture-lover with refined taste that even before the establishment of the organisation, was active in theatre. Olga Levinson and Alwyn van Heerden organised and staged *Karakul Kapers* for two years in the S.A.R. Club (Karakul, 1949a). The original and amusing variety shows carried a local flavour and were so very popular among Windhoek's inhabitants that it was repeated on public demand (Visser, 1948e; Verskeidenheid, 1948).

Her warm, flexible and gregarious personality made her absolutely the right person to be president of an active arts association. She was highly respected by her colleagues and served the association with tremendous integrity. "As a wealthy patron of the arts, she was the 'grande dame' of Windhoek's high society from the 1950's to the 1970' " (Biographies, 2009, p. 1). She was an excellent administrator and invaluable on committees. The arts flourished under her enthusiastic leadership and increasing, dedicated guidance.

Another characteristic of Olga Levinson was that she possessed managerial skills and could organise. She was a strong leader which made everybody want to do their best and was of great help to the organisation with counsel and guidance. Her being practical helped to solve the various problems the Arts Association encountered. Her thorough devotion was an inspiration and her ingenuity and unflagging loyalty to the Arts Association made her a wonderful role model.

Levinson had a phenomenal talent for networking, using her dynamic and dominant personality to network and to promote the Arts Association and theatre. She attended as many performances she could and afterwards followed it up with making contacts with directors, actors and playwrights. She attended everything that was arts related.

After the establishment of the Arts Association she made a huge contribution in the theatre committee (File 56. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). When the first amateur theatre festival for Windhoek was announced (Groot toneelfees, 1949) she represented the English Theatre Group on the festival committee. Together with Helene Avis from Outjo, who represented FATSSA and Mr. Gaum of the Afrikaans Theatre Group, Olga Levinson organised the theatre event.

Levinson was an active and talented participant in the plays produced by the local English Theatre Group of the Arts Association. The plays staged on 20th and 21st September 1949 by the English and German Theatre Group were the very first plays in Windhoek since 1939 (File 56. NA, A.345.2/12.AA; Visser, 1948). The hilarious comedy *Russian Salad* was under the direction of Jack Levinson, the husband of Olga, (File 56. NA, A.345.2/12.AA) and she acted the part of the parliament member's wife. Amongst the actors of *Russian Salad* Olga Levinson was outstanding while the acting of the rest ranged from fair to less convincing (Audante, 1949).

She continued to participate with flair and enthusiasm in the local amateur activities e.g., the Arts Association's Soir Culturel François evening. It was a play reading of two extracts from Molière's comedy *Le Medecin Malgré Lui* (The Physician in spite of himself) by the members of the English Theatre Group. Levinson did the narration and directing thereof.

In the area of raising funds for the Arts Association Levinson was exceptionally creative and innovative. She was a very sociable person and created opportunities for the public to take notice of the arts and its association. The Three Arts Ball was such a fundraising event. Another ingenious way of raising funds came from her planning: safaris to all corners of southern Africa to raise funds and for artistic purposes. Nothing that could benefit the association was too much work for her.

As president of the Arts Association (1957 to 1976) she dedicated her talents, energy and time to the organisation and initiated the building of the theatre and arts gallery in Windhoek. Under her efficient leadership, and with the support of the committee members, the Arts Association was developed to one of the most active and efficient organisations, not only in South West Africa, but also in the Southern Africa (Mossolow, 1976; Mossolow, 1967).

Even during her holidays she was in constant contact with the Arts Association. She made arrangements, made contact with artists or planned for future attractions (File 35, NA, A.345.2/12.AA). Olga Levinson send word, while in Cape Town, to Mrs. Dahlman that the cultural attaché of the British Embassy offered the actress Rosalinde Fuller at a nominal fee to the Arts Association (Letter: Levinson to AA, January 17, 1967. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). She felt that it was a good time to bring her to Windhoek. Levinson was constantly organising activities for the association. She was an exceptional ambassador for the Arts Association.

At one stage in 1959 the then secretary, Talitha Boehm, commented to a Peta about Olga Levinson (Letter: Boehm to Peta, January 17, 1967. NA, A.345.2/12.AA):

She was in a frantic hurry, as usual, with many social commitments, especially this time where her first book *Call me Master* was launched. It is rather amusing; a personal story of South West and its queer people. I was glad that she did come back after all – I had given it up already, as she had been away for two months and many things were awaiting her decision here (File 35. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

Though the Arts Association received much of her attention, she was active in many other areas, e.g., she was adjudicator at Miss SWA Pageant. She was constantly in demand as an artist, e.g., she gave a recital at the Language Festival on behalf of the English community.

Under her inspiring leadership the Windhoek public was exposed to the best imported theatre the Arts Association could afford to bring to South West Africa. Theatre was stimulated to a level which scarcely equaled before or since.

In 1960 the Arts Association, with Levinson at the helm, embarked upon their biggest enterprise. They initiated the building of the Art Centre with theatre, galleries and studios. As the driving force behind the scenes she played a leading role in the erection of the theatre according to the minutes of the meetings (Files 56, 57. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

With the establishment of SWAPAC in 1966 Levinson was on the council where she served as a board member of the first executive committee of the SWAPAC (Mossolow, 1967). She was the chairperson for the opera and ballet (Van Biljon, 1982).

Eventually Olga Levinson resigned as president after 18 years of service with Nana Wagner succeeding her (Levinson, 1979). On December 01, 1969 a donor's party was held at 18:00 in the garden of the Arts Centre. It was to mark her services as President of the Arts Association and in appreciation of all she has done for the arts in South West Africa. She was made an Honorary Life President of the Arts Association. In her own words Levinson said: "It is with pride and gratitude that I recollect many of the events described in this history, as I had the honour of serving on the committee of the Arts Association soon after its inception, and of having been its President for almost two-thirds of its existence - (1957 to 1976)" (Levinson, 1979, p. 73).

She was truly a remarkable person – the researcher has met her personally – she radiated life, energy, inspiration and enthusiasm. Olga Levinson was one of the most prominent figures in the

arts of Windhoek. She admirably captured the spirit of the Association. Without her the Arts Association might never achieved what they did. Her energy, perseverance and passionate love for South West Africa drove her to aspire for a superior culture –even in the barren desert.

Olga Levinson died in 1989 of lung cancer in Cape Town, South Africa. She will be remembered for the great influence she had for so many years on the Arts Association.

### **7.2.6 W.E.VON KLEIST**

Von Kleist was active in the theatre activities of the Arts Association and worked hard to stimulate an interest in specifically children's theatre. Educating the youth was an important aim for the Arts Association. In her mission she was quite successful.

The involvement of the youth in the various art activities was of great importance to Von Kleist and the Arts Association. She was the Chairperson of the Windhoek Little Theatre and the Chairperson of SWAPAC's Ballet Committee. Von Kleist organised several puppet shows in Windhoek (see 5.2.4 Children and Puppet theatre).

Mrs. von Kleist became the driving force of entertainment for children in Windhoek. She was involved in the Children's Theatre which began to offer regular performances to children, using an approach that was simplistic and effective.

In 1970 she became involved in the production of the performance *Berei in die Woestyn* [Prepared in the Desert], a verse drama from one of South Africa's major poets, N.P. Van Wyk Louw. The directing was done by her (Letter: Von Kleist to AA, November 17, 1960. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

## **7.3 DIRECTORS / ACTORS**

Alan Wykes (1965) said that “An amateur ... has a right to his personal pleasure in his hobby. But when his efforts are part of a collective enterprise like dramatics the paying audience has a right to some pleasure too” (1965, p. 8). The Arts Association felt both the audiences and actors were extremely important. The population of Windhoek was so small that it was inevitable that it was many times the same people (see Appendix G) that were involved in the theatre activities.

Most of the amateur directors and actors were well versed in more than one language and could therefore act for different theatre groups. This certainly ensured unity among them. Many of the actors were even experienced in doing double duty in being actor-directors. The actor often was director, playwright, manager and stagehand – all in one.

The casts were mainly made up of the usual few amateurs available at that particular period who acted primarily as a result of a passion for the art of the theatre. During the years some of the local actors have carved a name for themselves, e.g., Mrs. Sievers and Mrs. De Waal. These more experienced people were able to give guidance and advice to the young promising actors.

At the Committee Meeting of May 02, 1950 Sannie Visser raised the possibility of engaging a well known actor or actress to cast and produce plays in Windhoek. On the suggestion of Visser it was decided to refer this matter to the various theatre groups for their opinions (File 2. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). This was an idea that would later be utilized by the Arts Association.

It was a heavy blow for the theatre life in Windhoek every time when an active actor, often a couple even, left the town. Theatre life suffered such a blow when Johan Brewis, and his wife, Marie Herselman, a talented actress herself, left the capital in 1948 to return to the Union to join the theatre company of Pikkie Uys (Toneelverlies, 1948).

On July 5, 1950 The Windhoek Advertiser announced that Charles ‘Tommy’ Thomson was transferred to Cape Town. This was surely a setback to the theatre community of Windhoek as he was one of the leading theatrical persons and an excellent director (Olivia, 1950c). In the middle of July 1950 the art community had another setback when they lost a talented singer and actor. The well-known Alwyn van Heerden died unexpectedly after an operation. The young man, who studied music in Italy, came to Windhoek in 1947. He was not only well-known, but well-loved too (Alwyn van Heerden, 1950; Heengegaan, 1950). He was especially known for his items in the charity concerts and events such as a fundraising for, e.g., polio. His beautiful voice was not the only reason for him to be on the stage; he had good acting skills as well (Karakul, 1949b).

There were numerous typical problems that amateur theatre groups had to cope with and caused actors to despair about staging productions. By far the most important hurdle to overcome was the availability of talent. Adequate, willing directors were scarce. Theatre groups often had to fall back upon the same directors. The same was applicable for actors. Suitable actors were not always available due to work and family reasons. The argument against amateur players is that they cannot be depended upon for continuous work throughout. There is also a reasonable limit to the number of performances they can be asked to stage, thus limiting the theatre to occasional productions.

When the three act comedy, *Love’s a Luxury* by Guy Paxton and Edmond V. Hoile, were staged in August 20 and 21, 1956 after two months of rehearsals, it revealed interesting facts (Letter: Krummeck to AA, June 18, 1956. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

From the cast it is clear that family members supported each other by being together in productions. There were no less than three couples in the mentioned comedy. Actors also doubled as stage technicians, e.g. Joan Krummeck handled the make-up and acted.

Neville B. Krummeck	--- Director
Joan Krummeck	--- Mrs. Harris and Make up
Margot Opperman	--- Molly
Bernard Opperman	--- Stage Manager
Johan Lambrechts	--- Dick Pentwick
Cynthia Lambrechts	--- Prompt

Most productions used a prompter for such an occurrence (File 23. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). This was due to under-rehearsed performances with actors not knowing their lines. The amateurs were not so skilled in remembering the words, but taking into account the difficulty to arrange rehearsals that could fit all the amateurs, it is small wonder that some actors were less than sure of their lines.

For most of the local actors and directors “only training had been in the theatre itself, but they prepared the way for the professionals who followed” (Fletcher, 1994, p. 149). The Association really tried, with the limited resources at their disposal, to support the various theatre groups’ directors, actors and stage personnel.

#### **7.4 STAGE PERSONNEL**

South West African theatre lacked trained directors and stage personnel. None of the amateurs were skilled in theatre management or backstage activities. Most of them knew nothing about

running a theatre company or how to handle the technical aspects. It turned out that in the end everybody in the group, at one stage or another, handled about everything. Most theatre groups' actors doubled as stage personnel. They became skilled in devising their own decor, costumes, make-up, sound and lights. Many became experts through necessity.

From time to time very talented people resided in Windhoek. One such an interesting person was the skilled Hans Ringeisen of whom the English newspaper, the Windhoek Advertiser, wrote "It was interesting to learn that the very excellently fashioned wig and beard worn by Lou van Yck were specially made for him by Mr. Hans Ringeisen" (Olivia, 1950c, p. 6). The article elaborated further that the theatrical circles especially will be pleased to know that Mr. Ringeisen studied this sort of work overseas, and obtained several diplomas for doing wigs, plaits and beards in Berlin. He also obtained experience in all kinds of stage make-up.

Persons like Ringeisen were not only an asset because of their skills, but also for the expertise and knowledge they could pass on to others in the amateur theatre in their environment. This way they contributed to the development of the theatre. The Arts Association was delighted to have such expertise in their midst.

When such a talented person left the country again, it truly was a terrible loss for the community. It was surely a loss for the theatre community when Richard Adler relocated to Cape Town. He was well-known in Windhoek as a stage manager and many a production could speak of his excellent work (Olivia, 1950b).

## **7.5 CONCLUSION**

Of the numerous persons who contributed to the theatre activities of the Arts Association over the years, many of them were never mentioned by name. They were the people behind the scenes that ensured that the productions ran smoothly. Others fleetingly graced the stage as actors and directors. Each of them contributed knowledge, skills, time, money, but above all some soul, to the Arts Association's theatre.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **THE ARTS ASSOCIATION: AN ASSESSMENT OF ITS CONTRIBUTION**

#### **TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEATRE IN NAMIBIA**

**Enthusiasm is the greatest asset in the world. It beats money and power and influence. It is no more or less than faith in action** (Henry Chester).

This study would not be complete without an evaluation of the Arts Association's contribution to the development of Namibian theatre. Their mission to lay an organised foundation for theatre should be appreciated as well as the pioneering work done to stimulate the cultural life of South West Africa and especially Windhoek (SWA/Namibië, 1981). The Arts Association, albeit colonial, made the theatre possible for future generations.

The Arts Association has a unique place in the history of Namibian theatre. The theatre involvement of the Arts Association covered a period of 20 years. During this period the Association was the sole supporter, organiser and sponsor of the theatre on many different levels. Those years of involvement in theatre gives a definite representation of the immense contribution that this Association made to this art genre. Under the Association the theatre experienced progress. They insisted on the highest standards and creativity in every production. They encouraged and set standards of excellence which inspired the theatre groups to deliver quality work. The Association was a stimulus and a pioneer in the theatre area. The Arts Association felt that "theatre can best be promoted where there is one theatre Association. That Association would be accountable to all affiliate theatre groups to carry forward their objectives and implement the plans of action" (Matusse, 1999, p. 52).

The Arts Association believed, and hoped, that their organisation would be the beginning of better things to come for the arts. After their existence there was never a single organization which had done, with so little at their disposal, so much for the arts, and theatre in particular.

This organization not only fulfilled its responsibilities, going above and beyond the call of duty, but achieved immeasurable heights in all the arts spheres.

The SA Association of Arts (SWA) can look back with pride on three remarkable decades of valuable work - pioneering, activating, stimulating and fostering the cultural life of South West Africa, and Windhoek in particular. We are the only branch of the Association and are also unique in our sponsorship of musical and other cultural activities (Levinson, 1979, p. 7).

Their involvement caused “a veritable renaissance of the arts in Windhoek” (Levinson, 1979, p. 12). The involvement in all the different art genres made the Association truly a unique arts association. It became a unique organization with no counterpart in the whole of Southern Africa. “The scope of the Association’s activities was enlarged in order to obtain greater membership by widening the interest in it. Had it been confined to fine arts alone there would have been a very limited membership” (Levinson, 1979, p. 13).

“Firstly we are virtually a branch only in name and carry on our work completely independent. This work embodies all the arts as well as other activities” (Letter: AA to SAAA, August 08, 1966. NA, A.345.2/12.AA). That statement underlined the unique characteristics of the Association and their vision for South West Africa’s arts. “ — acting completely independently and with greatly extended activities that not only included fine arts but also the performing arts, safaris and even a film society” (Levinson, 1979, p. 12). This came by partly because of the great distance between Windhoek and Cape Town, but mainly because of the South West African’s branch’s unique character. At one stage the Association revealed that no representative of their

Association had ever been present at any Annual General Meeting and that the only communication between them and the main branch was on issues with regard to exhibitions (Letter: AA to SAAA, August 08, 1966. NA, A.345.2/12.AA).

From the beginning the Arts Association realised that it would be necessary to run the association as a non-profit organisation; with volunteers to organise the arts.

It was a small number of dedicated art-loving people who as committee members of the South West African branch of the Arts Association tackled a formidable task and achieved results beyond the most optimistic expectations with little means, great enthusiasm and in a truly pioneering spirit (Levinson, 1979, p. 5).

Nana Wagner, President of The Arts Association in 1977 said in her Foreword to Olga Levinson's booklet, *Our first thirty years*, that "The foundations of the Arts Association were laid on solid ground by people who knew what art is all about, by people who cared" (Levinson, 1979, p. 5).

The Arts Association was forced into self-reliance by using creativity and inventiveness. To supplement the little income they had, the Arts Association was ingenious when it came to fundraising. "One of the most successful and popular annual fund-raising events proved to be the Christmas Market, which gave talented artists (particularly women) the opportunity to market their arts and crafts" (Bravenboer, 2001, p. 237). Once again the Association was able to combine fundraising with an opportunity to help the artists. The safaris and Christmas Market not only set a trend, but made a valuable contribution to the support of the arts activities.

The establishment of the SAAA (SWA), better known as the Arts Association in Windhoek, was because of a definite need for an organisation who could take the lead in developing the arts. They did not work for personal gain, or fame – only for the exclusive benefit of their community. One of the purposes of the Association was to advance, promote, and generally foster and encourage the amateur theatre in Windhoek. The Arts Association was not focused on profits alone. In the beginning much of what was earned by the various theatre performances was donated to charity, but later every cent that came into the coffers, was spent on amateur and imported productions, facilities, renovations or equipment for the arts community. The Arts Association created a platform for the arts with the help of willing donors, of whom many were the artists and committee members themselves. Being involved as members of the Arts Association gave the public a sense of ownership.

Under the Arts Association the theatre blossomed from sporadic recreational performances by fly-by-night amateur societies to organised amateur productions that were of a more professional standard. “For two decades the Arts Association has been responsible for almost every major event in the cultural calendar” (Levinson, 1967, p. 43) — encompassing both the performing arts as well as the fine arts (Bravenboer, 2001; Levinson, 1979). The Arts Association was initiator and organizer, supporter and sponsor of those activities.

When taking into account that the theatre was not their only arts business – in fact music, ballet and the fine arts were a much bigger priority to them than theatre (Uit die Kunsakker, 1951; Data, 1973), what was achieved in theatre is daunting. The reason for the theatre taking a slightly less important position might lie in the fact that more people were involved in the other arts activities as it was easier to practice as individuals. The Association, however, undertook to

provide theatrical entertainment such as productions, play readings and lectures as part of their arts mission and did that with diligence and commitment.

They understood that theatre plays an important role in the socio-cultural life of the country and supported it with just as much passion as they did with the other art areas. From the amount of theatre produced over the nearly twenty years it was evident that the Arts Association never shied away from doing their utmost for the theatre.

From the beginning the organisation's management of theatre was in the hands of theatre lovers and amateur theatre practitioners, some with very little organisational skills, but with much determination to make theatre a successful undertaking. On January 5, 1948 *The Windhoek Advertiser* reported "it would be a formidable task to foster truly appreciative audiences and to maintain their growing interest" (p. 10). Based on the evidence of the Arts Association's theatre activities they indeed succeeded.

Initially there was a definite lack of theatre consciousness in Windhoek and no truly sustained theatre life. The lack of suitable dramas, adequate venues, expert technical knowledge and skilled theatre practitioners contributed to a deficiency in theatre. The Arts Association knew they had to have regular audiences to keep them in business. They developed methods to ensure audiences, and an income, by getting the Administrator as a patron, regular membership drives, a subscription-system, season tickets, and advertisements in the programmes. Many of their initiatives were either copied or adopted from what South African theatres were doing, with a few ideas of their own, e.g. as targeting prominent persons and companies for donations. Their approach was systematic and determined. Lectures, theatre courses and film evenings might not have supplemented the budget with much, but they served a certain clientele, promoted the Arts

Association's name. The Arts Association addressed these issues with flair and determination in their effort to promote theatre. For the first time, under the auspices of the Arts Association, a revitalised theatre life existed, due to performances by theatre groups.

When the Arts Association was established theatre facilities were non-existent. The only stages that were available were at schools, churches or hotel halls that lacked even the most basic amenities such as dressing rooms or lighting. Those temporary stages' décor and properties were extremely basic: in most cases a raised stage, a curtain and ordinary house lights. Backstage was mostly handled by the committee members, the actors, or their friends and family.

Initially there was no custom-built theatre in Windhoek, or anywhere else in the country, as the Administration did not provide any such infrastructures. Not even a city hall for Windhoek, the capital of South West Africa (Windhoek se stadsaal, 1959). Theatre groups normally experienced difficulties not only with staging their performances, but found themselves without rehearsal space. This miserable situation had a detrimental effect on directors and actors. Enthusiasm and morale were low and the Association tried to interest the theatre groups to ensure more regular performances.

When the amateur theatre became more regular they had such hassles with the derisory facilities that soon the Association built their own theatre. They realised that the performing arts not only needed an audience, but also a theatre in which to perform. The Arts Association "should be remembered for the conception and realization of the establishment of the Windhoek Theatre, and Art Centre, although this took many years" (Bravenboer, 2004, p. 232). This building today hosts the National Theatre of Namibia and is the largest theatre of its kind in the country: a lasting legacy.

Years after the building of the theatre, which happened through the unwavering endeavour of the Arts Association, Terence Zeeman, erstwhile director of the national theatre, said that it “contains one of the biggest stages in Africa” (Zeeman, 2000, Preface). He gave the stage measurements and he said that “The scale of the theatre is impressive by any standards: a stage 26.8 m x 12.2 m with a proscenium arch of 12.2 m wide and 6.55 m high, 38 scenery and lighting bars, an orchestra pit and additional proscenium arch housed in a five-story fly tower” (Zeeman, 2000, Preface). It was indeed a building to be proud of. The fact that the Association wanted, and worked relentlessly for, an own theatre underlined how serious they were in enhancing the quality of theatre. The equipped theatre building fortified the theatrical art in the country.

The Arts Association made the theatre building the focal point for the cultural activities of Windhoek. It was a living entity in the communal life. The theatre became a symbol of the forceful creative spirit behind it. It became the place where the people could meet, gain inspiration and be spiritually enriched.

Olga Levinson said in her speech at the Gala Opening of the restructured Windhoek Theatre “Perhaps our greatest achievement was conceiving and initiating the construction of an Arts Centre embodying a Theatre, Art Gallery and studios for teaching the various arts” (Levinson, 1973, Program). This was indeed a major achievement for an association. The Arts Centre was “proof of the Association’s initiative, tenacity and enthusiasm” (Mossolow, 1967, p. 108). When the Arts Association erected the theatre building they triumphed over what seemed like insurmountable obstacles of which finances were the foremost, to make a huge contribution towards the cultural development of Namibia (Horne, 1985). The Arts Association met the

expectations and trust bestowed upon them and “it has faithfully carried out these aims and objectives throughout its years of existence” (Data, 1973, p. 2).

The Arts Association gave Windhoek a veritable feast of culture, including its first professional opera and ballet (Levinson, 1979). The Arts Association brought about and sponsored the School of Dancing; fine arts, violin and piano classes. Unfortunately there were, except for elocution, no classes for dramatic activities. It was an area neglected for various reasons e.g. no skilled teachers and not many career opportunities other than amateur productions. Locally there were no training facilities for aspiring theatre practitioners, until the Academy (later the University of Namibia) was established.

The Arts Association was proud of their Association and instilled that pride in the committee, artists and community as well. They celebrated their delight in their success by holding festive celebration performances and launched festivals. They set up the organisational structures to generate active participation and encouraged creativity from the different theatre groups. The Arts Association’s theatre festivals played an important role towards the developments of theatre as it provided impetus. The energy and enthusiasm of the Association as organiser and manager of theatre festival activities inspired the theatre practitioners and audiences. The festivals created awareness among the public of the theatre activities of the amateurs talent and brought greater ownership and artistic incentives among the practitioners.

In 1976, Olga Levinson wrote in her Chairlady’s Report about the successes, the suffering and disappointments by saying

however, in spite of all the reverses and problems – we  
somehow managed to survive – and grow – and expand our

activities – and I am sure you will agree with me when I say that we can indeed be proud of what we have achieved (Levinson, 1976a, p. 1).

The theatre-going public grew steadily in numbers and their knowledge of and taste in theatre developed; just as the Arts Association has envisioned it should. With more exposure to theatre the public was able to an informed opinion. The Arts Association saw it as their duty to educate actors, directors and audiences to create some sort of public standard of entertainment.

As South West Africa was under the mandate (jurisdiction) of South Africa, who treated the country for all practical reason as a 5<sup>th</sup> province, South West Africa never develop an own local concept of theatre. Only after SWAPAC was replaced by NTN the influence of South Africa was less, though not eradicated. The theatre of South Africa was not foreign to them. It was all that was known to the Arts Association's theatre groups and their audiences.

A reality inherited from the colonial past was that the urban entertainment possessed no indigenous flavour and that black artists were overlooked. The Arts Association did nothing for the arts in the black communities. According to Mohr (1973, p. 9) both black and white theatre “have their value and their place in our culture”. The theatre of the Arts Association only benefitted a minority of the public due to the political circumstances. The Arts Association brought people with the same cultural interests closer, but there was a vast chasm in cultural background and worldview between the rests of the inhabitants. “Before independence, the arts establishment in ‘South West Africa’ was sadly, and with woefully few exceptions, caught up in the exclusive presentation of European ‘high culture’”(Zeeman, 2004, pp. 23 - 24).

Though the Arts Association was open to all races it was in essence an organisation whose traditions of producing and acting were rooted in the overseas theatre.

It was mostly looked upon as an intellectual activity which could appeal solely to members of the higher echelons of society, from which the common man was discarded. It certainly took many long years before theatre could eliminate traditional barriers and ensure the active involvement of various sections of the population and hence develop into a wider and more democratic enjoyment (Ramana, 1999, p. 63).

The Arts Association has not given the country an own indigenous theatre, nor a professional theatre. Neither was it their vision of theatre. “Art, however one defines it, must still mirror, favourably or with hostility, the development of the society to which it belongs. Inevitably, contemporary art, too reflects the complex and divisive social, political and ethical state of our civilization” (Gilo Dorfles, 1983, p. 8 in Hauptfleisch, 1997, p. 1). For the Association the society from which they originated was the European. The Arts Association saw the Europeans as their departure point, and as no indigenous member or society ever joined them, they concentrated their efforts exclusively on them. Religious and political-nationalistic loyalties certainly played a role. The Arts Association’s cultural activities, of which theatre was an integral part, was an effective means designed to keep them in intimate contact with European culture and traditions. Their theatre emphasised the aesthetic and entertainment dimensions of that culture.

The Arts Association established Eurocentric art and culture in Windhoek and saw it flourish on African soil. This type of theatre was influenced by Western theatre. It was ‘well-made’ plays

staged on a proscenium type stage (Mogobe, 1999, p. 43). The Arts Association integrated these plays into the European aesthetic expressiveness they practiced in the capital. “Theatrically moving plays, plays that widen the horizon of life, plays that stir the emotions and enrich the adult mind; ensemble acting, inspired acting, a standard of speech; reinforcement of the playwright’s and the actor’s effectiveness by adequate and at times are beautiful setting, costuming and lighting; all these are implications of the ‘art theatre’” (Cheney, 1969, p. 16).

The Arts Association was a lasting and formative power in the cultural life of Windhoek and the rest of the country (SWA Annual, 1956). The Association contributed to various fields of the arts besides theatre. They were responsible for the founding of the first Opera Company complete with orchestra and the first Ballet Company in Windhoek. Long after the Arts Association walked off the stage and kept itself busy with only the arts gallery, there were still benefits for the community. The Association was a driving force behind “the founding of the Windhoek Conservatoire of Music which opened in September 1972” (Bravenboer, 2001, p. 235). In 1981 the Arts Association inaugurated its own music record library and members were invited to use the collection of some 300 records (Bravenboer, 2001).

Even though the Association was no longer directly involved in theatrical activities, the Arts Association in 1979 protested against the barring of non-whites from the theatre. The Association still cared for their theatre, even though they were no longer the provider of theatre. In most European countries the culture of the nation had become the responsibility of the state and the local government. In South West Africa that burden fell on private initiative. The Arts Association accepted the role that the state was supposed to fill.

Today there is much to criticise, but no other association or society has ever achieved this much, been so creditable and committed. “The activities of the S.W.A. Branch far exceed in scope those of the mother organisation, restricted to exhibitions of paintings, graphic art, sculpture and native arts and crafts” (Data, 1973, p. 2). The Arts Association showed that a single organization could handle all arts genres successfully. They went through years of struggle and uncertainty, but their theatre laid permanent foundations for the advancement of creative dramatic art.

With hindsight it is easy to see the problems with, and shortfalls of the Arts Association. The Arts Association realised that there was a very limited place for amateur theatre in the scope of the arts in Windhoek as the number of theatre supporters were limited. One semi-professional or professional group producing regular productions might have had much more success. That was if the Association possessed the necessary funds, talented actors, a proper stage, and full-time stage technicians and administrative staff. As the members of the Arts Association were mostly professional businessmen or civil officials, each with his/her own field of employment, there were never enough people available who could afford the time to fulltime organise, administer and practice theatre fulltime. It was just too much work for a group of changing volunteers to handle. As the Arts Association’s available resources had to stretch to dance, music and fine arts as well, they could not afford to set up a permanent theatre company.

The theatre was influenced by internal and external factors: the vast distances, inadequate facilities, meager finances and lack of training, professional practitioners and local playwrights all contributed to the slow development of theatre in the country. The politics, bioscope and the theatre from South Africa all left an imprint on the local theatre.

The Arts Association triumphed over what seemed like overwhelming obstacles: droughts, wars, changes of governments, difficulties in obtaining rights of plays owing to the government's policy of apartheid, lack of financial support, inflation, escalating costs, personal and language differences. They fulfilled the cultural need of a diverse society and brought them entertainment during turbulent years. The Arts Association grew out of a cultural need and took a keen interest in the preservation of that culture. According to Eschel Rhoodie, a historian from South Africa, it was clear that "despite the isolation from the usual centres of the performing arts, Windhoek boasts a remarkable quality and variety of cultural life" (1967, p. 89).

The Arts Association's formal establishment brought an exciting innovative period for every art form; mostly in Windhoek, but occasionally even further afield in the rural areas. Windhoek became the pivot of the arts: the centre from which the arts were practiced. In a sense this pattern would stay the same for many years to come.

## **CONCLUSION**

**“History is that certainty produced at the point where the imperfections of memory meet the inadequacies of documentation” (Lagrange).**

The development of theatre in South West Africa during the period discussed progressed at a slow pace, within a complex social reality inherited from the colonial past. Hermien Dommissie (1957) claims that theatre is born solely from what a nation owns communally. Dommissie felt that the development of a communal theatre is difficult when there is a lack of communal loyalty among different nationalities. She saw the future of theatre in countries such as South Africa and South West Africa as theatre based on language, such as in Belgium where there are Flemish and French communities each doing their own theatre. In South West Africa the Arts Association encouraged each of the theatre groups to stage plays in their different languages.

This dissertation gave an account of how a small group of inspired, dedicated individuals with a love for the arts set about organising and developing theatre. It is a first attempt to reconstruct a fraction of the history of theatre in Namibia. The dissertation relied on the available material and acknowledges that there may be gaps. The recording of Namibian theatre data is an ongoing activity that will continue even after the completion of this dissertation.

The vitality of Windhoek’s theatre since 1947 until 1966 could largely be attributed to the Arts Association’s valuable pioneering work. The Arts Association saw it as their duty to inform and educate actors, directors and audiences about the requirements for a good performance through relevant art lectures for their members on a variety of related subjects, delivered by experts (Art Lectures, 1949). Many of the speakers came from South Africa; Dr G. von W. Eybers, a former director of Adult Education and member of the Federation of Amateur Theatrical Societies of

South Africa (FATSSA) gave a lecture on the development of theatre in Namibia and the role of theatre in nation building (Opvoedkundige, 1948; Volksontwikkeling, 1948).

The theatre of the Arts Association was largely conventional, rooted in South African and European realism. The Arts Association created an awareness of these conventions and the theatre that it provided was a popular leisure activity for the European inhabitants of Windhoek. These cultural activities were an effective means to design to keep the white population in Namibia in intimate contact with European culture and traditions. Their theatre emphasised the merely aesthetic and entertainment aspects of the theatre. The offerings of the Arts Association were pure entertainment that did not challenge, but maintained the status quo. It did not experiment with stimulating or provocative theatre. Ramana (1999) observed that “The theatre was primarily intended for a selected privileged society and not designed to entertain the public at large. It was mostly looked upon as an intellectual activity which could appeal solely to members of the higher echelons of society” (p. 63). There was a need to address contemporary socio-political issues like prejudice, racism, and avarice in local productions, but the Arts Association never challenged the hand (the SWAA) that fed them. Independence would in later years open that door wider for all the different cultures to bring these matters to the stage.

The Arts Association was influenced by, and conformed to, the South African theatre, as that was what was familiar to them. The theatre building – influenced by similar theatre buildings in South Africa, where the National Theatre of Namibia is housed today – is still the largest, fully equipped theatre in Namibia and is a major part of the Arts Association’s legacy. It is difficult to speculate on how theatre would develop if the Arts Association was less influenced by South Africa and the Western theatre of 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Theatre undoubtedly underwent profound

changes during the decades that the Arts Association was involved. Under their influence theatre progressed from sporadic amateurish short humorous sketches to regular full-length productions. Performances were staged so that more actors could participate and more audiences could be exposed to theatre.

The Arts Association kept theatre alive until the conditions were favourable for progress and change. When evaluating this period in Namibian theatre history it is clear, however, that the development of theatre followed a path set out by specific people and circumstances. Rubin (1997) sums it up by saying: “Given this political and social history ...it is no surprise that the development of an indigenous-style was late in coming. Indeed, the historical constraints of various autocratic administrations worked almost directly against such ventures” (p. 206).

The Arts Association deserves a unique place in the history of Namibian theatre, as under their auspices theatre practitioners contributed to the enrichment and development of theatre. This period did not deliver influential professional theatre actors, directors or technicians, but there were influential amateurs that did sterling work to keep theatre alive.

The Arts Association concentrated strongly on the finished product they imported. Vast sums were spent on subsidies of established scripts and plays not from South West Africa itself, but from other countries that spent their money in training and the development of theatre skills, be it acting or writing. Even today there is only a meager number of Namibian plays that can be staged and even fewer that have been published, Frederick B. Philander being one of the small number of Namibian playwrights to be published.

During the process of writing this dissertation it became clear that Namibian theatre practitioners should be more careful with the past, present and future of their field. When we understand our

past, we shall be more conscious of today and tomorrow and record it with much more care. Theatre history should be recorded as it happens to keep the memories alive for the future. A more purposeful effort should be made to collect important information on the theatre for future students to research. Interviews with those practicing theatre in Namibia should be done on a regular basis, as well as projects on oral history. The aim would ultimately be to paint an authentic picture of the theatre of a specific period (Reyneke, 1986). The ideal is that the presentation of theatre history should reflect the general spirit of the time when the theatre was created.

It is true that historical narrations are complicated to construct as new facts and arguments come to light and are debated as new research on Namibian theatre is conducted. However, by committing to on-going explorations in this area, we will understand the past and the future better. Wallace (2011) states that the process of historicising has hardly begun, which for the researcher kindles hope that more information will surface to broaden the knowledge base. The history and development of the theatre of Namibia is an uncharted area and yet of particular importance for the cultural heritage of the country and continent, but until the history of indigenous theatre compliments this history, it will never be complete; it is thus sincerely hoped that that area will soon be researched. Indigenous performing arts activities, existing in oral traditional history won't be in existence forever ... people forget, or die. It needs to be recorded as soon as possible. M. Venaani from the DTA, a local political party, once claimed that "the development of a Namibian Culture should be a long term approach. First, ethnic groups should be taught to recognize and appreciate their own cultures before they are made aware of the need for a national culture" (Gowaseb, 1993, p. 66). Future research must incorporate the cultural

riches, creativity and needs of all its diversity of peoples. It is inconceivable that no such unifying structures were initiated during the past years.

The writing of theatre history is an ever active, continual, and to a certain degree inescapably subjective process. Less is known about the Namibian theatre history than about any other art form's history in Namibia. One reason might simply be "because of the ephemeral nature of the theatre as form and because no demonstrable examples have survived unmediated" (Hauptfleisch, 2009, p. 1). It is very difficult after so many years to determine the quality of performances of the period under discussion. The vibrancy and magical atmosphere have disappeared; the enthusiastic applause is silent and the stage bare. The only opinion that can be put together is by scrutinising the reviews of the performances, but then the quality of the opinions of those who wrote the reviews can and should also be questioned. As many critics were ordinary journalists or just contributors with very little theatrical knowledge, one can hardly accept their judgment, but on the other hand, they wrote about what they experienced.

Another reason for having less information about the history of Namibian theatre might be that music and the fine arts were on a better organisational footing long before the establishment of the Arts Association (Bravenboer, 2004). The fine arts especially were driven, supported and cultivated by individual artists, like Otto Schroeder, Fritz Kampe and other successful artists (Davis, 1975). It was only under the auspices of the Arts Association that the theatre became organised and experienced a period of prosperity. That the theatre thrived under the Arts Association is reflected and confirmed in the Arts Association's files and the various newspaper articles about the performances. The Arts Association's documents reflected to an extent some administrative organisation: budgets, arrangements and ticket sales, though incomplete. No director's scripts, copies of programmes or detailed notes on productions surfaced.

Most theatre practitioners of the past did not write about what they were doing (Namibian performing artists are no exception) and rarely, if ever, reflected on their creative work in print. Very little about what happened in theatre appears in detailed writing (even today). Most theatre practitioners are concerned with *doing* theatre rather than *reflecting* on it. The available sources of the time allow certain limited deductions to be made concerning the kind of performance activities that existed (Hauptfleisch, 2009).

This dissertation is not meant to be a complete recording of the theatre development. It is an attempt to interest other researchers to continue with the documenting of Namibia's theatre history, development and progress. This part of Namibian theatre history was researched to honour the Arts Association and their theatre activities. When we understand our past, researchers will be more mindful of our history and record what occurs with more care. The past is, however, the past. One can but learn from it to better the future.

**“That moment in time gone, the play is done – and ceases to exist”** (Hauptfleisch, 1983).

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **THE ZOO PARK**

The Schutztruppe and the South African settlers cultivated the park as a recreation area in 1897 and calling it the ‘Truppengarten’ or ‘Denkmalgarten’ (Von Dewitz, 2009, p. 31). The magnificent European-style park, in the heart of Windhoek, with a playground, a war memorial, benches and fountains for the community to enjoy. “Traders and settlers brought along their folk music and dance, missionaries indulged in church music and the singing of hymns, while others found their pleasure in walking” (Bravenboer, 2004, p. 232). In 1916 Windhoek was a small town with very few people. The available entertainment facilities were limited. “The Council built an unpretentious building that housed a kiosk on the premises of the Zoo Park” (Bravenboer, 2004, p. 232).

The Town Council, in 1916, requested permission from the South African Occupation Force to establish a zoo in the park and this gave the park the name Zoo Park (Von Dewitz, 2009, p. 31). A tea-room / coffee shop followed and soon the park was a hive of activity. At regular intervals “the Zoo Park Café buildings were used to host receptions, concerts and dances” (Bravenboer, 2004, p. 200). With the Zoo Café open until 10 o’clock in the evenings, it was a centre of social gatherings. Inspired by this, the Town Council developed the Zoo Park with gusto between 1922 and 1929. Extensive new buildings were erected in 1929. Over a period of many years the Zoo Café underwent numerous changes, renovations and extensions to serve Windhoek (Bravenboer, 2004, pp. 72, 199 – 200; Von Dewitz, 2009, p. 31).

In the next phase of development “the Zoo Park Café buildings were used to host receptions, concerts and dances and during the 1940s and 1950s the Arts Association organised art classes,

exhibitions and ballet classes there” (Bravenboer, 2004, p. 200). January 1, 1953 the Municipality of Windhoek agreed to lease the Café Zoo to the S.A. Arts Association (SWA Branch). “The rental will be £50 per month, but the Council will give the Association a grant of £15 per month until June, 1953” (Arts Society, 1952, p. 5). The facilities in the park were very basic and not adequate for all the different art activities that the Arts Association practiced. As the Arts Association had nowhere else to settle, they decided to use the facilities only temporarily. However, they ended up using the premises for more than 20 years.

“During 1956 the notification of the destruction of sections of Zoo Park was published in four newspapers. The reasons given were the proposed widening of Kaiser Street and the building of an art centre” (Bravenboer, 2004, p. 200). There was public outcry against this development and in an attempt to pacify the public the Town Council approached a town-planning expert, Professor Fassler of the University of the Witwatersrand (Bravenboer, 2004, p. 200). He proposed that due to its popularity the buildings must be replaced with more functional buildings.

However, in February 1958 the municipality drew up a new lease agreement for Cafe Zoo. The Arts Association, which had been the only lessee until then, had to share the premises with the café. “Because the Arts Association was no longer in a position to control events, it was decided to find accommodation elsewhere,” (Bravenboer, 2004, pp. 200 – 201). It was also announced that the Municipality was planning an open-air theatre of 800 seats for the park (Suidwes, 1960, p. 17).

The Zoo Park and Café indeed played a major role in the social activities of Windhoek.

## APPENDIX B

### THE NEWSPAPERS

The country's newspapers certainly played a role in the development of theatre as they influenced public opinion significantly (Opgang, 1948, p. 61). It is interesting to note a few important dates:

**1898** The first South West African newspaper, *Windhuker Anzeiger*, was established October 12 (Opgang, 1948, p. 59) with the attorney, Dr Georg Wasserfall, as the editor. The name was changed in 1911 to *Südwestbote* (Bravenboer, 2004, p. 79).

**1900** The newspaper *Deutsch-Südwestafrikanische Zeitung* was launched by Wasserfall (Dierks, 1999, p. 122).

**1904** Another newspaper, *Windhoek Nachrichten* was established by Conrad Rust (Dierks, 1999, p. 61).

**1909** The *Südwestbote*, under editor-owner Rudolf Kindt saw the light (Bravenboer, 2004, p. 79; Von Dewitz, 2009, p. 12) and this newspaper was a great help in making social and cultural events known to the public.

**1911** The first English newspaper, *The Windhoek Advertiser* was founded (Dierks, 1999, p. 84). It was initiated as the '*mouthpiece of the united service club*' (Opgang, 1948, p. 61). The public regularly received the latest South African and overseas newspapers at the United Service Club. This club later became the Windhoek Club. As it was edited by government officials, the newspaper did not voice definite opinions on public affairs. When J.D. Lardner Burke took over the newspaper in 1920 the editor received unlimited control (Opgang, 1948, p. 61). The

newspaper over the years became very critical on political issues and reflected articles from abroad and South Africa. By 1921 *The Windhoek Advertiser* was a bi-weekly – Wednesday and Saturday.

**1916** The German newspaper *Der Kriegsbote* was renamed *Allgemeine Zeitung* (Dierks, 1999, p. 94; Von Dewitz 2009: 13). During the years the Arts Association was involved in theatre the newspaper was under the editor, Kurt Dahlmann (Dierks, 1999, p. 123). In 1959 Kurt Dahlmann, as editor of the *Allgemeine Zeitung* suggested a loose federation for South Africa and South West Africa.

**1919** *The Voortrekker*, a bi-lingual newspaper (Dutch and German) was launched in October (Dierks, 1999, p. 98).

**1922** The first handbills were placed into the newspapers to advertise. This was a method that worked well for making the public aware of productions to be staged.

**1927** *Die Suidwes-Afrikaner* came in the place of *Ons Vriend*, published by John Meinert. The editor was Erenst A. Schlegemann, a theatre enthusiast, who was later followed by L. Taljaard (Opgang, 1948, p. 63). Many of the editors of this newspaper were deeply political and the newspaper was founded by the United National South West Party (UNSWP) as a voice for the party (Dierks, 1999, p. 104).

**1944** *Die Suidwester* was established as the mouthpiece of the National Party (Dierks, 1999, p. 112; (Stals, 2008, p. 13). The newspaper was very critical of anything anti-National Party.

**1959** The bilingual newspaper, Afrikaans and English, *The South West News* was banned by the SWAA (Dierks, 1999, p. 122).

## APPENDIX C

### THE HOTELS

The first of many hotels to spring up in Windhoek, was the ‘Gasthof zum Kaiser’ in 1893 (Von Dewitz 2009, p.11). A reed construction was built on the corner of what were then Stübel and Bülow Streets, by Ernst Heyn who called it a ‘hotel’. The guests had admittedly to sleep under the stars in the open field, or in ox-wagons (Bravenboer, 2004, p. 40), but it was an overnight place. This establishment was the beginning of the hospitality industry in Windhoek. In 1894, Heyn, who was “one of the very first settlers in South West Africa” (Bravenboer, 2004, p. 145), built the Gross Herzog Hotel on the same site as the ‘Gasthof zum Kaiser’ (Mossolow, 1976, p. 74). This site became the first hotel and restaurant and also served as a temporary police mess. Only after Heyn had attempted, for the fourth time, to have get plans to upgrade the hotel approved was he successful. These hotels were used by the Arts Association for their performances until the Arts Theatre was built.

In 1925 a double-storey building was finally built when Otto Warnecke enclosed the old building and built a new hotel there. Wilhelm Koch built a family residence around the corner in 1928 and the hotel used part of this house as an entertainment hall (Bravenboer, 2004, p. 145). In later years the Berg hotel housed the South African High Commission.

Over the years plenty of hotels were erected in Windhoek: Outspan, Rheinischer Hof, Rosa Erde, and Vaatzès (Bristow, 1968, p. 83). Later, “as Windhoek grew in stature and population, other venues were established such as... the Railway Institute, Continental Hotel (1950)... Merensky

Saal and the Aula (hall) of the Deutsche Höhere Privatschule (DHPS)” (Bravenboer, 2004, p. 232).

## **APPENDIX D**

### **THE LEASE BETWEEN THE ARTS ASSOCIATION AND THE SWAA**

#### **THE ASSOCIATION OF ARTS (S.W.A)**

#### **REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE LEASE OF THE ARTS CENTRE THEATRE.**

1. “Association” shall mean the Association of Arts (S.W.A), or its duly authorised representatives, official or nominee. “Theatre” shall mean all the accommodation comprising the theatre building, and shall include all the auditorium furniture, fittings, fixtures, carpets, curtains, electrical equipment and all movables of whatever nature on the theatre premises.

2. Only the electrician appointed by the Association shall be authorised and permitted to operate the dimmer board and electrical equipment, and all other electrical appliances and equipment, including air-conditioning and supervision. The Association may, at its discretion, permit the restricted use of lighting without the services of the electrician.

3. The Lessee shall be solely responsible for and shall make good immediately any damages sustained by the association, or the S.W.A Administration, due to damage of any description whatever the Theatre, its furniture, fittings, fixture, appliances, curtains, scenery, theatrical properties and generally to the property under control of the Association, attributable to the action or omissions of the Lessee or anyone in his employ, whether such damage occurs during or after the period of hiring. The Theatre shall be deemed to have been received by the Lessee in

good and proper order and condition, and free from defects unless the Lessee informs the Association's representatives of any defects immediately after having detected same, and, in respect of movables articles, prior to putting them to use. The Theatre shall be handed to the Association in the same good and proper order and condition as the received, and any movables article lost or missing shall be replaced by an article of equal value and appearance or paid for by the Lessee.

4. The Association accepts no responsibility or liability whatever in respect of damage to or loss of any property, article or thing placed or left upon the premises by the Lessee or for his use or purpose.

5. Smoking in the auditorium, on the stage-area, or on the stage (save as is required in the action of the play), is prohibited at all times, and any damage caused in this respect shall be made good by the Lessee in terms of clause & above.

6. No furniture or articles of any descriptions whatever belonging to the Association shall be removed from the Theatre or from one part of the Theatre to another without permission. Chairs, benches and tables shall under no circumstances be brought in the auditorium or Theatre except for use on the stage only. The Association may prohibit the use of any device, contrivance or theatrical property likely to cause damage to the Theatre, unless adequate safeguards are provided by the Lessee.

7. Bookings or reservations at full rates will at all times have preference over bookings for rehearsals, and the latter will be regarded as provisional only and subject to alteration in the light of subsequent full rate bookings. In the event of a booking or reservation being cancelled after

the initial deposit or final payment has been made by the Lessee, such deposit or payment shall be forfeited unless equivalent booking is subsequently received for the night in questions.

**8. (a)** Lessee shall restore the premises to a clean and tidy condition before 9 a.m. on the morning following any day of use during the lease.

**(b)** Lessee shall remove from the premise all their property or that under their control, excepting property belonging to the association, within 40 hours after expiration of the lease.

**9.** Alterations to the stage, curtains, fittings, fixtures, electrical equipment, plugs and light points are prohibited, unless such alteration are sanctioned in writing by the Association. All such work must be carried out under the supervision of the Association.

**10.** The Lessee shall not keep, use or permit to be kept or used within the Theatre or its premises and precincts any kerosene, camphene, petrol, burning fluid or any other flammable or illuminating fluids, material or substances whatever, or permit any anything to be done in any part of the premises which is contrary to or in conflict with any regulations, laws, orders given with statutory authority.

**11.** The Association accepts no responsibility whatever for any loss or damage which the Lessee or person or persons acting with or for or employed by him, or attending the Theatre as licensees or invitees of the Lessee, or any person associated with or employed by him may sustain as the result of fire, theft, bodily injury or from any other cause whatever, whether such loss or damage is due to is due to negligence on the part of the Association or not. The Lessee hereby agrees to assume sole responsibility and liability in respect of any such claim as is contemplated by this clause which may be made against the Association by any of the person referred to therein.

**12.** The Association accepts no responsibility whatever for any inconvenience caused or loss sustained due to any interruption in the electrical or water services, nor for any accident as the result of the operation of such services. The Association accepts no responsibility whatever for whatever any person employed therein by the Lessee, who shall arrange suitable insurance in this respects.

**13.** No intoxicating liquor or liquid refreshment of any kind whatever may be brought into or consumed within the Theatre foyer and auditorium, nor may intoxicating liquor be brought into or consumed in the dressing rooms or any portion of the back stage without permission of the Association.

**14.** The lease of the Theatre for any day shall entitle the Lessee to the use thereof for any such period or periods as may be laid down in the Lease Agreement.

**15.** Rental shall be payable strictly in advance, one half thereof upon booking and the balance one hour before any performance.

**16.** Facilities for booking seats shall be available to patrons of the Lessee if required at the Theatre one hour before any performance at least, but not more than two hours. All bookings must be undertaken by the Lessee.

**17.** Back stage and front of house staff provided by the Lessee shall be under the supervision and authority of the Association.

**18.** No public announcement shall be made until after payment or confirmation of booking. The Lessee shall not use any form of publicity or publicity matter which the Association deems out of keeping with the dignity of the Theatre.

- 19.** The Lessee shall be responsible for all arrangements in connection with that of the the public to the Theatre, the provision at his own expense ushers, police, fireman and such staff as may be necessary to control the admission of persons to the Theatre and the sales of tickets.
- 20.** The Association reserves the right of admission to the Theatre at all times.
- 21.** The Association reserves the right in its sole discretion to decide whether Theatre shall be let on any occasion and to whom, and to disallow any performances whatever. Under no circumstances shall the Theatre be let for political and religious meetings.
- 22.** In case the nature of the letting requires any special or additional expenditure, Lessee shall pay such sum as approved by the Association to cover such expenditure.
- 23.** The Lessee shall be responsible for payments of any extra expenditure whatsoever incurred by the Lessee's authorised representatives or employees.
- 24.** No external posters, advertisement or notices, decorations, flags or emblems will be permitted save with the prior written consent of the Association and no nails, pin, screws or other objects shall be driven or inserted into any portion of the walls, roofs or fittings.
- 25.** No internal decoration of any kind will be permitted on the floor, walls or ceilings of the auditorium or foyer of the Theatre, without the written consent of the Association.
- 26.** The Lessee shall indemnify the Association against any claims arising out of infringement of any copyright, letters patent, or performing rights.
- 27.** In the event of a breach of Lease or any of the provisions of these Regulations, the Association shall be entitled to cancel the Lease forthwith and in its discretion retain and apply

any monies paid in respect thereof against any loss sustained by reason of such breach, all without prejudice to the Association's right to recover such further damage as the Association may have suffered.

**28.** The Association reserves to itself and for its exclusive benefit, the use and management of the bars, the sale of all refreshments, sweets, chocolates, cigarettes, cigars and tobaccos and the proceeds from automatics machines. The Association further reserves to itself the right to manage and control all the advertising in the Theatre by means of slides or moving pictures both before the commencement and during the interval any performance and proceeds of any such advertising.

**29.** The Lessee shall not do or permit or suffer to be done any act or things whereby any statutory approval relating to the Theatre or any part thereof may be vitiated or affected.

**30.** Should the Theatre be closed owing to damage by fire or unforeseen accident not attributable to the Lessee or the Lessee's servants or agents, or by statutory order or owing to its refusal to grant or renew a license, no rental shall be payable by the Lessee.

**31.** The Lessee shall permit the Association, its servants, agents or workmen at all reasonable times but without interfering with any performance of rehearsal, to enter upon the premises or any part thereof for purpose of inspecting the building, fixtures, fittings, wardrobes, properties, furniture, scenery, or other articles, or to make inventories thereof or to give the Lessee notice in writing of all the defects or losses revealed by such inspection or for any purpose in connection with the administration of the lease.

**32.** The Lessee shall not do or cause or suffer to be done in or upon the Theatre premises which may vitiate the existing policy of fire insurance in respect thereof, or which may result in the payment of increased or extra premiums, but shall at all times exercise due care and diligence in the handling and use of electrical apparatus or equipment and take all proper and necessary precautions to prevent or minimise loss or damage by fire.

**33.** The Association reserves the right in its sole discretion to cancel the lease of the Theatre premises or any portion thereof in the interest of maintaining law and order or to safeguard the public, public morals or the Theatre premises generally, or if such cancellation be deemed by the Association to be in the interest of the public. In the event of such cancellation, the Lessee shall be entitled to a refund of fees paid and to compensation considered reasonable by the Association, not exceeding 100 Rand.

**34.** No nails, pins, screws or other object shall be driven or inserted into any portion of the stage or any woodwork in the Theatre. Any damage resulting shall be for the Lessee's cost.

**35.** All stage properties shall be transported only via the entrance provided in the stage dock door, and may on no account be transported through the auditorium.

**36.** Lessee using the cinematograph or similar equipment shall at their own expense conform to the requirement of the Windhoek Municipal Fire Department.

**37.** The Theatre provides maximum seating accommodation for 413 people, and under no circumstances may the Lessee provide additional seating accommodation, without prior approval of the Association.

**38.** Any person contravening any of the provisions of these Regulation shall be liable to have this lease cancelled forthwith and shall be liable for any costs incurred by the Association as a result of such infringement.

**39. CHARGES FOR THE HIRE OF ACCOMMODATION IN THE THEATRE:** Night performance: £ 20 or R 40, plus fees for electrician £ 2 or R 4, plus charges for Municipal fireman. (A reduction of 10% will be granted in case of regular monthly performances, viz. two or more performances a month).

Matinee: £ 10 or R 20

Dress Rehearsal with admission charges: full charge, see night performances.

Dress Rehearsal no admission charges: £ 5 or R 10    With full lights

Rehearsal with only working lights: £ 2 or R 4

The Association may in its discretion vary the above charges where in its opinion such variation is necessary or desirable.

In addition to the above charges, the Lessee shall be responsible for any

Charges incurred in providing firemen or other officials required to be provided by the Municipality, or otherwise.

EXTRA CHARGES: Use of grand piano (approved use only): £3 or R 6

Use of upright piano (do) : £1 or R 2

Extra for tuning if required

Hire of scenery (complete set) : £5 or R 10

**40.** No photographs may be taken, or sound recordings made during performances under the auspices of the Association in the Theatre without the prior consent of the Association. Animals are not allowed in the Theatre.

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LEASE APPLICATION:

I, the undersigned .....

Herewith apply for hiring the ARTS CENTRE THEATRE on the following dates.....

.....

(state whether evenings or matinee, rehearsals, etc.)

for the purpose of staging .....

(state nature of performance)

Admission fees of R ..... are charged/ no admission fees/ silver collection

The proceeds will be used for .....

sgd. .... Lessee

AGREEMENT.

In consideration of payments made, and to be made by the Lessee to the Lessor in terms of the above Regulations, the Lessor hereby agrees to lease the Arts Centre Theatre in terms of such Regulations – The Lessee, having undertaken to abide by the above Regulations with which he has made himself conversant, agrees to make to the Lessor such payments as laid down by the above Regulations, in consideration of the Lease of the above Theatre.

Payment of R ..... , being half the amount of the agreed rental, is being made in advance by the Lessee herewith.

sgd. .... Lessor

sgd. .... Lessee

## **APPENDIX E**

### **ARTS ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS 1947 - 1978**

**PRESIDENTS:** Adv. J. P. Mowbray Niehaus, Mr. Jac. Joel, Mr. J. Krafft, Dr H. J. Steyn, Mrs. S. Davis, Mrs. Olga Levinson, Mr. G. G. Collins and Mrs. Nana Wagner

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS:** over the years in alphabetical order (1947 – 1979): Mr. K. Bartsch, Adv. H. J. Berker, Mr. A. Blatt, Mrs. N. Cohen. Mr. G. G. Collins. Mr. K. Dahlmann. Mrs. S. Davis, Mr. B. de la Bat, Mr. G. Feininger, Mr. W. Frewer, M. F. Frewer, Mrs. L Gebhardt, Mr. R. Hillig, Judge G. Hoexter, Mr. M. A. Isaacson. Mr. A. Jentsch, Mr. J. A. Joel. Mr. G. Krafft, Mrs. B. Kreutzfeldt, Mrs. O. Levinson, . H. Marais, Mrs. U. Meyer, Mr. H. E. von Marées. Mr. D. Minnaar. Adv. J. P- Niehaus. Dr J. Orford. Mr. J. Potgieter. Mr. H. Pulon. Dr E. Pfeiffer, Mr. J. J. Reiter. Dr H. J. Rust. Mr. E. Scherer, Dr E. R. Scherz. Mr. O. Schroeder, Mrs. B. Slabbert, Mr. M. Sobkowski. Dr H. J. Steyn, Mr. P. Strack. Mrs. W. E. von Kleist, Mr. F. von Dertzen. Mr. J. Voigts, Mrs. N. Wagner, and Dr M. Weiss

**SECRETARIES:** Mrs. Sannie Visser, Adv. H. Berker, Mr. Otto Schröder, Mrs. Tatiana Boehm, Mrs. E. Tonn, Mrs. E. Diekmann. Mrs. Lisa Kuntze. Mrs. Lotti Dahlmann, Mrs. K. Biesemann. Miss June Penderis, Mr. Martin Farmer, Mrs. Elbie Kachelhoffer,

(Levinson, 1979, p. 74).

## APPENDIX F

### REGISTER OF PLAYS PERFORMED BY THE AFRIKAANS, ENGLISH AND GERMAN THEATRE GROUPS UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE ARTS ASSOCIATION

The list is chronological. It was compiled from available sources and does not claim to be complete.

#### PLAYS DONE BY THE THEATRE GROUPS UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE ARTS ASSOCIATION

Date	Play Title	Playwright	Group	Director	Actors	Venue
<b>1948</b>						
March	<i>Die Stille Haard</i>	F.A. Fagan	Outjo Theatre Society			Railway Hall
October 22	<i>Lotchen's Geburts-tag</i>	Ludwig Thoma	German Theatre Group	Hans Berker	Wilhelm Kellner, Sigrid Kellner, Hildegard Berker, Hans J. Berker	Railway Hall
	<i>Nag het die wind gebring</i>	W.A. de Klerk	Afrikaans Theatre Group	Sannie Visser		Railway Hall
May	<i>Karakul Kapers 1948</i>			Olga Levinson and Alwyn van Heerden	Alec Pfeiffer, Tommy Thomson, Julia Marais	Railway Hall
	<i>Brown Sugar</i>	Arthur Leaver	English Theatre Group	Sannie Visser		Railway Hall

<b>Date</b>	<b>Play Title</b>	<b>Playwright</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b>Actors</b>	<b>Venue</b>
<b>1949</b>						
April 8	<i>Die Heks</i>	C. Louis Leipold	Afrikaans Theatre Group Swakopmund		J.B. Christie, J.J. Le Roux, E. Meyer, Kasper Steenkamp, E.L. Augustyn, Mrs. J.J. Le Roux, W.M. van Niekerk	Swakopmund
September 20 and 21	<i>Dark Brown</i>	Philip Johnson	English Theatre Group	Henriet-te Brenner and Frank Dixon	Irene de Lange, Mrs. Brener, P. Davis, Eileen Bohlmann, Norma Newman, Frank Dixon, Cecil Collett	Railway Hall
September 20 and 21	<i>Russian Salad</i>	Philip Johnson	English Theatre Group	Jack Levinson	Olga Levinson, Tommy Thompson, Phil Davis, Alec Pfeiffer, Ruth Timberg, Joan Pieters	Railway Hall
	<i>Karakul Kapers 1949</i>			Olga Levinson and Alwyn van Heerden		Railway Hall
<b>1950</b>						
January 06	<i>Hurrah, ein Junge</i>	Arnold Franz and Ernst Bach	German Theatre Group			Railway Hall
April	<i>Der Hund im Hirn</i>	C. Goertz	German Theatre Group	Hans Berker	Hans Berker, S. Hallway, W. Becker, I. Pieters, P. Boettger	Railway Hall

<b>Date</b>	<b>Play Title</b>	<b>Playwright</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b>Actors</b>	<b>Venue</b>
	<i>When' we are Married</i>	J. B. Priestley	English Theatre Group			Railway Hall
	<i>Sewe Vrouens</i>	J.M. Barrie	Windhoek Afrikaanse Amateur Theatre Society	Sannie Visser	Pieter Genis	Railway Hall
	<i>Vername Mense</i>	Fritz Steyn	Windhoek Afrikaanse Amateur Theatre Society	Sannie Visser		Railway Hall
	<i>Ontvlugting</i>	W.A. de Klerk	Windhoek Afrikaan-se Amateur Theatre Society		Helen Avis	Railway Hall
	<i>All the Tea in China</i>		English Theatre Group	Charles St. John Thompson	Cecily Gaunt, Mrs. Kloot, Mr. and Mrs. Brookes, Miss Lieferman	Railway Hall
	<i>In die Wagkamer</i>	J.W. Grosskopf	Outjo Theatre Society			Railway Hall
	<i>Die Swakker Vat</i>	H.A. Fagan	Kalkfeld Debate Society			Railway Hall
	<i>Hellersee</i>	W.A. de	Omaruri Art and	Helen Avis	Baby Delpont	Railway Hall

		Klerk	Culture Society			
<b>Date</b>	<b>Play Title</b>	<b>Playwright</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b>Actors</b>	<b>Venue</b>
	<i>Ruwe Erts</i>	H.A. Fagan	Tsumeb Theatre Group			Railway Hall
November 28	<i>Radio Koeroema Katietie</i>					Railway Hall
<b>1951</b>						
	<i>The Two Mrs. Carrols</i>	Martin Vale	English Theatre Group			Railway Hall
September	<i>Parkstrasse 13</i>	Axel Ivers	German Theatre Group		Lee Orth	
<b>1952</b>						
March	<i>Evening of Baroque Impressions:</i>			Hannes Heurner. Otto Schroeder	Heinro Labuschagne, B.H. Barnard	Continental Concert Hall
	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	William Shakespeare	English Theatre Group	G. A. Minds-zenty	Cooky Black, Nissen Davis, Robert Orth, Rex Miele, Alec Pfeiffer, Victor Paul, Manfred Sobkowski, Douglas Black, Peter Ceronio	Continental Concert Hall

	<i>Der Zerbrochene Krug</i>	H. von Kleist	German Theatre Group	G. A. Minds-zenty	Georg Gläser, Herbert Maul, Willy Becker, Erich Berker, Hildegard Becker, Milly Haelbich, Annemarie Ludwig	Continental Concert Hall
<b>Date</b>	<b>Play Title</b>	<b>Playwright</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b>Actors</b>	<b>Venue</b>
May 7 and 9	<i>Aimée</i>	Heinz Coubier	German Theatre Group	Hannes Heuner	Cooky Black, Erich Berker, Hans Erik von Maree, Willy Becker	Continental Concert Hall
	<i>Man of Destiny</i>	George Bernard Shaw	English Theatre Group	Olga Levinson	Olga Levinson, Lee Orth, D.M. Hutchison, Claus Meinert, Hannes Heuner	Continental Concert Hall
	<i>As die Nefie kom kuier</i>	Gerhard Beukes	Outjo Art & Cultural Society	Helen Avis	Gogga van Heerden, Johan Bester, Phoebe Venter, Willie Augustyn, Helen Avis	Continental Concert Hall
	<i>Die Goeie Hoop</i>	J.F. W. Grosskopf	Outjo Art & Cultural Society	Helen Avis	Huipie van der Westhuizen, Hugo Marais, Fanie Lemmer, Jan Laubscher	Continental Concert Hall
	<i>Die Importierten</i>		German Theatre Group			Continental Concert Hall
March 15	<i>Suid-Afrika, Bruid van die Toekoms</i>		Afri-kaans Theatre Group	Sannie Visser	Mrs. Loteryman, Rohona Naudé, S.Visser, Mejj. Louw, v. Heerden & de Wit, Jose Esterhuyzen, Arina du Plessis, S. Swanepoel, L.	

					Cronjè, Dora Human, Basie Maartens, John Mitchley, Leo v.d. Westhuizen,	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Play Title</b>	<b>Playwright</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b>Actors</b>	<b>Venue</b>
	<i>Die Dieper Reg</i>	N.P. van Wyk	Afrikaans Theatre Group	Sannie Visser	Mr. Van der Westhuizen, Basie Maartens, Pieter Swiegers, Sannie Visser, Yvonne Swiegers, Jock van Niekerk	
August	<i>Der Engel mit dem Saitenspiel</i>	Alois Johannes Lippl	German Theatre Group	Ulrich Orth	Erica Raentsch, Ulrich Orth, Lotti Kuhn, Edgar Boehm, Joachim von Mansberg, Ilse Stubenrauch, Klaus Mueller, Guenther Kraus, Bernard Pietzsch, Erwin De Bordes, Peggy Langer-hans. Stage manager: H. Erwig	Continental Hotel
November	<i>Goeie More My Man</i>		Afri-kaans Theatre Group	Johann Labuschagne	Elsa Louw, Johann Labuschagne, Dora van Niekerk, Peter Ceronio, Jaap Snyman, Fransie van der Westhuizen	Continental Hall
<b>1953</b>						
June 12 and 16	<i>Ingeborg</i>	Curt Goetz	German Theatre Group	Hans H. Heinrich	Erica Raentsch, Ulrich Orth, Klaus Mueller, Lotti Kuhn, Wilhelm Busch	Continental Concert Hall
	<i>Love's a Luxury</i>	Guy Paxton and Edmond	English Theatre	Neville B. Krummeck	Joan Krummeck, Bernard Opper-man, Margot	Continental Concert Hall

		V. Hoile	Group		Opperman, Johan Lambrechts, Cynthia Lambrechts	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Play Title</b>	<b>Playwright</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b>Actors</b>	<b>Venue</b>
September 23	<i>Drei Männer im Schnee</i>	E. Kaestner	German Theatre Group	Hans Berker	Peter Mohr, Klaus Bostelmann, Guenther Gerischer, Inge Gubalke, Christa von Oberritz, Rosemarie Mueller, Raimund Lossen, Ingolf Landien	Railway Hall
September	<i>Evening's Entertainment of Marriages:</i>		English Theatre Group			St. Georges Memorial Hall
	<i>A Marriage has been arranged</i>	Alfred Sutro	English Theatre Group		Wendy Lemmer, Paul Vincent, John Morris	
	<i>The Creation of Women</i>	F.L. Falkland & Phillip King	English Theatre Group	Margaret Baxter	Margaret Baxter	
	<i>Holy Matrimony – how to avoid it!</i>	Margaret Baxter	English Theatre Group		Alec Pfeiffer, Margot Lewis, Margaret Baxter	
					Roy Lewis, Margot Lewis,	

	<i>Wife Required</i>		English Theatre Group		Norma Newman, Barbara Dixon, Jeanette van Hoffen, Winnie Delafield	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Play Title</b>	<b>Playwright</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b>Actors</b>	<b>Venue</b>
April 8 and 9	<i>Blythe Spirit</i>	Noël Coward	English Theatre Group	Dan Minnaar	Barbara Dixon, Claus Meinert, Henriette Brener, Margaret Baxter, Audrey Fuller, Alec Pfeiffer, Norma Newman	Continental Hotel
	<i>Man of Destiny</i>	George Bernard Shaw	English Theatre Group	Olga Levinson	Olga Levinson, Lee Orth, D.M. Hutchison, Claus Meinert, Hannes Heuner, Helen Botha	Continental Hall
	<i>As die Nefie kom kuier</i>	Gerhard Beukes	Outjo Art and Culture Association	Helen Avis	Huipie van der Westhuizen	Continental Hall
	<i>Die Goeie Hoop</i>	J.F.W. Grosskopf	Outjo Art and Culture Association	Helen Avis		Continental Hall
<b>1954</b>						
September	<i>Die Bedrieërs</i>		Afrikaans Theatre	Hersie Herselman	Siegfried Zachau	Railway Hall

<b>Date</b>	<b>Play Title</b>	<b>Playwright</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b>Actors</b>	<b>Venue</b>
November 26 and 29	<i>Gif en Oujong-nooiens</i>		Afrikaans Theatre Group	Valerie de Jongh	Susie v. Zyl, Joey Schoeman, Dan Minnaar, B. Snyman, A. Pfeiffer, Irene Herling, Chris Liebenberg	Continental Hall
<b>1955</b>						
May 26 and 28 & October	<i>Satansloon</i>	Pierre de Wet	Afrikaans Theatre Group	Dan Minnaar	Ester Mouton, Johan Labuschagne, Ulrich Fobian, Cora Fick, Leentjie Viljoen	Continental Hall
	<i>Auf Anruf Mord</i>	Federik Knott	German Theatre Group	Hans Berker		Continental Hall
	<i>Ninotschka</i>	Melchior Lengvel	German Theatre Group	Hannes Heuner		Continental Hall
December	<i>Sakke vol geld</i>	Will Evans and Valentine	Afrikaans Theatre Group	Dan Minnaar		Continental Hall
<b>1956</b>						
April 04 and 09	<i>Faust</i>	J.W. von Goethe	German Theatre	W.M. Rudolph	Gerhard Kiehn, Sieglinde Huhlmann	Continental Hall

<b>Date</b>	<b>Play Title</b>	<b>Playwright</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b>Actors</b>	<b>Venue</b>
October	<i>Love's a Luxury</i>	Guy Paxton & Edward Hoile	English Theatre group	A. Krumneck	Brain Mills, Alec Pfeiffer, Strachan Ross, Olive Kloot, Barbara Dion, Joan Krumneck, Margot Oppermann, Johan Pentwick	Continental Hall
<b>1957</b>						
June	<i>Auszug aus Les Mouches</i>	J.P. Satire	English Theatre group	Otto Schröder	H. J. Berker, E.Räntsch, C. Meinert	Continental Hall
	<i>Le Medecin Malgré Lui</i>	Molière	English Theatre group	Olga Levinson	Danie Smuts, Frank Dixon, Phil Davis, Olga Levinson, Wendy Lemmer, Monica Johnson	Continental Hall
<b>1958</b>						
	<i>Diener Zwei Herren</i>	C. Goldoni	German Theatre Group			Government Gardens
<b>1959</b>						
April	<i>Nude with Violin</i>	Noël Coward	English Theatre group	Fiorella Holmes		Continental Hall
	<i>Die Importierten</i>		German Theatre Group		Hannes Heuner	Continental Hall

1960						
Date	Play Title	Playwright	Group	Director	Actors	Venue
	<i>Three One Acts:</i>  <i>Glückliche Reise</i> <i>Die Rache</i> <i>Herbst</i>	Thornton Wilder  Curt Grötz Curt Grötz	German Theatre Group		Hildegard Becker, Willi Becker, Günther Lamberts, Ischa Koblitz  Willi Becker, Hildegard Becker, Erenst Günther Karschik  Cooky Black, Willi Becker	Arts Theatre  Arts Theatre Arts Theatre
July 21, 22, 26	<i>Love of four colonels</i>	Peter Ustinov	English Theatre Group	Fiorella Holmes	Reg Horwood, Charles Mayoss, Isa Myers, David Gamsu, Gershon Isaacson, Julie Mills, Rudi Huber, Shirley Stone, Peter Bryan, Audrey Fuller, Pearl Oakley	Arts Theatre
	<i>Die Jaar van die Vuuros</i>	W.A. de Klerk	Afrikaans Theatre Group	Dan Minnaar	Hendrik v. Rensburg, Matty Linström, Dora v. Niekerk, Jurie Ferreira, William Franklin, Leo v. d. Westhuyzen, Hannes Smit, Isak Pienaar. Souffleuse: Ansie v. Staden. Stage manager: Larry Kritzinger. Décor: Hannes Heuner Makeup: Alek Pfeiffer. Sound: H. Hesse Organisation: Joey Schoeman	Arts Theatre
	<i>Satansloon</i>	Pierre de Wet	Afrikaans Theatre Group	Brain Mills		Arts Theatre
November	<i>Intent to</i>	Leslie Sands	English	Dan		Arts Theatre

12 and 13	<i>Murder</i>		Theatre Group	Minnaar		
November 14 and 15	<i>Die Swakkere Vat</i>	H.A. Fagan	Afrikaans Theatre Group	Tatiana Boehm		Arts Theatre
<b>Date</b>	<b>Play Title</b>	<b>Playwright</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b>Actors</b>	<b>Venue</b>
November 14 and 15	<i>Max oder Bobby</i>	Carl Mathern	German Theatre Group			Arts Theatre
	<i>Puppet Show Des Koenig's Pantoffeln</i>		Puppet Group		Mrs. Gehrt	Arts Theatre
<b>1961</b>						
February 4	<i>Der Kreidekreis</i>	Klabund (Alfred Henschke)	German Theatre Group	Dr. W. Kellner		Arts Theatre
	<i>Mikado</i>	W.S. Gilbert and A.S. Sullivan	German Theatre Group	Pieter Bryan, Fiorella Holmes	Pieter Bryan, Anne Hamman, David Gamsu	Arts Theatre
August	<i>Die Braufartzu</i>	N. Gogel	German Theatre Group	Fredi Frewer		Arts Theatre

September 29 and 30	<i>Ein Glas Wasser</i>	Eugène Scribe	German Theatre Group	Hans Heinrich		Arts Theatre
November 17	<i>Der Weg Zum Himmel</i>	Albert Husson	German Theatre Group	Hannes Heuner	Hildegard Becker, Cooky Black, Willie Becker, Erenst Gunter Kaschick, Martin Rùhe, Margot Schulz-Leist	Arts Theatre
<b>Date</b>	<b>Play Title</b>	<b>Playwright</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b>Actors</b>	<b>Venue</b>
November 22 and 23	<i>Die Twisappel</i>	W.A. de Klerk	Afrikaans Theatre Group	Annemarie Weber	F. Steyn, H. Weber	Arts Theatre
	<i>The Interrupted Hour</i>		English Theatre Group	Mrs. Geel		Arts Theatre
	<i>Taming of the Shrew</i>	William Shakespeare	English Theatre Group	Hannes Heuner		Arts Theatre
<b>1962</b>						
March 29	<i>Sound of Music</i>	Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse	English Theatre Group			Arts Theatre
August	<i>Die Ryk Weduwee</i>	Uys Krige	Afrikaans Theatre			Arts Theatre

			Group Mika			
September	<i>Orpheus in die Onderwêreld</i>			Fortu von Oertzen, Erenst Scherer,	Fortu von Oertzen, Erenst Scherer, Hannes Heuner	Arts Theatre
	<i>Der Prozess Mary Dugan</i>	Bayard Veiller	German Theatre Group	Hans Heinrich		Arts Theatre
<b>Date</b>	<b>Play Title</b>	<b>Playwright</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b>Actors</b>	<b>Venue</b>
<b>1963</b>						
	<i>The Sound of Murder</i>	C.R. Mayoss	Windhoek Theatre Group			Arts Theatre
	<i>Two for the Seesaw</i>	William Gibson	Windhoek Theatre Group	Brain Mills	Julie Mills	Arts Theatre
<b>1964</b>						
	<i>Patsy</i>			Milly Hälbach		Arts Theatre
<b>1965</b>						
	<i>Miss Julie van Spruitberg</i> <i>Des Königs Pantoffeln</i>	Hans Andrup	Children and Puppet Theatre Group			Arts Theatre
<b>1966</b>						

May 25- 30	<i>Macbeth</i>	William Shakespeare	English Theatre Group	Hans Andrup	J. Brown	Arts Theatre
June	<i>Puss in Boots</i>	Geovanni Francesco Straparola	Children and Puppet Theatre Group			Arts Theatre
<b>Date</b>	<b>Play Title</b>	<b>Playwright</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b>Actors</b>	<b>Venue</b>
July 28 - 30	<i>The Rape of the Belt</i>	Ben Levy	English Theatre Group	Gerry Holmes	Emmi Lubbe, Mae Kleye, David Gamsu, Joel Klutsky, Alvia McCauley, Gershon Isaacson, Barbara Dixon, Dorci Carpenter-Frank, Audrey Fuller, Sybille Schamberger	Arts Theatre
November	<i>Prairie Saloon</i>	Heinz Wunderlich	German Theatre Group	Fredi Frewer		Arts Theatre