

FREDERICK B. PHILANDER: AN EXPLORATION OF HIS CONTRIBUTION TO  
NAMIBIAN THEATRE (1979-2021)

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore Frederick B. Philander's contribution to Namibian theatre from 1979 to 2021. The study was intended to fill a gap in Namibian theatre history. In-depth interviews were done with Frederick B. Philander and theatre practitioners familiar with Frederick B. Philander's theatre practices. This study utilised archival information and written documentation of his work. The outcomes of the study indicated that Frederick B. Philander made important contributions to Namibian theatre over the aforementioned years. Philander's contribution includes a legacy that continues on in the current generation of theatre practitioners to whom he provided acting and staging opportunities. Philander has made significant contributions to the promotion of theatre outside of Namibia's borders. Philander is a theatre practitioner who has written and performed various plays that have been published. Philander established several theatre groups such as Windhoek Theatre Association, Windhoek Players, Serpent Players and CAN, and also chaired Assitej-Namibia. Philander was the first 'black' Namibian playwright to have published his plays. He also broke the pillars of apartheid when he staged the first 'non-white' play in an 'all-white' theatre. He further staged a controversial play *The Beauty Contest*, in which Philander and co- star appeared naked on stage. The research further found the need to document the work of theatre practitioners who have been active in the Namibian theatre, such as Vickson Hangula, Laurinda Olivier- Sampson, Sandy Rudd, Senga Brockerhoff, and Tanya Terblanche and others. These practitioners have been active in Namibian theatre over the years by writing plays and staging productions. Therefore, they deserve to be documented. It should be noted that theatre is still ongoing in Namibia at the time of this research, therefore it needs to be documented constantly.

**Key words:** contribution, explore, Frederick B. Philander, Namibian theatre

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## **DEDICATED TO**

I dedicate this research to the Holy Spirit and to everyone who has supported me on my academic journey. Thank you!

**DECLARATION**

I, Melgisedek Nehemia, 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 at any other institution of higher education.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS**

<b>AIDS</b>	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome virus
<b>ANC</b>	African National Congress
<b>ATKV</b>	Afrikaanse Taal Kultuur Verening
<b>BBC</b>	British Broadcasting Corporation
<b>CAN</b>	Committed Artist of Namibia
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus disease
<b>DB AUDIO</b>	David Benade Audio
<b>HIV</b>	Human immunodeficiency
<b>IUM</b>	International University of Management
<b>MPLA</b>	The People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola
<b>NAMCOL</b>	Namibian College of Open Learning
<b>NTN</b>	National Theatre of Namibia
<b>SABC</b>	South African Broadcasting Corporation
<b>SWAPAC</b>	South West African Performing Arts Council
<b>SWAPO</b>	South West African Peoples Organisation
<b>UCT</b>	University of Cape Town
<b>UNAM</b>	University of Namibia

**UNITA**

National Union for the Total Independence of Angola

**UNTAG**

United Nations Transition Assistance Group

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the study

This study was prompted by the interest shown by this researcher in the history and development of Namibian theatre. The research focuses on Frederick Brian Philander, a Namibian theatre practitioner, who has played, and continues to play, a pivotal role in Namibian theatre. Olivier-Sampson (2016) stated Philander is one theatre practitioner who remained active in the Namibian theatre. Even though Philander has been active in the theatre industry, there are others such as Sandy Rudd, Laurinda Olivier-Sampson, Vickson Hangula, Senga Brockerhoff, who were active in the theatre industry over the years. The study had the intention to bring to the front the significance of Philander's theatre and the influence thereof on the Namibian theatre.

From 1979 to 2021, Philander directed, wrote, and performed in several major productions, including *Joanie Galant-Hulle*, *King of the Dump*, and *The Beauty Contest*. Philander's plays have received international acclaim, including *King of the Dump* and *The Railwayman*. Accompanied by the late David Ndjavera, Philander visited 11 universities in England, Goldsmith Colleges and, the Acra Theatre in Gent, Belgium, in 1996 for live performances (Schauffer, 2009).

Ogundele (2000) stated that it is essential to maintain artistic traits as evidence of the past that cannot be reproduced in the same way as their creators. Art heritage consists of important materials that represent various groups of people; they remain our forefathers' eyes, mouths, ears, and other sensory organs that can be revisited from time to time for useful information whenever the need arises (Agbadge-Williams, 1996).

Heritage is the connection between the past and the present and the future through stories, traditions and objects that are memorised and preserved over time (Upper Hutt City, 2014). It should be emphasised that memories of the past live on in the hearts of eyewitnesses or people with knowledge of a specific scene, events, and history of a place and its people's lifestyles (Okpoko, 1990).

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

This study aimed to preserve by exploring and documenting the works and contributions of Frederick B. Philander to the Namibian theatre from 1979- 2021. The researcher decided to systematically document Philander's work to add the canon of available literature to the development of Namibian theatre.

## **1.3 Objectives of the study**

This study had the intentions to:

1.3.1 explore how Frederick B. Philander's theatre practices, ideas, visions and influence came to shape Namibian theatre practices and conventions.

1.3.2 study Philander's plays to comprehend the significance of his contribution and determine trends encapsulated in the themes of his plays.

1.3.3 record the activities of Philander as a local theatre practitioner during the period (1979-2021) and to what extent the theatre industry embraced his theatre productions.

## **1.4 Significance of the study**

There is a large gap in the knowledge of theatre history in Namibia (Mans, 2017). In recent years, two doctoral studies, covering various aspects of Namibia's theatre, have come to light. Laurinda Olivier-Sampson researched the policies, practices, and trends in Namibian theatre in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, while Suzette van der Smit covered the theatre activities of the Arts

Association (1947-1966). This research uncovered new in-depth information about Philander as a theatre practitioner and assessed his contribution to Namibian theatre. This research pays reverence to an eminent theatre practitioner who has devoted his life to theatre in Namibia.

### **1.5 Limitation of the study**

A concern was that all participants, who could contribute to the development of Namibia's theatre by Philander, were not residing in Windhoek, but a solution was to use email. This may have influenced interviews, either in person or to complete questionnaires, but it was done via email. Litkie (2003) outlined in her research, that covered a portion of the works of Frederick B. Philander in Southern Africa, that there is a tremendous need to do considerably more work on the collection and archiving of data on theatre practitioners and practices in Southern Africa. This is applicable to Namibia as well. Olivier-Sampson (2016) utters the same hope in her dissertation. The researcher used interviews based on personal opinions that might have potential biasness. A solution to this was to use triangulation to ensure objectivity and to eradicate subjectivity as far as possible.

This research included a study of selected plays by Philander. These particular plays were chosen to determine whether Philander made a contribution to the Namibian theatre. Philander claims to have written 18 plays. However, this study focused on just 14 of Philander's 18 plays that were performed in public. This study also included four plays by foreign playwrights that he staged. The four plays were included in this research, because they were performed in public and had information on their performances.

### **1.6 Delimitation of the study**

Emphasis was placed on a theatre practitioner, Frederick B. Philander, to make sure the study was manageable and accurate. Only theatre practitioners with knowledge of Philander and his theatre were questioned.

## **1.7 Conclusion**

Components such as the background of the study, statements of the problem as well as research objectives were deliberated on to the preliminary research on the works of Philander. Furthermore, it addressed the study's significance, limitations, and delimitations, which added to the clarity and necessity of the research. The next chapter deliberates on the reviewed literature and the theory that outlined this study.

## **CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The perspective of relevant literature to compare with other related studies is an important component of all research. This chapter provided a review of the available literature on Philander. It should be taken into consideration that there is not enough of an extensive pool to gather literature from due to the facts mentioned in the significance of the study concerning the literature available on Namibian theatre and Frederick B. Philander in particular. This research served to gather extensive information on the research topic for future reference researchers. This chapter highlighted existing knowledge in relation to the objectives and significance of the study.

### **2.1 Knowledge gap**

There are studies that investigated Philander's work. Schaffer (2009) discussed the background of Philander and the theatre organisations he formed in Namibia, as well as the analysis of selected plays. Litkie (2003) in her dissertation on *Selected Black African Dramatists in South of Zambezi*, which focused on the published or written texts on plays by the dramatists. Litkie made use of Schaffer's knowledge about Philander, such as play analysis and Philander's background. Though her study demonstrated valuable information, areas still need to be documented. Olivier-Sampson covered Philander's work in her dissertation. However, Olivier-Sampson (2016) stressed that the only assessment of Philander's work used in her research was how well his plays reflected his time's socioeconomic and political situations. On the other hand, this study focused on Philander as a theatre practitioner and his contribution to Namibian theatre.

## 2.2 Community theatre

According to Olivier-Sampson (2016), Philander claimed that the Community theatre movement was initiated when he came to Namibia in 1979. In mentioning about Community theatre movement's purpose, Philander (2002) stated "Its main aim and objective had been to activate, conscientise, inform and enlighten people on the then ethnic divided (sic) society" (p.2). Philander (2002) further mentioned that "With the exception of conventional colonial theatre practice by the then South- West African Arts council, community theatre was non existing" (p.2). Olivier-Sampson (2016) stated that "Philanders statements were discredited by Andre Strauss, the Deputy Director of culture in the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture. Leon Beukes (1991) claimed, theatre was always part of Namibia, be it in school performances in churches or staged plays. Strauss, according Olivier-Sampson (2016) explained that:

A distinction should be made between three types of theatre namely: commercial theatre, conventional theatre forms using community themes and community theatre which works directly with communities and voice the current concerns of the communities. He felt that Philander's work resorted under the second category (Olivier- Sampson, 2016, p.99).

Olivier-Sampson (2016) further mentioned that when Philander first started with theatre, he staged plays by Adam Small and later he staged plays by Athol Fugard. Philander would have audience seated on one end receiving what was presented and the actor on the other end of the stage delivering their performance. "The Community theatre, according to Strauss, should be actively involved in all stages of the production and, in the end, become what Augusto Boal (1979) referred to as spect-actors" (Olivier-Sampson, 2016. p.99).

Bassey (2017) agreed that Community theatre is viewed as a drama, of, by, and for the community by appropriate artistic practices for its desires. Bassey (2017) further mentioned

that Community theatre is a practice of using theatre as an agency for development and education. Matusse (1999, as cited in Olivier-Sampson, 2016) described “this format used by Philander as a legacy of the colonial rule. He asserted that the curtain rose on Western theatre (in Africa) with the arrival of colonial rule” and it did not leave at the end of the occupation” (p.99). Olivier-Sampson (2016) describes this type theatre as:

Characteristic of this form of theatre was the use of halls, scripts, directors and an array of effects of which the monetary was an important one. This type of theatre had to be purchased by the audience in contrast to pre-colonial forms that had no purpose-built venues and were offered to the community for free (Olivier-Sampson, 2016, p.99).

Although Philander mentioned that he uses Community theatre, it is not in accordance with its definition. When theatre is monetized, it becomes Commercial theatre, which according to Bonet & Schargorodsky (2018) is theatre that operates like a business, with the primary goal of making a profit. This can take many forms, from charging for tickets to running advertisements before and during shows.

Philander (2002) stated about the Community theatre movement the following:

Over the years community theatre uncompromisingly exposed, poked fun at, informed, educated and enlightened the Namibian people on different levels and through many forms of theatre; grass roots, community, etc. In this regard many practitioners were seen as cultural activists with a mission. Some were politically vulnerable and were taken advantage of. Others stood firm, maintained their independence, integrity and are still pursuing their theatrical hopes and dreams as cultural combatants (Philander, 2002, p.2).

What Philander write is plays based on what is happening in the community, without the input from community members, thus excluding them from them from the equation. However, A.W. Olifant describes Philander’s type of theatre as Protest theatre.

### 2.3 Protest theatre

Oliphant (2005) stated that reading Frederick B. Philander's plays exposes the reader to the genre of playwriting:

which deals with social and political themes playwrights from all over the world, including the African continent, have used this style of theatre to great success. The writing for the theatre by Philander is part of a larger African political and cultural opposition to colonial dominance and is deeply based on anti-colonial battles of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is tied to societal-specific economic and political crises in other regions of the world (Oliphant, 2005, p. 5).

Pertson (1995) stated that Protest theatre is a form of theatre which makes people aware of political, social and environmental issues. Diala (2006) mentioned Protest theatre is based on theatre productions which are created to bring the problems to its people and a good example of the plays that fit this description are South African plays e.g., *Sizwe Bunzi is Dead*, *Woza Abert!* And *Districts six*. Diala (2006) stressed that in South Africa, during the 1970's and 1980's, forms of art such as music, poems, and drama were used as a weapon against apartheid struggles. They expressed the contrasting perceptions of the 'whites' and 'blacks.' This is also applicable to Namibia, as it was also under the South African apartheid regime. Schauffer (2009) stated that Protest theatre in Philander's plays "is always close to the surface, and some instances into the realms of theatre of resistance" (p.23). Theatre of resistance refers to the type of theatre that has the objective to rally and mobilizing the oppressed to fight against oppression (Gorak, 1989). Schauffer pointed out the following example in *Katutura 59' or The Curse*:

At the end of the Curse for instance, the white mayor of Windhoek, who tries to persuade the crowd to move from Old Location to the new high-density township of Katutura, is stoned. He falls and the crowd throw sticks and stones at the police who retaliate with live ammunition. In the crowd as one of the characters, is Sam Nujoma. Significantly, as the action of the play turns to violent resistance, there is a change

of language register to Nama and Herero in the dialogue in the crowd which counter poisoned against Afrikaanse and English “oppressors” (Schauffer, 2009, p.23).

Olifant (2005) in his forward to Philander’s plays, mentioned that the dramatic register of the Philander’s plays belongs to what is generally known as protest against social injustices and the abuse of power. Oliphant (2005) further stated that “this form of theatre has been practised with great effect by playwrights across the African continent and around the world” (p. 5).

Oliphant further outlined the following:

Rooted in the anti-colonial struggles of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this writing for the theatre is part of the broader African political and cultural resistance to colonial domination. In other parts of the world, it is related to economic and political crises specific to each society. In Africa with the advent of National liberation and de-colonisation, after the Second World War, this form of theatre assumed a new-post colonial orientation. This is, it engaged the new social conditions, or to use Chinua Achebe’s phrases, it is examined the “hopes and impediments”, which came to bear an independent state across Africa. Chief among these playwrights is: Wole Soyinka from Nigeria, Ngungi was Thiongo and Ngungi wa Miri from Kenya, Adam Small, Athol Fugard, Mbongeni Ngema, Matemela Manaka, John Kani, Zakes Mda and a host of others from South Africa and the rest of the continent belongs to this tradition (Philander, 2005, p.4).

Schauffer’s statement on Philander going into resistance theatre is true, but it should be considered that *Katutura 59’* or *The Curse* may be the only play that presented resistance in the way it was written and how the characters interacted. Although, Philander’s play may fall into the category of Commercial theatre, the main purpose is on the content in the plays. Bonet & Schargorodsky (2018) describe Protest theatre as general and theatrical or Political term used to describe theatre that is used to protest, and address economic inequalities and social skills. The predominant of his plays are Protest theatre, because they do not rally people

to resistance. Therefore, Philander's type of theatre falls between Protest and Commercial theatre.

## **2.4 Youth Theatre**

Philander, has been involved in youth theatre, through the National Youth Theatre Festival and Assitej-Namibia. Huges & Wilson (2004) stated that the term 'youth theatre' defines a wide variation of organisations that engage young people in theatre-related activities in their own time. It takes place outside of formal education and is founded on the voluntary participation of young people. Huges & Wilson (2004) added that young people are required to take part in a variety of activities within the youth theatre and this includes, devising and performing theatre productions with their peers. Philander's involvement in Youth Theatre was elaborated on in Chapter 5.

## **2.5 Poor theatre**

Schauffer (2009) stated that the writing and presentation style of Philander's plays falls under the 'Poor theatre' heading. Grotowski (2002) stated the term 'Poor theatre' is defined by a style of performance that rids itself of the excesses of theatre e.g., lavish costumes and detailed sets. Poor theatre centers around the actor's skill, and often with a hand full of props. When it comes to Philander's plays, Schauffer (2002) mentioned that a few essential items and of costumes and properties, and the most basic décor is all what was required and should fit into a car. Shaeffer further mentioned plays by Philander that do not require a simple setup such as e.g., *The Railwayman*, *The Teacher* and *Porridge Queen* and *Two men and a Baby*. "Philanders plays do not rely upon complex light effects, split second timing black out, the

use of elaborate lighting right backed by a sophisticated lighting control panel” (Schauffer, 2009). More information was shared, based on the experience from Namibian theatre practitioners in this this research in Chapter 7.

## **2.6 Narrative Theory**

Fisher (1987) proposed that a person is naturally an innate storyteller. Storytelling has been around since the dawn of time. It is a common form of communication, meaning individuals interpret their social settings through a narrative point of view, making decisions and acting within the narrative structure. Through recollection, research participants could narrate stories about their experiences with Philander's theatre practices, providing a direct account.

According to Miller (2005) Walter Fisher created the Narrative Theory in 1960 while pursuing his Doctorate at the University of Iowa. He created the narrative method using the theories of rhetoric and communication. Fisher earned a Golden Anniversary Monography Award from the Speech Communication Association in 1979 for his paper introducing the Narrative Theory to communication. Unfortunately, academics did not adopt the Narrative Theory (Miller, 2005). The hypothesis went against a number of previously held notions about what make people think, behave and communicate (Miller, 2005).

Fisher (1987) outlined the distinction by using the principles of two prevailing paradigms. According to the rational paradigm, humans are inherently rational, people base their judgments on arguments. The human communication context dictates the direction of people's arguments, and rationality is defined by how much people know and how they argue (Calabresi, 2019). Because various people have varied ideas regarding Philander's works and contributions to Namibian theatre, information from each research participant and recorded sources were used.

Fisher (1987) continued that the narrative paradigm maintains that individuals are basically narrators, and that people make decisions for good and bad reasons. What is regarded to be reasoning is defined by history, biography, culture, and character; narrative rationalities are governed by the coherence and insincerity of people's tales; and the universe is a set of stories from which individuals pick and continually build their lives (Fisher, 1987). It was critical to collect information from persons who observed the evolution of Namibian theatre through Philander's theatre practices between 1979 and 2021.

Consequently, Fisher (1987) stated that the narrative paradigm is all-encompassing. As a result, every communication may be evaluated via a narrative lens, even if it does not fit the usual literal requirements of a story. People may distinguish narrative rationality. Coherence and integrity are two criteria that determine rationality. The best way to describe coherence is whether or not a tale makes structural sense. Is the plot coherent, with sufficient information and reliable characters? The issue of narrative faithfulness is whether or not the story is true (McClure, 2009). Accounts from study participants, newspaper articles, archival papers, and other written sources included material to piece together a preliminary tale regarding Philander's contribution to Namibian theatre.

Fisher (1984) proposed five variables that determine the narrative authenticity of a story: questions of fact that evaluate the value inherent in the tale, either openly or implicitly, and questions of relevance that consider the relationship between the story being told and the values being imposed. As reported by Namibian theatre practitioners with first-hand experience and inquired whether the contribution and progress has genuinely been made to the Namibian theatre industry, the input information from participants was helpful and added fresh information to the current understanding of Namibian theatre history.

### **2.6.1 Utility of Narrative Theory**

According to Smith (1989) the Narrative Theory has been used in the field of communication, but not explicitly. Narrative Theory is a generic approach to communication by those who have utilised it in their study. Fisher's idea has been applied to interpersonal interactions and corporate communication (Smith, 1989). Several detractors claim that Fisher's idea is not universal. According to Rowland (1989), Narrative Theory should be rigorously applied to communication that matches the narrative patterns, because Fisher's generality undermines its credibility.

Narrative can be applied to any text or conversation, or it can be used to text utilised in the context of a qualitative research technique of inquiry (Chase, 2005), with a special focus on the tales conveyed (Polkinghorne, 1995). For instance, in interviewing study participants who revealed detailed information on an individual's impact on society, for instance Philander, the Narrative Theory was best suited.

Oral history comprises one or more people's own thoughts on events and their causes and effects (Plummer, 1983). Participant interviews provide a sort of oral history. The researcher investigated Philander's contribution to Namibian theatre by interviewing him to discuss his personal experiences and influence on Namibian theatre. The researcher interviewed theatre practitioners familiar with Philander's theatre practices. The oral narratives formed a base for the Narrative Theory that was applied.

### **2.6.2 Advantages of Narrative Theory**

It is simple to get participants for narrative research to capture detailed data, as participants are willing to reveal themselves and account for reflections of reality, giving participants a voice (Creswell, 2012; Newby, 2014). When utilising narrative research, it is generally easy

to encourage individuals to tell tales because most people are delighted to share a story about themselves or others (Ntinda, 2020).

In-depth data can be obtained since it occurs frequently and easily in narrative situations. When researchers use the narrative technique to describe findings, they can access a wealth of material that can provide an in-depth understanding of a participant's perspectives (Ntinda, 2020). Narrative research may give the researcher a thorough comprehension of the topic matter and extra insight into how to adapt stories to their own setting (Saving-Baden & Niel, 2007).

Humans tend not to speak the truth while recounting stories; if they do, it usually appears in extensive data interpretation. During story studies, the researcher builds intimate ties with participants, and people may feel their tales are heard and relevant (Creswell, 2012). The benefits of narrative research were relevant to this study since participants were free to offer their own voices and account for their experiences with Philander.

### **2.6.3 Disadvantages of Narrative Theory**

According to McLain (2016) narrative research can only collect a limited number of experiences, which researchers utilise to build a cohesive tale. As a result, the researcher must be aware of what is missing from each individual's story and the discrepancies between testimonies. To triangulate information, the researcher explored additional sources of information, such as newspaper stories and other documented material about Philander. The downsides of using storytelling in this study were that some participants had difficulty recalling exact dates when they narrated their interactions with Philander and his theatre activities.

## **2.7 Theoretical Framework**

This study utilised the Narrative Theory, as explained by Landa (2005). This theory is understood to be a semiotic representation of a sequence of events occurring at a particular time and in a particular order. These narratives are socially constructed stories that depict past events as they appear in the present to the narrator. Mathews and Ross (2010) proposed that narrators process, analyse, and narrate their stories. Therefore, the researcher asked Philander to provide a chronological account of his theatre experiences prior to leaving South Africa. The type of theatre he was involved in at that time was provided for, and how he began and conducted theatre upon arriving in Namibia in 1979 up until 2021, were all presented in a narrative format.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

This chapter deliberated on the available literature on Philander. It also addressed the types theatre genres in relation to Philander's practices. The chapter discussed the significance of the Narrative Theory to this study, which the researcher used to gain first-hand knowledge from Philander and theatre practitioners.

## **CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

The qualitative research method, using personal interviews and email questionnaires was applied in this study. According to Leavy (2017) qualitative research "values the richness of meaning and people's subjective experiences and meaning-making processes" (p. 124). Using the qualitative method enabled the researcher to thoroughly explore people's experiences through in-depth interviews (Hennink, Hutter, & Baily, 2020).

Frederick B. Philander and practitioners who acted for him and were or are familiar with his theatre practices provided primary data, through personal interviews and email questionnaires. Secondary sources such as accessible literature, newspaper articles, journals, and pertinent archive information were used in this research.

#### **3.1.1 Population**

The population consisted of 100 theatre practitioners in Namibia. Philander wrote 18 plays, but the researcher only selected 14 plays and four international plays by other playwrights that he staged in Namibia. The reason for selecting the 14 plays and four international plays, is because Philander claimed to have written 18 plays, but there were only 14 plays and four international plays that had available information on them. It could be that Philander might be referring to some of his unpublished work.

#### **3.1.2 Sample**

The researcher used a purposive sample. Etikan (2016) stated that purposive sampling is the deliberate selection of individuals based on their characteristics, expertise, experiences, or other criteria. Purposive sampling was ideal for this study since it provided a reliable narrative account of Philander's contribution. The researcher contacted 10 theatre practitioners in Namibia who had acted for or were acquainted with Philander, because they had knowledge

of Philander's theatre practices. During the process of engaging with the study participants, snowball sampling was employed to locate 10 or more possible research participants.

### **3.1.3 Research instruments**

To collect data for the study an interview guide was employed and attached (See Appendix 2) and the questionnaire guide (See Appendix 3). The personal interview for Philander and 23 theatre practitioners, was conducted using open-ended discussions. The questionnaires were sent via email with pre-determined questions to the two study participants of the 23. The questionnaires had pre-determined questions, followed by open-ended questions. To carefully comprehend Philander's contributions to Namibian theatre from 1979 until 2021, the researcher examined newspaper articles, journals, and records in the National Archives of Namibia, UNAM's Information & Learning Resource Centre, and the Faculty of Arts Library.

### **3.1.4 Procedure**

The researcher interviewed Frederick B. Philander as the primary source of information. Philander then provided names of possible participants. Data were further acquired by contacting performers and practitioners familiar with Philander's theatrical practices (1979-2021), and they further provided referrals for possible study participants. Participants who opted for emailed questionnaire were sent the emails, and they had a week to complete the questionnaire. Upon completion the researcher received feedback, but also had to inquire on certain areas mentioned by participants. The data were collected from study participants utilising an interview guide and recording the interview, and recorded information from emailed questionnaires, which were documented in the research.

### **3.1.5 Data analysis**

Given that this was exploratory research, the data were structured to identify common occurrences and patterns. The research aimed to be both descriptive and analytical where applicable. The study sought to balance a logical narrative and a thematic approach. The researcher used 14 out of 18 plays by Philander and included four international plays he staged in Namibia between 1979 and 2021.

### **3.2 Reliability and Validity**

Reliability in qualitative research refers to the stability of responses to multiple coders of data sets (Whittmore, Chase, and Mandle, 2001). Validity in qualitative research means the extent to which the data is plausible, credible and trustworthy, and thus can be defended when challenged (Ghazali, 2016). The subject of the research, namely Frederick B. Philander and his contribution to Namibian theatre, lends itself to potential biasness, which may have been a threat to the reliability of the research. To ensure that the study was valid and objective the researcher was cautious and triangulated all gathered information. The researcher made sure that the data was the correct interpretation of the participants meaning, and the researcher's conclusions were based on consistent information from all participants. The media is not always reliable with its information; therefore, triangulation was used to find factual information. The researcher used information from different sources mentioned in the literature review, to ensure that the research was objective.

### **3.3 Conclusion**

The study used a qualitative research approach and gathered data from Philander and 23 other study participants. This study included data from sources such as newspaper articles and other documented information that explored Philander's activities from 1979-2021. The following

chapter focuses on data presentation, and it contains more detailed and in-depth information about Philander's contributions.

## CHAPTER 4 FREDERICK BRIAN PHILANDER

This chapter introduces Philander while residing in South Africa and the background in theatre he gained there. The chapter also indicates Philander's arrival in Namibia, and his introduction to the theatre scene in Namibia.

### 4.1 Philander in South Africa

Frederick Brian Philander was born on November 12, 1949 (Schauffer, 2009). Philander is the son of a railway police officer and the brother of three sisters. Philander is from the Western Cape's central Karoo town of Beaufort West. Dr Christiaan Barnard, the surgeon who performed the first heart transplant on Louis Washkansky, was born in the same town, according to Philander. Dr Christian Barnard inspired Philander to create *My Dream Girl* in 1958, when he was nine years old. This stage play critiqued the prejudice against 'whites', 'blacks', and 'coloreds' (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

In addition, F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) asserted that the play *My Dream Girl*, which lasts 20 minutes, was performed by himself and the late Collin Appies, his childhood best friend. The play was about a man who wanted to be accepted by the elite society. The play was written, to express the desire of the poor to have the comfortable life of an Afrikaner. Collin was outstanding in his role as a girl in a wig and costume, and he and Philander received a standing ovation for it. Ms Wynn, Philander's primary school teacher, predicted that Philander would become a great writer, which he dismissed as a joke and asked her why she thought so, to which she replied that it was evident in the way he creatively wrote the play (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

Philander and other railway children had to break the cycle by constantly expanding their abilities in academics and sports, because it was assumed that in a society where illiteracy

was the norm, a railway child would never be cast in a school play because they were poor (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

#### **4.2 Philander at high school**

F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) stressed that during his high school years, he adapted a prescribed work, *Die Swart Pelgrim* 1960's (*The Black Pilgrim*) into a play. Philander staged this play at his school, and the school profited greatly by charging an admission fee. The purpose of staging the play was to raise funds for a trip to a nearby town for a function called the Arting Excursion, which they would have otherwise been unable to attend due to a lack of funds at their school (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022). This researcher is impressed by the fact that Philander as student was able to come up with an idea that benefited his school.

#### **4.3 Philander in Cape Town**

After graduating from high school, F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) mentioned that he proceeded to Cape Town to attend Hewitt Teaching Training College, which was known for producing notable South Africans like Dr Reid, who was a writer who wrote short stories. In 1971, during Philander's first year, he was cast as a severe lawyer in the Afrikaans drama *Die Rooi Duiwel Se As* (1970) a play by F W. Strydom.

Philander's role in *Die Rooi Duiwel Se As* and his late father, who served as a railway policeman for 35 years, inspired his lifelong dream of becoming an attorney. Later, in 1997, Philander would create the play *The Railwayman*, which was based on his father. Moreover, Philander wrote *Will of a Die-Hard Soldier* on his father (Schauffer, 2009). F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) stated that he was unable to follow his dream of

becoming an attorney because Latin was a requirement for entrance to study law but was not offered at their Hewitt Teaching Training College. Philander and others staged several plays at Hewitt Teaching Training College in 1971.

#### **4.4 Philander at Merweville**

Philander wanted to travel to rural places where nothing was occurring after finishing his studies because he desired to make a difference, so he moved to Merweville, where he received his first teaching job. Philander taught at Merweville Primary School for five years. Philander rapidly became active with the local inhabitants' living situations (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

Philander had an issue with the colonial educational system, stating that a child cannot be taught to become an adult; there must be a balance holistically, meaning developing a child through extra-curricular activities areas such as drama and academically, which he discovered at Merweville Primary School. Philander got his wish: to present plays with ex-students from the school. His theatre career began when he was allowed to form a theatre group with the ex-learners (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022). The term ex-learners here refer to young people who dropped out of school during their early years of school.

F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) continued to stress that he had to teach the ex-learners of Merweville Primary School how to read, write, study, and memorize scripts. Philander directed the two plays, *Die Rooi Duiwel Se As* and *Huis Vader*, in 1970's, which were staged at the local church of Merweville, after he received the right to stage his productions for two nights.

Besides that, F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) claimed that he began staging the mentioned plays and touring with them throughout cities surrounding Merweville,

employing ex-students from Merweville Primary School as players. Philander then approached a village store dealer about starting a tennis court with recreational activities to develop the community. Philander wanted to establish this program since he used to play tennis and soccer in college. The arrangement was that Philander would get a 50% discount on everything he bought from the dealer's shop (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022). Observing this, one can spot Philander's desire to always to do something in his community, such as starting the Youth Theatre Festival in Namibia.

Finally, Philander accepted the challenge to get 50% discount on anything he would buy from the shop dealer and went on to perform the mentioned plays in remote towns and in Beaufort-West, earning money, half of which he retained and half of which he handed to the dealer. The tennis court was built but not supported by the school principal, who Philander believed should have taken the initiative to build the community, resulting in Philander and the principal becoming adversaries (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

#### **4.5 Philander's arrival in Namibia**

F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) stated that he arrived in Windhoek, Namibia, on 16 June 1979, on self-imposed exile. The reason for moving was due to the fact that in South Africa, at the time, many 'coloreds' wanted to change South Africa, young 'colored' men began their political careers standing up against the 'whites', serving the African National Congress (ANC) at the time. The young 'coloreds' political status became a sin in the eyes of the 'whites', making Philander a victim because of his connection to political activities against the state (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

Warned by his father, Philander left South Africa for Namibia (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022). Schaffer (2009) asserted that Philander went into voluntary

exile because he was acquainted with Windhoek, which he visited in the late 1960's as a student who had gotten a holiday job on the South African railways.

F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) outlined that he came to Namibia after a long journey with his Volkswagen, which he thought would break down but eventually arrived. Philander began working for a newspaper that served the political agenda of the 'white' people and was a newspaper for the 'blacks' and 'coloreds'. Philander accepted to work for the newspaper *Die Joernaal* as a way to stay in Namibia. Two years later, the newspaper was shut down after the people who were in charge of it were beaten by South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) and other ethnic groups led by leaders, such as e.g., Peter Kalangula representing the Ovawambo people in the North and Daniel Luipert representing the people in the South (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

#### **4.6 Philander and the local theatre scene**

According to F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) when he arrived in Namibia, Namibian 'non-white' people did not even know where the 'white' theatre was. The theatre administration in Namibia under South West African Performing Arts Council (SWAPAC) catered for Western ideology during apartheid in Namibia. Philander became the first to stage the first 'non-white' play in what is known today as the National Theatre of Namibia (NTN) on the 3 August 1979, despite encountering problems because of racism from the 'white' administration (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

Furthermore, Philander utilised his position at *Die Joernaal* to publicise his interactions. Hannes Horne, the theatre's director, clashed with Philander because Horne could not comprehend contemporary theatre from the perspective of Namibians since he was used to performing 'white' theatre (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022). In 1979,

Philander proposed staging Adam Small's play *Joanie Galant-Hulle*, in which he portrayed the politically astute protagonist, Joseph. Philander cast the late Jonathan Sam in a role he had played previously in South Africa as Davy, Joanie Galant's brother. Jonathan Sam's girlfriend Bernadett Kloppers was also cast, as she was familiar with the role of Joanie. Danny Louw played the newspaperman, a role previously played by Philander. Although Louw had no experience, he ended up doing a good job in the role (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) further emphasised that the permission to perform *Joanie Galant-Hulle* came with specific stipulations, such as 'white' people not be allowed to watch a 'colored' play in a 'white' theatre. The letter (Not available in archives), Philander sent in response to the imposed restrictions not allowing 'white' people to attend the 'non-white' performance of *Joanie Galant-Hulle* was eventually published in *Die Joernaal*, where Philander was the newspaper editor.

Furthermore, F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) stressed that the Windhoek Theatre's 'white' administration that was under the National Party of South West, which owned *Die Suid-Wester* and *Die Joernaal*. The administration thought it was not a good idea to publish such an article. To which Philander threatened that if the newspaper owners did not publish the letter, that disagreed with the conditions that stated that 'whites' were not allowed to attend a 'non-white' play, he would resign and return to Cape Town. This action prompted the newspaper administration to publish the letter (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) said that, despite the prohibition on 'whites', many 'white' individuals attended the performance, as did many others from many walks of life from Walvis Bay, Swakopmund, Keetmanshoop, Rehoboth, Okahandja, and

Gobabis. "Everyone gathered to watch a historic event" (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

In addition, according to F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) the first night's performance had to start 20 minutes late due to the requirement for additional seats, and 90% of the awaiting audience in the queue were 'whites'. F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) further mentioned that the audience for the performance of *Joanie Galant-Hulle* filled the theatre to capacity for the first time. Due to a scarcity of seats, several individuals were forced to sit on steps.

All the performers were consequently anxious, with the exception of Philander and Jonathan Sam, yet for 90 minutes the cast captivated the audience. It was after 3 August, 1979, Philander understood that his theatre career officially started after standing tall despite the challenges of staging the play. Even after many years, people who attended the play came to Philander's future plays (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

The article on the play in *Windhoek Advertiser* of September, 6, 1979, stated that the play *Joannie Galant-Hulle* deals on one level with the problems of existence. It sketches the fall of a 'colored' family unit, pitted against powers beyond their control- the 'skollies', government officials and greedy people. *Joannie Galant-Hulle*, tells the sad story of a family persecuted under the Group Area Act, which was a headache and a political embarrassment for the South African government (Players arouse, 1979, p.9).

Players arouse (1979) stressed that the untold hardships and the adverse and cruel effects of that law on people evicted them from their lawful dwellings, this came strongly to the Anthony family, who were shamelessly evicted from their home in Woodstock after the area was declared 'white'. The family lost their house and were bureaucratically chased into townships

of the Cape flats with many social evils and problems created by the system of apartheid (Players arouse, 1979, p.9).

Additionally, Players arouse (1979) mentioned that “eventually, the family got temporary accommodation, after which, once again, they were evicted, and the bulldozer wilfully demolished their shanty” (p.9). “The family lands on the pavement, because they have nowhere to go. The play is the traumatic tale of an uprooted generation which stands out as South Africa’s most hideous and inhuman deeds against blacks” (Players arouse, 1979, p.9).

Moreover, according to Players arouse (1979) the play was scheduled for two additional performances for high school students in Windhoek on December 5 and 6, 1979, at the Rössing Education Centre in Khomasdal at 17:00. This was done by the play's popularity. The Windhoek Players called the play astonishing and inspiring for the work they have been doing (Players arouse, 1979).

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

This chapter presented that Philander’s interest in theatre. His passion at a tender age led him to be performing plays at college and to creating a theatre group at Merweville. His passion further ushered him to stage the play *Joanie Galant-Hulle* as the first ‘non- white’ group in an ‘all-white’ theatre, despite the challenges he encountered. It also showed Philander’s introduction to the local theatre scene in Namibia.

## **CHAPTER 5 THEATRE GROUPS AND THE YOUTH THEATRE FESTIVAL**

### **PHILANDER ESTABLISHED IN NAMIBIA**

This chapter discusses the theatre groups Philander founded and the Youth Theatre Festival and including an organisation on which he was chairman. The material in this chapter was compiled from personal interviews with Philander and theatre practitioners, newspaper articles, and publicly available documents that covered various parts of his theatre groups in Namibia from 1979 to 2021.

#### **5.1 Windhoek Theatre Association**

According to Schauffer (2009), in 1979, in Windhoek, Philander, founded the Windhoek Theatre Association, Windhoek Players, The Serpent Players, and Committed Artist of Namibia (CAN), which was the first 'non-white' company to play on SWAPAC's 'all-white' stage. Before 2003, Philander was the only published black playwright in a country where script publication by black playwrights was uncommon (Schauffer, 2009). In his publication *The Namibian Theatre Movement* (2002), Philander mentioned that that CAN was founded 1979 but what was founded in 1979 first was the Windhoek Theatre Association that performed *Joanie Gallant- Hulle in 1979* and its name was later changed to Windhoek Players. The exact year of establishment of CAN is not really clear, but based on the information gathered in this research, CAN was formed in 1980's even while Philander maintained the group name Windhoek Players. This researcher believes that since Philander was the person who established Windhoek Players, recollection of memory of things from the past was a problem as mentioned by the Narrative Theory applicable to this study.

## 5.2 The Serpent Players

According to F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) following the closure of *Die Joernaal*, he began working at a bakery. His first ex-wife, a nurse at the Khomasdal Clinic, landed him a job as a bakery manager. F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) added that each day, his job was to open the bakery for the bakers. Philander's earnings from this bakery were modest, but he could make a living. Philander quickly began to doubt his employment and offered that he drives the minivan and distribute bread, which is how he landed up in Katutura.

F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) continued that in 1982, he went to conduct a delivery at a business near Jan Jonker Afrikaner Secondary School, which was managed by the Nama administration. Philander visited the new school. As he entered the school premises, dressed in blue overalls, he was mistaken for a 'white' man, 'shilumbu' in Oshiwambo. F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) further mentioned that he spoke with the principal, a 'colored' man named Charles Jansen, who informed him that there was a vacant teaching position and that he should submit the requisite documentation. The following day, the principal came to the bakery and informed Philander that he had been hired.

Moreover, F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) stated that school teachers were asked to devise extra mural activities for students. Philander proposed that he become the school grounds beautifier by planting plants. The principal, aware of Philander's history in theatre, suggested that he perform theatre with the students. Even though Philander uses the term Community theatre, it could possibly mean that he refers to something that he does for the community. However, his approach is between Protest theatre and Commercial theatre based on the literature review.

F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) continued, saying that with the principal's consent, he began to choose possible students for plays. The students had no idea what theatre was all about, so Philander had to teach them. After walking through the entire school, he arrived at his final class with three students. He was ready to leave the school when he heard an 11-year-old child shout out to him, 'Sir, what about me, sir?' 'I'd want to act as well.' 'What makes you think you can act?' Philander said, and the youngster answered, 'But I can try, sir.' This was how Philander met the legendary late David Ndjavera, a boy who, according to Philander, excelled for 40 years in the theatre industry of Namibia (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022). David Ndjavera, would later work with Philander on many productions and travel internationally with him. Philander's influence ushered David Ndjavera into becoming a renowned actor, playwright and director in Namibian theatre till he passed on in 2021.

Following that, F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) continued there were around 10 trainees whom he taught and managed. Philander showed the learners several films that piqued their interest and described his plans to do with them. Following the success of *Joanie Galant-Hulle*, Philander planned to stage a play by Athol Fugard *Boesman and Lena*, whom he admired along with others such as Adam Small (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

*Boesman and Lena* was first performed when translate from English to Afrikaans in 1980 with the agreement of Athol Fugard by Philander and was presented at Cape Town's 'The People's Space Theatre', formally known as 'The Space Theatre'. Philander portrayed Boesman, Shirly Jansen played Lena, and Johannes Gawab played Outa (Sam, 1989). Philander (2002) stated that the play was performed for two nights at the Windhoek Theatre now NTN to full capacity house and subsequently was taken on a tour to Western Cape.

F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) goes on to say that in June 1982, he used an excerpt from Athol Fugard's play *Boesman and Lena* to create a one-act play and founded The Serpent Players with the 10 students he chose. The group began meeting once a week after school, and the frequency of meetings progressively increased. Because of their excitement about learning about theatre, the learners did not want to go home after school (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) added that he picked three out of the 10 learners since the play only had three roles. John Isaacks, Robert Isaacks, and Hansina Isaaks were chosen to be part of the play *Boesman and Lena*. The performance was successfully performed for 40 minutes in the open-air square during the school assembly. Several teachers began to accuse Philander of using the students for his personal gain. Philander believed that what the teachers were acting out of jealousy and believed that theatre was affecting students academically. But despite the accusation Philander consistently got an average grade in all of his classes (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) added that The Serpent Players were invited to present the play *Boesman and Lena* to other schools, including Immanuel Shifidi Secondary School, Augustineum Secondary School, and Ella Du Plessis Secondary School. The Serpent Players quickly became Namibia's national centre of Youth Theatre. After that, F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) emphasised that the play *Boesman and Lena* began to be presented often in 1983. The introduction of The Serpent Players introduced the school drama competitions among the mentioned schools until the Youth Theatre Festival.

F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) asserted the Afrikaanse Taal Kultuur Verening (ATKV) visited Namibia in preparation for the annual Traditional School Theatre competition held in South Africa. Namibia was included as a participant in the competition.

Philander chose to enter the tournament without informing the event's administrative team that he was competing with 'black' trainees because it was an 'all-white' endeavour (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022). The reason for not mentioning that the actors were 'blacks' Philander feared that the administration would perhaps not allow the group to perform, since it was still before the independence of Namibia, in the era of apartheid.

F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) continued that the finals for the competition for the ATKV at Concordia High School were with the play *Alle Paaie lei na Rome*. The Serpent Players won the tournament and were chosen as Namibia's representative group to compete in a regional competition in Stellenbosch, South Africa. Philander got R2,000 from his 'white' friend, auto dealer Jacky Cohen, enabling the group to travel to South Africa for the ATKV Northern Regional competition.

F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) further stated that the performance venue in Stellenbosch was 'all-white' with no 'blacks'. The competition's judges were well-known television personalities. The Serpent Players took the stage first and received a standing ovation. The players won and became the first Namibian 'black' group to perform in Johannesburg South Africa at the Roodepoort Theatre for the finals (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) continued that he realised that, because the group was the first Namibian 'black' group, they would not win because the tournament had been an on-going 'white' tradition on for 70 years. Consequently, because the group was 'black' did not stand a chance to win. The team did not win but earned second-place medals and interviews with the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). David Ndjavera and the other new performers were routinely cast in Philander's productions once the group returned to Namibia (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

Norman Job is a Namibian actor who was a Jan Jonker Afrikaner Secondary School member and The Serpent Players. Norman Job migrated to Namibia from South Africa in 1984 and began attending Jan Jonker Afrikaner Secondary School in 1985. Philander had founded The Serpent Players when Job enrolled at Jan Jonker Afrikaner Secondary School. After viewing a self-written play by Norman Job and Lucky Pieters as a class exercise in 1986, Philander asked Norman Job about participating in school theatre competition (N. Job, personal communication, August 10, 2022).

Philander called Norman Job for an audition for a role in the play, *The Black Pilgrim*, 1985 to act alongside Lucky Pieters, and Dannie Matroos. Norman Job was cast in three roles in *The Black Pilgrim*. The play was entered into competition at the Windhoek Theatre. However, it did not win (N. Job, personal communication, August 10, 2022).

Lucky Pieters a Namibian actor who attended Jan Jonker Afrikaner Secondary School and is now lecturer at the International University of Management (IUM). Lucky Pieters has known Philander for almost 40 years, and Philander was his teacher at Windhoek's Jan Jonker Afrikaner Secondary School. Philander introduced Pieters to theatre during his senior year of high school before Pieters matriculated (L. Pieters, personal communication, August 3, 2022).

L. Pieters (personal communication, August 3, 2022) stressed Philander was and still is a hardworking individual who dislikes mistakes in theatre shows. Philander guarded Lucky Pieters and others when they were The Serpent Players. During, The Serpent Players era in 1980's, before it was changed to CAN, Namibia only had three theatre companies: The Serpent Players, Bricks, and NTN (L. Pieters, personal communication, August 3, 2022).

L. Pieters (personal communication, August 3, 2022) stressed Philander was well-versed in the theatre industry and its politics. Whenever The Serpent Players wanted to act in a different theatre group, he would caution them not to be used as conduits to gratify the egos of others

in the theatre industry. “Philander desired to train The Serpent Players until the young actors were experienced and talented enough to make their own judgements” (L. Pieters, personal communication, August 3, 2022).

L. Pieters (personal communication, August 3, 2022) confirmed that Philander scouted Norman Job and David Ndjavera from Jan Jonker Afrikaner Secondary School. As a teacher, Philander moved from class to class, announcing that there was a play and that anyone interested should give their names and try acting. The young players had no idea what it was, but it was all in good fun, and Philander would assemble them and teach them theatre.

"As a Serpent Player, it was the ideal option to either go fool about after school with friends and do reckless things, but the drama was the best choice over athletics since it was pleasant for a shared experience" (L. Pieters, personal communication, August 3, 2022).

Furthermore, becoming part of The Serpent Player entailed that the actors were to be cast into a stage play and bringing the character to life. As entertaining as it was for the players, as they grew, the group began to realise that acting could be a voice for their grievances, since it was still before independence (L. Pieters, personal communication, August 3, 2022). L. Pieters (personal communication, August 3, 2022) added that the performers began to become politically conscious and began to utilise theatre as a tool to voice their aspirations for freedom (L. Pieters, personal communication, August 3, 2022). Namibia was then first known as German South West Africa, then as South West Africa reflecting the colonial occupation by the Germans and South Africans before 1990.

L. Pieters (personal communication, August 3, 2022) further mentioned that the South African government watched The Serpent Players whenever they visited schools. When Lucky Pieters and others toured to South Africa to perform educational productions in different towns, these tours were just as educational for The Serpent Players, as Philander would take actors to all

the important places, like the Market Theatre, and introduce them to actors like John Kani as they toured.

L. Pieters (personal communication, August 3, 2022) stated that the “South African Market Theatre is very competitive, and you cannot just take any production that does not satisfy a particular level.” Most of the pieces performed in South Africa by The Serpent Players were by South African top playwrights such as Athol Fugard, e.g., *Siswe Banzi Is Dead and Boesman and Lena* (L. Pieters, personal communication, August 3, 2022). It should be taken into consideration that *Siswe Bunzi is Dead* was written by Athol Fugard in collaboration with John Kani and Winston Ntshona in 1972. The Dates of performances by The Serpent players is not known, due to the theatre practitioner’s recollection. The group would travel to South Africa with two South African plays to break into a certain market and one Namibian play to introduce what was done in Namibia. In 1980’s, The Serpent Players was changed to CAN, by Philander (L. Pieters, personal communication, August 3, 2022).

J. Isaacks (personal communication, August 3, 2022) stated at the age of 14, he encountered Philander as his Geography teacher at Jan Jonker Afrikaner Secondary School in the 1982. Philander sparked Isaack’s interest in the theatre. Isaacks was one of the chosen students to perform in Philander's play *Boesman and Lena* in the 1982, and he subsequently played the truck driver in *King of the Dump*. Even though John never went on to study theatre, he values the chance and experience he gained from working with Philander, even now, at the age of 55 (J. Isaacks, personal communication, August 3, 2022). Even though Philander never studied directing, his passion and years of dedication and consistency allowed him to leave an impact in those he worked with.

Philander met John Kani on two of The Serpent Player’s instructional tours. The first meeting occurred in the Southern Cape when Philander accompanied the trainees to see live theatre in

order to stimulate them. The second meeting took place in the Market Theatre in Johannesburg. John Kani was the first 'black' man to appear on stage in an August Strindberg's play *Miss Julie* in 1985, performing beside a 'white' actress and kissing a 'white' woman played by Sandra Prinsloo. Philander obtained a discount for his 30 students. John Kani recognised Philander's contribution to Southern African theatre when he was invited to NTN's Bi-Annual Film and Theatre Awards (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022). The exact year of John Kani's visit to Namibia was not clear even after contacting necessary sources. Philander toured and performed plays in South Africa at places such as Market Theatre and this could have inspired and encouraged the actors to become even better at their craft by watching other actors perform. John Kani's recognition shows how well Philander was doing.

### **5.3 Windhoek Players**

Olivier-Sampson (2016) stated that Philander created the Windhoek Players in 1979. The term 'Players' is a contradiction because Philander was the only permanent and consistent group member. Others collaborated with him for different periods of time and some people were appointed for specific works. The Windhoek Players was later called the Committed Artists of Namibia (Olivier-Sampson, 2016).

The Windhoek Players catered for raw talent, who did not need stage performance experience, and were used in amateur productions (Schauffer, 2009). While for CAN, F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) stressed that with David Ndjavera and other actors growing through each performance, the quality of actors had improved to the point where he decided to create a semi-professional company called CAN.

#### 5.4 Committed Artists of Namibia

Philander (2002) asserted that “from the onset in 1979 CAN as the then Windhoek Players has been a forefront in the intellectual and colonial emancipation of the people of Namibia and South Africa through its consistent, fearless and revolutionary theatre programs on a wide front” (p.9).

The official approach of the group, then by his publication *The Namibia Theatre Movement* (2002), was for a progressive theatre development of a policy of radicalism for political and democratic change, inspired by its motto “if we can’t beat the colonialist on the battle field, we could hit them culturally from stage” (p.9). Philander (2002) stated that that is exactly what CAN did, something that brought it into disfavor of the illegal colonial regime in Namibia. To which later resulted in Philander being banned from the premises of the Windhoek Theatre which is now NTN. This may be to the fact that Philander by nature is man who speaks his mind, and does not hesitate to even swear. Philander does not hesitate to write plays on what he sees as unpleasant, and this may have gotten him to be in disfavor with the Windhoek Theatre at the time.

F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) emphasised that he began focusing on CAN because he wanted to expand and show his work beyond the border, following the success of the Namibia Annual Youth Theatre Festival and the fact that he toured with most of his adult plays, such as *The Beauty Contest* and *King of the Dump* in 1980’s and 1990’s in nearby towns and rural areas in Namibia. Philander was confident that it was time for him to stage his own plays rather than the plays which his audiences became bored of, plays such as *Boesman* and *Lena* by (Athol Fugard) and *Siswe Banzi Is Dead* written by Athol Fugard, Winston Ntshona and John Kani (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022). According to N. Job (personal communication, August 10, 2022), The Serpent Players

changed their name to CAN and visited several Namibian schools. Philander provided Norman with challenging characters, primarily in Athol Fugard's plays.

"A notable play for me is *My Children, My Africa*, in which I co-starred with David Ndjavera and Felicity Celento, as well as *Sizwe Banzi Is Dead*, in which I co-starred with John Isaaks" (N. Job, personal communication, August 10, 2022). CAN also created the Youth Theatre Festival.

### **5.5 CAN and Namibia Annual Youth Theatre Festival 1984**

Philander founded the Annual Youth Theatre Festival in 1984. This Annual Youth Theatre Festival was created and managed by CAN. The first six local school groups to compete were secondary schools: Ella Du Plessis, Augustineum, Immanuel Shifidi, St Paul's, Jan Jonker Afrikaner, and A. Shipena. There was a preliminary round in which judges chose three of the top plays out of six (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) stressed the committee selected Jan Jonker Afrikaner (The Serpent Players), St Paul's, and Immanuel Shifidi secondary schools for the finals. The Serpent Players won the competition. Philander initiated the Namibia Annual Youth Theatre Festival because he did not want to travel to rural places and wanted to offer his players the opportunity to perform in a real theatre (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022). Real theatre in this case could refer to Commercial theatre. The Serpent Players were performing in schools when they started, and he wanted them to experience a paying audience. F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) mentioned that The Serpent Players were unbeaten in the Annual Youth Theatre Festival competition for the next five years (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022). Based on this research, Philander could have initiated the Youth Theatre Festival, after having

partaken in the ATKV and must have been inspired to create something of the similar nature for Namibia.

F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) mentioned that he began to seek financing for the Namibia Annual Youth Theatre Festival from different companies owned by 'white' individuals. By telling them that the event was multicultural, Philander assumed that one of them would be prepared to support the initiative. Philander assumed that by inviting 'white' schools, he would almost certainly receive support (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022). Philander's motives to approach the 'white' individuals could have been motivated by the some of the challenges mentioned by Felicity Celento in some of the difficulties faced during acquiring of finances for the Youth Theatre Festival. However, Philander would get support for the Youth Theatre Festival in 2003 from e.g., The Franco-Namibia Cultural Centre (FNCC), Finish embassy in Windhoek and the Ministry of Basic Education, Sports and Culture.

F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) stated that the Youth Theatre Festival lasted for 24 years since its inception. Which indicates that it must have ended 2008. Olivier-Sampson (2016) stressed in her dissertation that the Youth Theatre Festival was active till 2015. However, this seems to bring some kind of unclarity to the exact date when it ended. Due to the comprehension of the nature of the theory used in this research, it is understandable that certain information may be forgotten or unclear. Whether there were sponsorships for the last two Youth Theatre Festivals, is not known.

F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) emphasised that the festival lasted three nights, with two plays performed each night during performance days. Philander hired judges who were not paid and sometimes when they were paid, they received N\$ 200. The reason they were not paid was because there was an agreement with the Ministry of Education, to

allow teachers to be on the jury. Keetmanshoop eventually began to send their own schools, as did other towns such as Walvis Bay and Mariental, and the festival grew over the following 24 years.

At first, Philander oversaw the Youth Theatre Festival, which became renowned as a one-man show. Then he hired Felicity Celento as secretary and David Ndjavera as chairman of the committee. He chose them because he wanted individuals familiar with theatre (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

CAN wanted to make the festival an annual event and a permanent feature on the Namibian calendar. The Annual Youth Theatre Festival's principal was to give a platform to Namibian playwrights to showcase their work (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

V. Hangula (personal communication, August 23, 2022) stated “I directed Frieda Karipi in her play *Goodbye Sister Evil* at the Youth Theatre Festival. Philander brought the Namibia Annual Youth Theatre Festival to other regions of Namibia, allowing them to participate.” Hangula’s statement can be confirmed by Philander (2002), stating that the first Hardap Karas region Youth Theatre Festival was held at Mariental. The groups that took part in the festival were Gideon theatre group of Cornelius Oaseb High of Gibeon, Rehoboth School of the Arts, Mariental High and the Keetmanshoop group.

Several theatre practitioners, such as Severius Majiedt, emerged through the Namibia Annual Youth Theatre Festival. Even though Vickson Hangula believed that *Goodbye Sister Evil* deserved to win, it was immoral for Philander to organise and win the festival with one of his plays (V. Hangula, personal communication, August 23, 2022).

In 1988, Lucky Pieters created his first play, *Echoes*, and submitted it to the Namibia Annual Youth Theatre Festival. The play earned first place in the school category, leading him to compose *Gobotsi Man* (Who would console me) in 1990 (Philander, 2002). Lucky Pieters

received the top price at the Namibia Annual Youth Theatre Festival in 2000 for his one-man play *Gobotsi Man*, which allowed him to represent the production at the Expo in Hannover, Germany. The play has also been performed in Zimbabwe, Botswana, Lesotho, and Ireland (Philander, 2002).

Severius Majiedt, a theatre practitioner who is now a reverend, encountered Philander as an actor in the Annual Youth Festivals contests through his instructor, Kubbe Rispel. S. Majiedt (personal communication, August 9, 2022) recalled participating in the Namibia Annual Youth Theatre Festival with high school Tamariskia in Swakopmund from 1987 to 1989 and again after independence. Severius Majiedt co-starred with Ombili Katongolo and Lazarus Jacobs from his school (S. Majiedt, personal communication, August 9, 2022). The plays were not recalled during the interview.

Philander organised the Annual Youth Theatre Festival, and he is regarded as the ‘Father of Namibian Theatre’ in terms of the ‘non-white’ portion, a claim shared by Vickson Hangula, Kubbe Rispel, and Ronald Krotz (S. Majiedt, personal communication, August 9, 2022). Severius Majiedt appeared in several plays, including *Die Stoel* by Kubbe Rispel and *Judas Iscariot* (S. Majiedt, personal communication, August 9, 2022).

Armas Shivute, a theatre and film actor from Namibia, has known Philander since the early 2000’s. Shivute appeared in the early 2000’s production of *Katutura 59* produced by CAN at the Namibia Annual Youth Theatre Festival. Shivute entered a play for the Festival, *My Big Brother*, which he wrote, directed, and acted in alongside the late Boetijie Kavange. The play won Best Play in 2000 (A. Shivute, personal communication, August 2, 2022).

Kubbe Rispel, who as a teacher by profession, began his theatre career in 1984/1985, with his young actors Lazarus Jacob, Ombili Katongola, and other actors. Kubbe Rispel represented

Swakopmund's Tamariskia High School. Kubbe Rispel's play *The Chair* won in 1988, and *Dream Child* won in 1989 (K. Rispel, personal communication, August 23, 2022).

According to Philander (2002), David Ndjavera mentioned that the festival was the vehicle and venue that propelled Namibian playwrighting forward constantly for the following 20 years. After winning with his debut comedy, *The Bride and The Broom* in 1997, the festival helped to establish Ndjavera as an acclaimed dramatist and established playwright.

Philander (2002) stated that Petrus Haakskeen, a Namibian actor, stressed that the Annual Youth Theatre Festival was a fantastic vehicle for Namibian playwrights to experiment with drama writing and a terrific opportunity to strengthen their creative skills. The Youth Theatre Festival allowed Haakskeen and other playwrights the opportunity to showcase their own pieces. Several of those who participated in the Youth Theatre Festivals became now well-known playwrights (Philander, 2002).

Richard Swarts, a Namibian theatre practitioner who participated in the Namibia Annual Youth Festival and Assitej-Namibia, says he was honoured to be a part of the Youth Theatre Festival, which gave many Namibian playwrights a chance to shine. In 2002, Richard earned the festival's dramatist award for *Street Life* (Philander, 2002).

Felicity Celento, a Namibian theatre practitioner who has performed in Philander's plays and was the secretary of the Namibia Annual Youth Theatre Festival. Celento was able to showcase her ability as a stage performer, and to meet other performers, and learn about other cultures during the festival. Every year, the event became something to look forward to (Philander, 2002). Albert Rickerts, a Namibian theatre practitioner, was also allowed to participate in the Youth Theatre Festival in (sic) 1984. The opportunity he received gave him valuable experience for his acting career, and was cast in local shows, movies, and his first

overseas theatre exchange program in Denmark (Philander, 2002). The evidence of the movies that Albert Ricketts did was not available.

According to Philander (2002), Aldo Behrens who served as a judge at the Youth Theatre Festival, the festival was to provide a communal mouth piece, having the Youth Festival sensitize the youth that there is more to live than “cognitive articulation”. It exposed one to artistic rhythm and rime and to a creative and God given human function (p.9). Philander (2002) further mentioned that Danie Strydom who served as adjudicator for Committed Artist’s Youth Theatre Festival for several years mentioned that over the time, he was amazed to see how the standard of work improved, both in acting and directing areas of the productions.

In addition, Philander (2002) further mention that Danie Strydom stressed that “the talent which came to the front was unbelievable and was convinced that Namibia is one of the countries with loads of talent for the stage. Philander (2002) additionally stated that Danie Strydom added that the Youth Theatre Festival was one of the few, “if not the only opportunities where people interested in stage work could show their talents and where they could get a chance to perform. It also meant local people could watch their own people perform” (p.9).

Philander (2002) furthermore outlined that Francis S Nyati who also served as a judge for the Youth Theatre Festival shared that the eminence of work that was shown at the Youth Theatre Festival was impressive. What impressed him was the amount of work put into the productions by the actors, who brought to standard to a representative theatrical atmosphere. Francis S Nyati believed that the Youth Theatre Festival functioned as platform for revealing unidentified talent mostly from rural areas to the mainstream of acting. It has also allowed actors and playwrights to learn from each other (Philander, 2002).

Laurinda Olivier-Sampson was also one of the judges for the Youth Theatre Festival in 1998 (Philander, 2002). Laurinda Olivier-Sampson described the festival “as well organised, and what was encouraging was the number of young people who were in the audience. Great care was also considered to ensure that the benefits of the festival did not only go to participants but also their peers” (Philander, 2002). Laurinda Olivier-Sampson also mentioned that “The quality of work presented ranged from mediocre to very good. In the section for community groups, especially, I saw Namibia theatre that was on par with the best I have seen in the country” (Philander, 2002, p.15).

Based on the information found by this research, The Youth Theatre Festival truly provided opportunities for young Namibian actors, directors and playwrights to show case their talent. The Youth Theatre Festival kept theatre alive in Namibia, and this can be credited to Philander for starting the initiative, which this researcher believes to be his contribution to Namibian theatre. Some of the mentioned individuals who were part of the Youth Theatre Festival are still active in the Namibian theatre industry today e.g., Felicity Celento, Lucy Pieters, Norman Job, Vickson Hangula and Frieda Karipi.

### **5.5.1 CAN organising the Youth Theatre Festivals**

Philander (2002) stressed Felicity Celento shared that the logistics of arranging the event over 16 years were enormous. “Finding a location for a non-profit theatre organisation with little funding and sponsors for the festival was frustrating. Sometimes the group received funds, but other times they were forced to perform in underequipped school halls” (p.38).

Furthermore, Philander (2002) stated that Celento continually organised schools because most school officials did not understand theatre. Over the past 20 years, schools from Windhoek, Okahandja, and Swakopmund have worked together to attend and showcase their work at the

Annual Youth Theatre Festival. “Additional responsibilities included picking scripts for the Youth Drama Festival, a time-consuming procedure often involved reading 30 handwritten scripts. Following the selection of scripts, props, lighting, and sound requests were recorded” (Philander, 2002, p.38). This information shows that the challenges faced by CAN over the years to organise the Youth Theatre Festival. It shows the determination and passion for theatre by the group. Another part of the works of CAN was with the group Assitej-Namibia.

### **5.6 CAN and Assitej-Namibia 2002**

Giles (2021) stated that Assitej is an international Association of Theatre for children and young people, which was established in 1965. Assitej (2019) stated Assitej exists to develop the field of theatre and performing arts for young audiences worldwide. This is accomplished by connecting members to National Centres, regional networks, professional networks and bringing individual members into the larger Assitej membership for international interchange.

Assitej (2019) stated that Assitej provides possibilities for young audiences to grow stronger and more successful in the area of theatre through its programs and activities, which include publication, promotion, research, networking, creative exchange, mentorship, and development. Philander (2002) stressed that Assitej’s actions in Namibia were directed by a constitution that adhered to the values of the international body. Assitej-Namibia was able to expand its educational operations throughout Namibia.

Assitej-Namibia toured schools in 2005 and presented the play *My Children, My Africa* to different schools in different regions in Namibia. The delegation also visited De Duine Secondary School in Swakopmund, where 500 students and staff were present. David Ndjavera, Norman Job, and Felicity Celento performed at the Assitej-Namibia school performances (Philander, 2005).

F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) outlined that the organisation created 17 youth centres in secondary schools around the country. David Ndjavera was on the board of Assitej-Namibia for eight years. Philander would dispatch Verdhal Philander and Richard Swarts, the author of one of the plays in the book *Namibia Youth Theatre* to perform in different regions in Namibia. Assitej-Namibia produced plays in schools in 14 regions, with Philander serving as chairperson (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

Philander (2006) stressed Assitej-Namibia got a N\$300,000 yearly funding in 2006 to continue developing youth theatre in schools and communities around the nationwide. The Finnish Embassy in Windhoek provided the money for the third year in a row. Philander (2006) stressed that Assitej-Namibia introduced a segment for young theatre groups from rural regions for the 23rd Annual Youth Theatre Festival.

Assitej-Namibia expressed gratitude to the Finnish Embassy for assisting the children's section. David Ndjavera stated that the Group had already received N\$700,000 from the Finnish Embassy in the group's yearly programs for 2006 (Philander, 2006). The children section was part of Assitej's primary aims and objectives, which stated by Philander (2002) that "Assitej was to expand theatre on a national level in nine regions, to creatively empower children and youth in communities, to create exhibition opportunities by means of existing annual youth theatre festival" (p.18).

Philander (2006) stated that Stefo Natsou, honorary president of Assitej-International in Australia, stated in a message to all the 76-member countries on World Theatre Day, March 20, 2006, that the "importance of theatre for children and young people has no measuring stick, no degrees or points of obvious calculation. Its impacts are sometimes unseen and invisible, yet we know it has transformed, awakened, and saved lives" (Philander, 2002, p.22).

Philander (2006) continued that Natsou stated that people are becoming increasingly

technology-minded. Keyboards have replaced mouths, text messages and e-mails have replaced personal interaction, and mobile phones have replaced personal contact. Live theatre is a healthy platform for humans to gather and communicate tales, emotions, and freedom in schools, community halls, parks, indoor and outdoor theatres, and impromptu theatres worldwide (Philander, 2006). Giles (2021) stated that Assitej has over 83 centres nationally. Natsou's words are debatable, and Giles indication of 83 centres nationally, proves that only those affiliated with its Assitej benefit from it across the world.

However, Natsou's words were true, and based on this research Assitej- Namibia provided live performances in different schools in various regions in Namibia. CAN dedicated itself to the work of fulfilling Assitej international goals and objectives. Their work also inspired Fillimon Handukeme to become a film script writer and actor, who was a young man in high school. CAN has proven itself as a group dedicated to promoting theatre over the years, from creating the Namibian Youth Theatre Festival and managing Assitej-Namibia. CAN has also travelled internationally with their productions, which are mentioned in this research.

## **5. 7 Conclusion**

This chapter focused on the theatre organisation founded by Philander, and Assitej-Namibia on which Philander served as chairman. It also focused on the Youth Theatre Festival which added significant value to Namibian theatre by offering theatre acting opportunities for Namibian actors, and keeping theatre alive in Namibia. Philander as a playwright is the topic of chapter 6.

## CHAPTER 6 PHILANDER, THE PLAYWRIGHT

This chapter introduces Philander's plays, including an overview of his plays, and information about the plays' locations, performers, and language. This chapter also includes four plays by international playwrights, to show that apart from his own plays, Philander is inspired by other playwrights. Due to the fact that most of Philander's plays have been restaged frequently between 1979 and 2021, the data presented in this chapter is drawn from different years over the aforementioned time span. The plays are presented in the manner according to the year they were first staged, however the information on the plays is sporadic. Only publicly available information was utilised in this chapter, and a personal interview with one study participant. This chapter, observed the following plays to determine whether Philander made a contribution to Namibian theatre.

### 6.1 *The Beauty Contest* (1989)

*The Beauty Contest* illustrates themes of desire and exploitation of young women in pageants all over the world. Litkie (2003) stated the following regarding the play:

The play was first presented at The Warehouse in Windhoek in 1989. Subsequently the play was performed for three years running from 1989 to 1991 as a box-office hit at the *Grahamstown Festival*. Part of the reason for this is that, apart from being outrageously funny it also involves the fondling of the actress's large bare breasts and the full-frontal nudity of the male performer (Litkie, 2003, p.125).

Moreover Litkie (2003) further stressed that the part of “the male character, Klaas Geswind, played by Philander in *The Beauty Contest*, is drawn from the Afrikaans name chosen by the poet F.W. Reitz for the Afrikaans translation of Robert Burns' *Tam o' Shanter*” (p.125).

Olivier-Sampson (2016) stressed that the character of Saartjie was dressed in a one-piece swimsuit by the time the play was produced at UNAM's Space Theatre in 1999. F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) stated that the reason for the swimsuit was because he toned down the scene as part of its functional nudity, and he would do this sometimes with a blue light that would not enable the audience member to see clearly. However, Olivier-Sampson (2016) outlined that whether or not the nudity was a cheap sensationalism or not, the nudity was considered dramatic necessity during the play's performances at Grahamstown Festival.

Ncube Kulati (1993, as reported in Olivier-Sampson, 2016) stated in his review that technical presentation of the play was not very impressive. However, he praised *The Beauty Contest's* performance at the Grahamstown festival since he considered the subjects in the play highly pertinent. The world of modelling studios and beauty pageants was exploited in the play to demonstrate how women were viewed as objects in society (Ncube Kulati, 1993, as reported in Olivier-Sampson, 2016, p.115).

Nevertheless, in his assessment, Robert Housley (1993, as mentioned in Olivier-Sampson, 2016) believed that the social and political content was tacked on, and that the issues of politics, religion, racism, and women's rights were "soapboxed" (p.115). Stephan Garratt agreed with Housley that neither the script nor the performance came near to a current, conventional notion of theatre. However, the play was highly accessible to the target audience. He stated that it was the type of theatre for those who were not really interested in the ethos of theatre, but rather in the ability to solve community concerns (Stephan Garratt, 1993 as cited in Olivier Sampson, 2016, p.116).

“While experienced theatregoers may find the play's methodology didactic and outmoded, it is easy to imagine that this approach may well appeal to the inexperienced, possibly rural,

audience to whom it will be immediately accessible and relevant” (Stephan Garratt, 1993, as cited in Olivier-Sampson, 2016, p.116). Furthermore, according to Olivier-Sampson (2016), “the problem with this comment was that, Philander did not see himself as a playwright for rural audiences, but for an urban audience that included role players that should make a difference to the situation” (p.116). By staging a play such as *The Beauty Contest*, Philander did something that was never done in Namibian theatre, performing naked on stage. This play will always be remembered in the history of Namibian theatre.

### **6.2. *Katutura 59'*: Also known as *Colonial Evictions* and or *The Curse* (1988)**

According to Lush (1990), Philander was inspired to write *The Curse* or *Katutura 59'* in the early 1980's after hearing about the resistance to forced removals in the Old Location, and the subsequent massacre of demonstrators. Philander stated that he lacked both funds and performers to present the play. *The Curse*, also known as *Katutura 59'*, was performed in 1988, when Namibian independence was rapidly approaching (Lush, 1990).

Lush (1990) stressed that the reception of the play was divided. Philander stated that he had received threats and feared losing his job at Jan Jonker Afrikaner Secondary School. *The Curse*, or *Katutura 59'* was highly appreciated by people who lived in the Old Location, with some even crying when they watched the play, and praised Philander for the performance (Lush, 1990). This shows how much effort Philander puts into his plays, the extent of staging a play relatable to his audience.

In 2005, the play was produced again as part of the 22nd Annual Youth Theatre Festival competition. According to Ingwafa (2005), Elise Heikkinen, a program officer at the Finnish Embassy, characterised *Katutura 59'* as an excellent and powerful drama produced in Namibia, in which the actors did a fantastic job with emotional interpretation (Ingwafa, 2005).

Philander's dedication to what he calls 'real theatre,' which also involves preparing his performers to manage their characters during rehearsals emotionally and writing on what happened to people in his community, was evident to audience members such as Heikkinen.

Krishnamurthy (2007) wrote in her review that the play *Katutura 59'* was performed on August 29 and 30, 2007, at Katutura Arts Centre Boiler room in Windhoek. Krishnamurthy (2007) also stressed that *Katutura 59'* is a dramatic play that recreates the massacre of local people in 1959 due to their unwillingness to leave their locality in protest of land-grabbing by the 'white' government.

Melber (2016) stated that the Windhoek Old Location site refers previously the principal location for the majority of 'black' and so-called 'colored' people in the South West African capital from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century until 1960. Throughout the late 1950's, the people's forced evacuation to the newly constructed township of Katutura sparked opposition, popular rallies, and violent conflicts between the locals and the police. On December 10, 1959, as a result of this, numerous people were killed or injured (Melber, 2016).

Krishnamurthy (2007) mentioned that the play lasted 90 minutes and was a riveting re-enactment of an important moment in Namibian history. Several in the crowd used the occasion to lament the deaths of ordinary people who battled for their homes, dignity, and identity. It was an opportunity for many youngsters to learn about the considerable sacrifice their parents made to deliver Namibian independence (Krishnamurthy, 2007).

Moreover, Krishnamurthy (2007) described a particular scene in *Katutura 59'* as emotionally compelling because of the horror of a person being captured in the dark with the use of a torchlight. This showed the contrast between the police chief's harshness and the sad wail of Handjjevol, whose husband was taken away to prison, was electrifying, and this may have been brought about by Philander's directing style. Krishnamurthy (2007) continued that the

spectacle that followed demonstrated the tenacity and perseverance of a modest mother who just wants what is best for her children. She is content with the additional money she makes from laundering her mistress's clothing in order to get her husband out of jail (Krishnamurthy, 2007).

Krishnamurthy (2007) further indicated that Handjievoll is pressured by her mistress to relocate to Katutura. Handjievoll explained the play's voice of conscience and the cause for their migration. Handjievoll has encountered further difficulties after being put off from her job and having her daughter turn to prostitution for a living (Krishnamurthy, 2007).

Krishnamurthy (2007) additionally stated Handjievoll's spouse returns from prison and vows not to leave. The residents of the township band together to resist the 'whites', and many are killed in the process. While dealing with a serious issue of injustice, death, and persecution, the play was not taken too seriously. However, there were moments of comic relief by the antics of 'black' police officers working for the government. In *Katutura 59*, Philander asked Namibians to remember their lost heroes (Krishnamurthy, 2007). Krishnamurthy pointed out the comic relief moments, in *Katutura 59* which were almost part of most of Philander's productions. It may have been part of Philander's way of sharing serious matters, and also making his audience laugh.

Krishnamurthy (2007) stated that Frederick Philander is the father of the Namibian theatre movement. Not only because he has written multiple plays that can be classified as genuinely Namibian, but also because of the opportunities he provides for artists to appear in his plays (Krishnamurthy, 2007). The opportunities Philander provided for Namibian actors as revealed by Krishnamurthy point out his contribution to Namibian theatre. Although Philander has been active in the theatre and providing acting opportunities for actors, there are others who also kept theatre alive in Namibia such as the Theatre Association, Bricks and NTN.

Botha Ellis as Major Lombaart and his two reservists, Armas Shivute as Pineas and double as Jakop, and Tjireya Hipikuruka as Klaas, Anna Louw as Gerty, (sic) Lize Kubersky as Miss Lombaart, and Stanley van Wyk as Oom Booi, appeared in the 2007 play *Katutura 59'*. Intila Katambo played Meide, while Takal played Romanus Mukutu (Krishnamurthy, 2007).

### **6.3 *King of the Dump* (1986)**

Litkie (2003) stated that “*King of the Dump* was originally written in Afrikaans in 1985, translated into English in 1986, and was banned by the ‘all-white’ South African government in 1988” (p.124). This must have been due to the swearing in the play or they could have been offended by the play itself, similar as what Schauffer (2009) mentioned that the play was objected by religious leaders because of swearing.

According to a March 1996 article in *The Namibian*, *King of the Dump* deals with poverty and its general impact on the unemployed and homelessness (Double Bill, 1996). For two years, in 1986 and 1987, the play was a box office success in Namibia, Cape Town, and at the Grahamstown Arts Festival. F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) claimed that the inspiration for composing *King of the Dump*, which became a successful play, was Athol Fugard's play *Boesman and Lena*. Fugard, a liberal ‘white’ man who told the ‘coloreds’ tale through his eyes, encouraged Philander to create his plays from a ‘colored’ viewpoint on his community's social experiences (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

According to the play’s review in the *New Era* on November 25, 2011, *King of the Dump* is a vignette of a day in the life of a common-law couple that lives on and off a waste dump, a dump that might be anywhere on the globe (Play King, 2011). Despite winning at the Kellerprinze Drama Festival in Cape Town in 1985 and being picked by the BBC to be aired to 120 million radio listeners in Africa, Namibian theatre critics did not receive *King of the*

*Dump* well. Philander remarked that it was due to their claims that he used vulgar language and that the play was graphic, with excessive profanity (Sasman, 1996). What is surprising is that Philander usually uses swearing in most of his plays, but than it might have been a reflection of the society of Namibia at the time the play was performed.

Fletcher (1986) stated that the honesty of *King of the Dump* is what made it so fascinating. The audience received no concessions from *King of the Dump*; its vulgarity was required for individuals who had no other way of acting; the dump was their area, and certain rules had to be obeyed; excuses were inadmissible (Fletcher, 1986). Furthermore, Fletcher (1986) stated that as they accepted each other without blaming external causes, life was pleasant, even entertaining, and the dump became an enticing place to live.

An article on the play in *The Times of Namibia*, September 16, 1998, stressed that both performers who played Pompie (Philander) and Eva (Felicity Celento) were believable and earned positive feedback from the audience (Rubbish Dump, 1998). According to Play King (2011), *King of the Dump* was re-staged on October 3rd and 4th, 2008, at the UNAM Space Theatre, with Freddie Philander (Pompie), Felicity Celento (Eva), and Richard Swarts (Driver) in the cast. *King of the Dump* was re-staged again in 2011 at Playhouse 99, directed by Philander, and starring Philander, Felicity Celento, and Richard Swartz. Over the years Philander would restage most of his plays. During a personal interview with him, F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) mentioned that he would one day like to stage all his plays again. Something which this researcher believes will be good for those who never saw his productions.

#### 6.4 *The Mole People* (1990)

Oliphant (2005) stated that the play *The Mole People* is based on traitors of SWAPO held in underground dugouts at a camp jail in southern Angola. The traitors are guarded by a group of individuals who have a common political goal but differ in political status. An article on the play published in *The Namibian* on July 1992, stressed that the individuals were suspected of betraying the movements, whether they were guilty or not (*The Mole People*, 1992).

Olivier-Sampson (2016) stated the following on *The Mole People*:

In this play about the infamous Lubango dungeons of SWAPO, where those accused of being spies or collaborating with the South African government or defence forces during the liberation struggle, were reportedly imprisoned, Philander sketched a bleak picture of the life in the dungeons and the debauchery and cruelty of the guards. Significantly the name of the camp commander was Danger whom his subordinates refer to as a “fucking psychopath” (Olivier-Sampson, 2016, p.126).

Olivier-Sampson (2016) further mentioned that by the time Philander wrote *The Mole People* there were reports that stated the following:

By the time Philander wrote this play, reports had already been received via the Parent’s Committee about alleged abuses in some of the SWAPO camps. Although others have written about this period in Namibian history, especially through the Breaking the Wall of Silence Movement, as far as this research could establish Philander was the only Namibian playwright to have expressed himself on the matter of the Lubango dungeons (Olivier-Sampson, 2016, p.127).

Olivier-Sampson (2016) added that when Philander was asked about the criticism of his play by the theatre critics, Philander had the following to say:

I just tell stories. I document things in a way I experience them and I try to be balanced – give both sides of the tale. I

don't mind exposing my work to criticism. There have been changes, movements for the better but in the arts field, they are too slow. People in this day and age, they would still more readily give money to soccer and crap like that and the people in charge for the last 18 years of the National Theatre of Namibia have not promoted our culture which is truthful to what our experiences were. That's why we continue doing things the way we see fit (Olivier-Sampson, 2016, p.127).

When Philander writes plays, he does so with an intention of addressing a social or political issue in his community, which is evident from information in Olivier-Sampson's dissertation. Despite criticisms, Philander, as it has been mentioned in this research does not care about criticism. When asked in personal interview about his writing material, F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) stressed that "I wrote the play based on the information that I got from some of my friends who were in those dungeons, some of which are still alive today."

Olifant described what happened to those who were regarded as moles, as something experienced on the African continent. Oliphant (2005) stated that that after 23 years of conflict, corruption and abuse of authority are widespread among a disbelieved population living in what appears to be unspecified exile. Carnages like these can be found in almost every African liberation movement, dating back to the Western African Biafran conflict, the Mao-Mao uprising, and movements like the African National Congress (ANC), the National Union for Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), the Peoples Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), and SWAPO (Oliphant, 2005).

Philander (2007) outlined the cast for *The Mole People 2007* included Basil De Walt (Camp Commander), Neville Hipikuruka (Captain Danger), Armas Shivute (enemy spy), Maria Guriras (raped woman), Ronald Krotz (internal security), Menghis Kamsay (prisoner 2),

Richard Swartz (supreme commander), Sakeus Kanyanda (sergeant), Anna Louw (Guard 2) (Internal security agent 1).

### **6.5 *Election Fever* (1990)**

Kubersky (2007) asserted that Philander's play *Election Fever*, which was composed after Namibia gained independence, was to examine the Namibian election process among community members. Olivier-Sampson (2016) stated "*Election Fever* (1990) celebrated the euphoria of people who may then vote in an independent country while at the same time taking a dig at the manifestoes of political parties" (p.124). Kubersky (2007) further mentioned that there were a few amusing moments in the play. Philander utilised satire to mock politics, for example, when Namibia had its first democratic election in 1989.

In her review, Kubersky (2007) further related her experience, stating that the opening scene showed that the set was made by a veteran actor and director. There were also some problems that started directly from the beginning of the play. This may have occurred because of the minimalistic approach for sets used by Philander. Sometimes a production may have few delays before starting and it would depend on the technical cues used if there are any used during the show.

Moreover, Kubersky (2007) added that the acoustics of the Boiler house theatre prevented the players from reaching their maximum potential with their lines. Philander supports theatre in various ways, but he should have realised that a lack of clarity reduces a play's comprehension degree. The acoustics of the venue compromised the integrity of the performances. Every movement the performers took obscured the words by disrupting the rhythm and quality of the acts produced in that setting (Kubersky, 2007). Some of the venues used by Philander may not have been of the best quality for a theatre venue, such as the one mentioned by Kubersky. Philander does not however allow the venue to deter him from staging plays.

Kubersky (2007) also expressed dissatisfaction with how performers had to focus on articulation when playing numerous characters. Balzer (2007) on the other hand, offered her thoughts about *Election Fever*, stating that she appreciated the play. “The performances were fantastic, and the set was wonderful and genuine, taking the audience back to the first democratic election” (p.31). Balzar (2007) added that “the stage worked well and the performances were satisfactory” (p.31). Balzer gave a positive review on a play that that was also criticised by Kubersky. Perhaps it may be the reason Philander is sceptical about not to have journalist reviewing his plays, as some reviews were positive and some negative.

#### **6.6 *Will of a Die-Hard Soldier* (1991)**

“*Will of a Die-Hard Soldier*, is about the reminiscence of a ‘colored’ soldier who fought in War 2 and was based on the life of Philander’s father” (Olivier-Sampson, 2016, p.122). *Will of a Die-Hard Soldier* was staged at the Academy's Space Theatre in May 1991, according to an article in *The Namibian* on May 12, 1991. The article further mentioned that the plot revolves around James Carry, an Allied soldier with a family score to settle, who died in North America after being wounded by a compatriot's bullet. While James Carry was gone, his wife double-crossed him and bore three stillborn children to another man. Nevertheless, his wife is clinging to the army pension. James Carry’s daughter despises him. His son believes his father James Carry died in the Queen's service for his nation (Dramatic exploitation, 1991).

The article described James Carry, played by Philander, as having superpowers and being able to appear to the audience unnoticed by his family, allowing him to monitor his family's deeds (Dramatic exploitation, 1991). From many perspectives, the audience was put through the wringer of love, anger, derision, greed, humor, and even obscenity. In writing a play where the character disappears, shows Philander’s writing creativity and a willingness to be diverse.

The play addresses everyday family problems experienced by community members. *Will of a Die-Hard Soldier* was performed by Felicity Celento (Lola Curry), Blossom Louw (Maggie Curry), Georgivis Izaakz (Jamesie Curry), and Freddie Philander (James Curry) (Dramatic exploitation, 1991).

When the play was restaged again in 1992. Gowaseb, a journalist for *The Namibian*, stated that attending the play at the Windhoek Warehouse Theatre was like being deceived in broad daylight since it was not adequately staged (Gowaseb, 1992). Gowaseb (1992) continued, that James Carry acquires a dramatic aspect when his wife and children attempt to resuscitate him so that he can tell them where the money is. That was the extent of the credit. Philander should have invited journalists to a storytelling session instead of a theatre to see a carnage of what could have been a fine performance (Gowaseb,1992). Although Philander does not like negative reviews, it is possible that negative reviews could have contributed to him interacting with audience members as mentioned in this research. Philander would ask audience members their opinions on the plays, to better his writing and probably performance.

### **6.7 *Blood Brother* (An AIDS-play) (1992)**

According to the play's review in the *New Era* on August 16, 2010, *Blood Brother* shows the last hours of three former prostitutes in a hospital ward. The article mentioned that in 1990's, the play was used to reference on the sickness caused by the Human immunodeficiency virus HIV which is an infection which attacks the immune system of the body. The play was placed in the Vatican City library in Rome, Italy as an unpublished work by Philander (Fighting AIDS, 2010). Due to the nature of the play and the manner in which it was written, it attracted international recognition, and represented the Namibian theatre.

“The two actresses Felicity Celento and Christy Rispel were well-drawn and wonderfully portrayed, and caricatured characters like the crazy lay preacher were played with vigor” according to Hopwood (1992), who noted this in the review of the play when it was produced in 1992 (p.14). Hopwood (1992) outlined that “the acting was the genuine highlight of the play. The production showed that Namibian acting was developing quickly, although locally produced content was still trailing behind” (p.17). “Freddie Philander was among the performers that performed in the play in 1992 at the Ultimate Theatre in Windhoek Khomasdal” (Hopwood, 1992, p.17). It should be taken into consideration that Philander acted in most of his productions over the years. Even though Philander may not have gone to study the art of directing. The evidence of his good directing style was evident in some of his productions by those who saw them.

In the National Theatre of Namibia, the piece had a brief run in the early 1990’s. Fighting AIDS (2010) further stressed that Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome AIDS, which is the advanced disease and death are the play's themes. On September 18 and 19, 2010, the play was presented at the Ultimate Theatre in Khomasdal, Windhoek, as a part of CAN's 4th Annual Youth Theatre Festival. Four hundred individuals attended the opening acts of CAN's festival.

The article indicated that the play’s actors in 2010 included Intila Katambo, who won Best Newcomer on Stage at the 2007 Theatre Zone Competition for her performance as Nadula in CAN’s production of *The Bigamist*. Intila Katambo acted as Carla, Shirley was portrayed by Christel Nassauw, Debbie by Petra Coleman, Ralph the pimp by Kibbe Rispel. The Egyptian priest by Vernon Cloete, the pastor, and doctor by veteran actor Romulus Pietersen, and the male nurse by David Ndjavera in his directorial debut (Fighting AIDS, 2010). Apart from Philander’s Youth Theatre Festival, the NTN had the Theatre Zone which gave upcoming

playwright an opportunity to direct their plays. Philander remained consistent in reproducing his plays over the years.

### **6.8 *The Teacher* (1992)**

According to the play's review in *The Namibian* on August 22, 2008, *The Teacher* satirically examined the current general issues affecting the nation's educational system in Namibia at the time. The play was initially presented in 2005 to a packed house at the College of the Arts in Windhoek, Namibia. Subsequent performances took place in a community hall in Rehoboth. On August 29 and 30, 2008, Richard Swarts performed as *The Teacher* at the UNAM Space Theatre (Young actor, 2008). The play is a satire on burning social and political issues, which Philander mostly likes to address. The play revolves around an adult night school under the Namibian government. The play also deals with people's changing attitudes towards crime and disasters in Namibia.

The article on the play published in *The Namibia* on July 11, 2012, further mentioned "*The Teacher* was an 80-minute rant by writer and director Frederick Philander that artfully insulted the government, the president, bureaucrats, 'black', 'whites', and 'coloreds', gained elements of politics and racial humour, but failed to leave a lasting message" (Teacher, 2012).

The article also complained the fact that the play failed to address the teacher's lack of concern for his job, and his students, or the reality that he earned good pay to make it through the month while finding it difficult to teach English. This was due to Philander's portrayal of a figure who could only criticise the status quo rather than one of the 98 % whom he felt the system failed (Teacher, 2012). Sam (2009) too complained about Philander using every opportunity to speak about politics. Perhaps it is the way Philander likes to address certain issues that matter to him as an individual. The 80 minutes performance, showed how much

effort went into writing, directing and acting. Despite the negative review on *The Teacher*, it seems not to even bother Philander as he's still planning to re-stage all his plays.

### **6.9 *Two Men and a Baby* (1994)**

Litkie (2003) stated that the play *Two Men and a Baby* was first performed for the Youth Theatre Festival in 1994. After a re-vision and reconstruction, the play was presented at the NTN in 1995. Litkie (2003) further mentioned that *Two Men and a Baby* is similar to Zakes Mda's tramps in the play *We Shall Sing for the Fatherland* (1980). Once more, this is an indication of where Philander draws inspiration for his own plays.

According to Sam (2009), on September 3, 2009, at Khomasdal's Ultimate Theatre, Frederick Philander and David Ndjavera performed the play *Two Men and a Baby*, which was directed by Philander. The plot revolves around the characters' inconsistent lifestyles. Sam (2009) further mentioned that the public park is home to two squatters, who later find a 'white' infant that has been thrown in a nearby trash can. "As he gets 'home' later that night, one of the hoboes informs the other about finding a baby. The two men debate over what to do with the infant and the play centres on their justifications for treating the baby differently" (Sam, 2009, p.4).

Cloete (2009) asserted that people with such personalities are typically considered as the scum of the earth. However, the play gave people an unexpected depth. To reflect on the modern man and his conception of fatherhood and the reality that women who lack courage often abandon their infants at a dump site, a common social issue in Namibia. The two protagonists were stressed out by their excessive fatherly responsibilities throughout the play.

Sam (2009) stressed that he thoroughly enjoyed watching David Ndjavera perform because he was true to his part and had enjoyment, which infected the crowd. Ndjavera excelled in the role of Juba, Philander, played as Nelson the noisy hobo who struggled despite his attempts to maintain his character's dominance over his submissive companion (Sam, 2009). When Philander attempted to make political capital out of every circumstance, his persona became a problem (Sam, 2009). The fact that Philander would make political capital of every circumstance shows how political situations mattered to him. This trend shows in almost all his plays. Even though there was no intellectual content in the play, it was nonetheless entertaining (Sam, 2009). Philander has a dominant character by nature, which can be visible in his plays. David Ndjavera's years of involvement in theatre could have played a role in helping him know how to develop his character in the play.

Cloete (2009) stressed that "the two performers had a good rhythm throughout the whole production. They had no trouble carrying each other through the snappy dialogue, which made it enjoyable to watch" (p.4). Speaking fast in dialogues shows that, the actors rehearsed over a long period of time. It shows how important the rehearsal process was. This play explored the themes of parenting, baby dumping and racism.

#### **6.10 *The Porridge Queen: also known as The Street Vendor or Papland (Weak Land)* (1995)**

*The Namibian* article of June 5, 2017, described the play as a critical one-person and multiple-character play. It is a complete play with additional characters and an extended monologue from the whole script. From the viewpoint of a street seller selling porridge, Handjievoll examines post-independence grappling with the reality of new democratic dysfunctions and abuse of governmental power in a new African country (*The Porridge Queen*, 2017).

According to Amagulu (2007), the play is a satirical comedy that shows Namibians' social and economic position through the eyes of the main character, Handjievool, an ordinary Namibian. With her monologues, Handjievool comments on a various of topics affecting the Namibian people, such as immigration, crime, unemployment, corruption, and the country's political atmosphere following independence in Namibia (Amagulu, 2007). In most of his plays, this is a reoccurring pattern, addressing the issues faced by citizens of Namibia.

Amagulu (2007) further stressed that the main issue of the play is how unemployment causes many individuals to engage in informal trade, such as selling 'pap' or 'porridge' on a street corner, in order to make a livelihood. Amagulu (2007) mentioned that the acting and directing were excellent, and the play was entertaining because it was not exactly serious but hilarious, with every second or third line being funny. On the last night, some spectators could not control their laughing and would break into choruses (Amagulu, 2007). Again, the element of comic-relief was part of this play. The fact that Philander wrote plays that made the audience enjoy, means that his plays are relatable to every Namibian, and that makes his writing unique, and contributing to the Namibian theatre authentic Namibian plays.

*The Porridge Queen* raised several concerns in Namibia, including the numerous public holidays, how the police treated hawkers, strikes, and social difficulties affecting veterans, according to Amagulu (2007). "A majority of the proletariat may revolutionise due to a play like *The Porridge Queen*" (Amagulu, 2007).

According to an article on the play in *New Era*, on June 5, 2017, CAN restaged *The Porridge Queen* in 2017. The group travelled with the play to six schools in six different regions, including Okahandja Secondary School in Okahandja, Wennie du Plessis in Gobabis, Dr. Lemmer High School in Rehoboth, P.K. de Villiers in Keetmanshoop, Kolin Foundation School in Arandis, and Oshakati Secondary School in Oshakati (*The Porridge Queen*, 2017).

The cast included John Isaacks as the worker and Ou Booï, Danny Matroos as the health inspector and Ou Six, Frederick Philander as Caspie and a Jehovah's witness, and Zenlia Philander as the insurance and political agent. Elzaan De Wee as Handjievool in *The Porridge Queen* (*The Porridge Queen*, 2017). CAN has been active for many years, and to make a tour with many actors takes dedication and enthusiasm. It shows Philander's willingness to entertain and educate the Youth, as when he did with the Youth Theatre Festival and Assitej-Namibia.

### **6.11 *The Railwayman* (1997)**

*The Railwayman*, is based on Philander's personal narrative of growing up as a 'colored' youth in South Africa during the abhorrent apartheid regime. Litkie describes the play as following:

The Railway man is a one-man play in nine scenes that uses oral storytelling techniques to recall memories of childhood. Much of the play is autobiographical and the 'Actor' in the play is really Philander himself here, as in his other work, Philander sometimes draws us alarmingly close to the characters he portrays. In this case it is not only the tattered clothes and squalid living conditions that become real to us, but also the stinking feet, the foul breath, the body odour, and the amazing number of times farting and shit enter into the picture (Litkie, 2003, p.125).

Litkie (2003) further mentioned that the play was later presented at the *Grahamstown Festival* and was described by a critic for *Fringe Voice* as "a riveting, mature play that will stand its own amongst theatre audiences anywhere in the world" (p.125). "The Afrikaans version was published by the University of Pretoria (Makro Publishers) and prescribed as a setwork in Afrikaans at the same University" (Litkie, 2003, p.125). According to an article in *The Namibian* on August 6, 1997, Philander's play *The Railwayman* earned positive reviews from

the Cape Town press when it was produced at the Nico Malan Theatre. According to Angelo Flick, it was a stunning and thought-provoking drama. *The Railwayman* was on the correct track (Committed Artist, 1998).

Additionally, Committed Artist (1998) stated that despite the anguish and humiliation of apartheid, which was supposed to eliminate 'black' existence in South Africa, *The Railwayman* softened childhood trauma and the recovery of dignity in the way it was presented. Melvin Witbooi (1998 as cited in Committed Artist, 1998) said in the *Rapport Metro* that Freddie Philander has proven that Protest theatre was still relevant in South Africa with *The Railwayman*. His play's casual dry humour and narrative approach portrayed the sadness and pain that was part of his upbringing as a child in the Karoo (Committed Artist, 1998).

Olivier-Sampson (2016) asserted that Philander mentioned the following:

According to Philander the play was about poverty, irrespective of what colour you were. It just so happened that he, as a nonwhite, experienced poverty under Apartheid. Thus, for him, there is a link between poverty and Apartheid. The play elaborated on the restrictions of Apartheid when certain positions were reserved for whites only and how the economic depression in the town was a direct result of Apartheid policies (Olivier-Sampson, 2016, p.117).

An article in *The Namibian* on August 15, 1997, stated that Philander's tour to London with his plays was seen as a tremendous theatre breakthrough for CAN and the Namibian theatre on an international cultural stage (Frederick Philander, 1997). The trip was made possible by Professor Peter Thomson, chair of the Theatre Department at Exeter University, and the standing committee of the University of England Drama Department. The tour was considered essential to Namibia's cultural interaction with the United Kingdom (Frederick Philander, 1997).

Furthermore, the article in *The Namibian* on August 15, 1997 stressed that Philander, toured staged his plays *The Railwayman* and *Will of a Die-hard Soldier* for six weeks at the following universities: University of Reading Exeter, Nene College, University of Leeds, University of Lancaster, Royal Holloway College, Gold Smith's College (both at London University), University of Glamorgan, University of Bristol, University of Plymouth, University of Loughborough (Frederick Philander, 1997).

Philander's plays have brought him recognition in South Africa, the reviews on *The Railwayman* show that Philander is a good script writer, actor and director. His tour to England, was indeed an achievement that can inspire upcoming actors in the Namibian theatre industry. In 1997, as a result of touring with *The Railwayman* and *Will of a Die- Hard Soldier*, the then-Ministry of Basic Education sacked Philander from his position as a teacher (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022). Olivier-Sampson (2016) stressed that "Philander had trouble getting his leave of absence from his school granted to attend the conference, but he attended regardless. This was going to cost him his job as a teacher at the school" (p.122).

However, in an interview, F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) mentioned that they fired him because the school principal and others conspired against him, sentiments he shares in his play *Conspirators*. "In August 1997, that Ministry was deemed responsible for my unjust termination from my employment" (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022). Even after being dismissed from work, Philander has continued writing plays, acting and directing, even after having worked as a journalist. Philander's invitation showed that his work was internationally recognised and promoted the Namibian theatre.

### **6.12 *Victim of Love* (2000)**

According to Olivier-Sampson (2016) HIV/AIDS, racism, and intolerance were all addressed in *Victim of Love*. *Victim of Love* expands on the topics of the themes that were introduced in *Blood Brother*. The mother of the girlfriend compared the young male character in the play, who was American, (sic) to the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) members who "had an eye on the elections and unofficially they were monitoring the bedrooms of women, old and young, in villages, cities, and towns, everywhere in the country with a more penetrating eye" (Olivier-Sampson, 2016, p.123). Philander (2005) outlined that the piece was initially performed at one of the yearly festivals for young actors. This play shows part of Philander's activities in the Youth Theatre Festival. Philander (2005) stressed that the piece was expanded into a play of substantial length. The National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) commissioned the play's production (Philander, 2005). Due to some sexual situations, the play was not televised (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

### **6.13 *The Polygamist /Bigamist* (2007)**

Nangula (2007) stated that *The Bigamist* is a tragicomedy about inter-relationships in modern-day Namibia between a Baster man married to a compassionate Oshiwambo-speaking lady after divorcing his immoral Baster wife for years. Nangula (2007) goes on to say that, as fate would have it, a devastating incident occurs in the family's existence, with far-reaching effects for the entire clan. The drama focused on inter-cultural marriages and child abuse, two major societal concerns in Namibian society. According to Kubersky (2007), the play's 2007 cast included Basil de Waldt as Reo, Armas Shivute as Charlatan Kazara, Arlene Mouton as ex-

wife Baba, Dedrei de Wee as raped daughter Kinnie, Intila Katambo as the Oshiwambo wife Nadula, and Albert Ricketts as Pastor.

According to Krishnamurthy (2008), the plot develops as follows: Reo is left alone while his Oshiwambo wife visits family in the North, so he decides to bring his first wife for a 'quicky'. Reo's first wife accepts, but just as things are about to get comfortable, the Oshiwambo wife interrupts them. Angered by her husband's behaviour, Nadula engages in conflict with the first wife in an effort to get her husband's attention. The bigamist's daughter, whom a law enforcement official has sexually assaulted, is the subject of the play's second half.

Krishnamurthy (2008) continued that *Philander* exposed the rot that had crept into the political establishment by casting a critical eye on significant segments of society. The police officer, tasked with keeping the populace safe, is to blame for the child's horrible circumstances. Instead of protecting the family from harm and social exclusion, the pastor indulges in alcohol. The play's central character, Reo's antics, made the performance's half delightful, but the play's second half was bothering (Krishnamurthy, 2008).

In addition, Krishnamurthy (2008) noted that the crowd laughed inappropriately during the play's second act as the policeman was raping the girl. A youngster being raped should never be laughed at. Freddie trivialized a very serious and deeply ingrained problem by making fun of the molestation situation. This is hardly a topic to chuckle about after reading several horrifying accounts of girls as young as four or five years old being raped and brutalized by their own fathers (Krishnamurthy, 2008). The comic-relief is a trait in *Philander's* plays, and sometimes the audience cannot help themselves if certain acts are done in a comic manner.

Krishnamurthy (2008) noted that the stage has its own dignity, which must be respected (using creativity to convey a message). It was not a realism issue, but there was an issue with some of the motivations. If *Philander* intended to highlight the marginally decaying sections of

Namibian society, his production of the play was successful. Nevertheless, Philander should have adopted a more sensible strategy by seeking for ways to contain disintegration. The University of Namibia (UNAM) Space Theatre hosted the play's performance in 2008. Rape and polygamy are the themes of the play.

#### **6.14 *Pandemic: Effects and Defects* (2021)**

According to the article about the play published in the *New Era* on April 12, 2021, Philander wrote, directed, acted in, and produced *Pandemic: Effects and Defects*, a multilingual play. The drama is about an elderly man who lived alone and in self-quarantine in a dilapidated squatter camp shanty. With the aid of God and traditional medicine, he recovers from a slight coronavirus infection. The Theatre School of the College of the Arts hosted the performance. In this one-man performance, Philander portrayed the lead role (Pandemic effect, 2021). Participant 6 (personal communication, July 17, 2023) a Namibian theatre practitioner, saw the one-man play and described it as a play which deals with an old man somewhere in Katutura who self-quarantined during the covid- 19 pandemic, lockdown. The play also showed different methods on how to keep himself save. Participant 6 (personal communication, July 17, 2023) stated the play was great to watch, and it was good to watch a play during the pandemic. Even at time of Covid- 19, Philander still decided at his age to stage a production. It showed that Philander's passion for theatre is unwavering. The script to the play was not available as this play is recent.

#### **6.15 *Conspirators (Bureaucratic Harassment)* (2021)**

F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) stated the play is based on his dismissal from Jan Jonker Afrikaner Secondary School in 1997. Everything that happened to him in is written in this play. The play was presented at the College of the Arts Theatre School with the

cast of Zenlia (Sarah & Lopes), Felicity Celento (The Voice & Head of Department), Arlene Mouton (The Head), Andreas Mulenga (Television-Reporter), and Frederick Philander (Frederick Philander) were among the actors that appeared in the play at the Theatre School (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

Participant 6 (personal communication, July 17, 2023) stated the play was about Philander's life, from when he was fired from the school he was teaching, to winning an award in USA. "What was good about this play was that the actors and directing was good, a part I enjoyed was by the character by Philander's daughter. The scene depicts an encounter Philander had with a fortune teller who told him who was behind his problems" (Participant 6, personal communication, July 17, 2023). Philander, dismissal from his teaching position is something that shows the hurt he felt over the years, which is why he wrote the play *Conspirators*. Philander is still writing a part two to *Conspirators*.

### **6.16 Language in Philander's plays**

L. Pieters (personal communication, August 3, 2022) indicated that Philander wrote in both Afrikaans and English. However, Philander would employ English plays when travelling to Durban or elsewhere. The plays by Philander contained language understood by the audience member with sporadic cursing. M. Claasen (personal communication, August 2, 2022) agreed that the language usage contained both English and Afrikaans to appeal to the locals because it is all about the distribution of knowledge. Sometimes the meaning of words would be lost if they were said in English or Afrikaans, several lines were supplied to the actors in their mother tongues (M. Claasen, personal communication, August 2, 2022).

F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) mentioned in the interview with this researcher that his way of writing is not too sophisticated because he writes in a way that any

audience member from the community attending the play is able to relate to their everyday language. Philander does not hesitate to use words such as ‘fat ass’, ‘fucked’, ‘voetsek’, ‘bastard’, ‘he rides me’ (sexual gesture), and ‘bullshit’ in his plays (Philander, 2005). However, there is a difference in the written and spoken performances. This means that a person who is reading Philander’s plays will have a different view from the person who attended his productions. Philander would use crude language whenever he performed. In person Philander uses crude language, so it also reflects in his productions.

## **6.17 International plays**

### **6.17.1 *Waiting for Godot* (1953)**

F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) asserted that the reason for staging international plays is because he considered the plays though provoking, and wanted his audience to be captivated by the messages in the plays. According to the play's article in the *New Era* on October 5, 2012, CAN planned to present the critically renowned Irish drama *Waiting for Godot* as part of their 35th anniversary in the Namibian theatre scene. According to Alsharadgeh (2020), in the two acts in the play by Samuel Beckett the characters mirror one another. Beckett tackles a significant existential query in *Waiting for Godot*: "Why do humans exist?" Because they are rational beings, Vladimir and Estragon think their existence must have a purpose (Alsharadgeh (2020, p. 31).

Alsharadgeh (2020) mentioned that the audience was presented with two sets of characters: one pair, Vladimir and Estragon, who wait passively, and the other pair, Pozzo and Lucky, who fill time with purposeless journeying. Beckett strips away the false rewards of power, wealth, or marriage to present concentrated sparseness to explore existential questions.

According to the play's article, in the *New Era* on October 5, 2012, CAN planned to present the critically renowned Irish drama *Waiting for Godot* as part of their 35th anniversary in the

Namibian theatre scene. An article on the play, *Waiting for Godot* in the *New Era* on October 17, 2014 stated that the cast at the Ultimate Theatre, Khomasdal, according to Acclaimed Waiting (2014) consisted of Zabeth Philander as Boy, John Isaacks as Lucky, the enslaved person, Mervin Claasen as Vladimir, Felicity Celento as Estragon, and Frederick Philander as Pozzo. There was however, not much written on the play about its performances.

#### **6.17.2 *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* by Ken Kesey (1962)**

According to an article in *The Namibian* on August 12, 2015, Frederick Philander produced this play, adapted by American writer Dale Wasserman from a novel by Ken Kesey in 1962. Philander shortened the play from a five-hour theatre production to a 90-minute drama for the Namibian audience (*Cuckoo's Nest*, 2015). The shorting of the play could have been to accommodate the Namibian people. According to Mukaiwa (2015), the play is about Randle McMurphy, who has a clever plan to serve his sentence for violence and rape in a more pleasant atmosphere than the labour farms by pretending to be insane and being admitted to a loony bin.

Moreover, Mukaiwa (2015) emphasised the irony that Randle McMurphy would soon find himself in a battle of wills with a no-nonsense nurse Ratchet while motivating the insane masses to revolt against her deceptive and nefarious system. During the performance, the actors twitching, gambling, and giggling, made the crowd laughed throughout the production of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Mukaiwa (2015) further mentioned that *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* was a fantastic production for CAN. Based on this information, Philander demonstrated his versatility by producing a play by a different playwright and doing great service to the play even after shortening the playtime, and also directing it in such a way the audience enjoyed the production.

The cast that performed the play at the Ultimate Theatre at Eldorado Secondary school Khomasdal consisted of Philander as the Colombian Chief, David Campell, Brumelda English, Adriano Visagie, Anthony Titus, Wayne Beukes, Peter Peter and Lynn- Jacobs as Nurse Ratched (*Cuckoo's Nest*, 2015).

### **6.17.3 *Agnes of God* (1979)**

Mathew (2017) stated that *Agnes of God* is a play by John Pielmeier based on a true story that Philander did not write but directed. It is about Maureen Murphy, a 37-year-old nun who was discovered in a pool of blood after giving birth to a baby on April 27, 1976, at the Our Lady of Lourdes convent in Brighton, New York. Before having a newborn boy, Murphy lived in the convent for more than 19 years. The child was first thought to have gone missing but was later found dead (Mathew, 2017).

Furthermore, Mathew (2017) mentioned that the cause of death was classified as asphyxiation. Murphy was later tested for mental and emotional instability to establish her fitness to stand trial. The evidence established that she was capable but was eventually declared not guilty due to insanity. In his play *Agnes of God*, the writer John Peilmeier has Maureen Murphy's character Agnes strangle the infant with the umbilical cord knotted around its neck. She then tosses the infant into a waste paper basket.

Muushandja (2015) stated that Philander presented *Agnes of God* on his 'Poor theatre' set. *Agnes of God* addressed the institution of religion and its power on society. Inesh dos Ramos stole the show as the nun, portraying a young, fractured figure that was both emotionally and physically strong (Muushandja, 2015). Inesh Dos Ramos was a brilliant actor and a drama student the University of Namibia. Philander's concept of 'Poor theatre' in this production,

shows that he probably did not have a big stage set up, which is common in most of his plays depending on what his productions needed.

Muushandja (2015) mentioned that Tanya Hartz played Martha Livingstone, a role she could have performed better, and Felicity Celento as Mother Miriam, who was remarkable in her performance. *Agnes of God* was well crafted and it was clear that great preparation went into the process to present a great production. The play was performed at the Ultimate Theatre at the Eldorado High School (Khomasdal) (Muushandja, 2015). The great preparation that went into the play as mentioned by Muushandja, showed that Philander's directing style was effective in his productions and brought results.

#### **6.17.4 *My Children, My Africa* (1990)**

Philander (2005) stressed the play *My Children, My Africa* addresses the efforts of a meek and caring black teacher in a segregated township to persuade just one young person that education and not violence is the answer to South Africa's problems. Philander (2005) stated *My Children, My Africa*, an adaptation, won the overall Best Play award at the 23rd annual Youth Theatre Festival in 2005 in both directing and acting. Hangula (2005) noted that the South African school rebellion of June 16, 1976, served as the backdrop for the play *My Children, My Africa*. Hangula (2005) stressed that the play directed by Frederick Philander and starred late David Ndjavera as Mr.M, Norman Job as Thami, and Felicity Celento as Isabel Dyson, did not disappoint him.

Hangula (2005) further mentioned that Ndjavera did not fall short of the demands of the character instructor Mr.M, whose sole transgression in the eyes of the militants was a person who desired political change in the country, and his varied approaches to enacting those changes. Although Mr.M concurs with his protégé Thami that change is necessary, he thinks

change should be achieved via negotiation to end the bloodshed rather than through confusion and violence. Mr.M feels that education is the best way to bring about change. Philander did a good job directing the play overall (Hangula, 2005). Once more Philander's directing style was praised and proved effective.

According to an article on the play in the *New Era* on June 3, 2005, Ndjavera was more forceful in the character of Mr.M than the role's original actor, John Kani, which won him high praise at the Grahamstown Arts Festival. The themes of *My Children, My Africa* are communication versus violence, the gap, the effects of an unfair social system and the meaning of a useful life (Philander, 2005). Since David Ndjavera saw John Kani perform the character, it could have inspired him as a brilliant actor.

## **6.18 Conclusion**

This chapter found that, Philander has contributed to Namibian theatre through writing and directing his own plays as well as those by other playwrights. Philander had kept theatre active since 1979, even though some of his plays were re-staged many times. Philander provided acting opportunities, for the actors in the industry, even though he uses the ticket sales system when there are no finances, those who sell their tickets do get to make ends needs, and sometimes when he has sponsors then they get direct payment. Through Philander's international recognition, the Namibian theatre is praised, and provides inspiration for the upcoming actors. The reviews of some of the plays show that people enjoyed and support his work. Through his consistency in staging plays, despite positive or negative reviews, Philander kept the theatre alive from 1979-2021. Philander also has a play *I am Not Corrupt* which deals with corruption in Namibia. The play was supposed to be staged in 2020, but was cancelled because of Covid-19. The play is however on the waiting list of plays to be staged by the NTN. The following chapter 7 focuses on the work behind the scenes that goes into staging plays.

## CHAPTER 7 PHILANDER AND, THE STAGING PROCESS

This section explores the process of staging Philander's plays, including venues, lighting, sound, stage décor and the staging process of his plays and other aspects that happen behind the scenes of production. Philander did not have a large budget to cover sophisticated stage setups for technical equipment or to purchase quality technical equipment when he started out with The Serpent Players in 1982, later on Philander received a sponsorship for lighting and sound system from the American Cultural Centre which he uses to date.

### 7.1 Venues

For the Youth Theatre Festival Philander used the Windhoek Theatre. Bricks, a theatre group active in Windhoek in the 1980's, disagreed with Philander's choice of the Windhoek Theatre as the location for the Youth Theatre Festival. Bricks believed that people's liberties should be achieved. Bricks felt that modest concessions like utilising the Windhoek Theatre should have been avoided until the liberation fight was finished (Olivier-Sampson, 2016).

Bricks commented that the long history of exclusivity of the theatre meant that “gewone werkers” or ordinary workers did not patronize the venue. The intimation was there that the festival organiser put his personal interest before the more inclusive ideals of the liberation struggle. They used the image of cream cake (Windhoek Theatre) to illustrate this instant gratification of the festival organiser satisfying his own agenda by offering the young participants a fleeting taste of something which they could not enjoy freely. An exercise like that was considered a death knell to the culture of liberation. Philander however in his total rejection of segregation policies of government used whatever means he could find to subvert the system (Olivier-Sampson, 2016, p.100).

According to Van der Smit (2018), the Arts Association members organised a peaceful demonstration in front of the Windhoek Theatre building in 1979 with candles to protest the closing off for non-European viewers and practitioners. Olivier- Sampson (2016) stated that the displacement of the performance from the community where the performers resided meant that only a limited number of parents and other supporters could attend. The performers were forced into town, away from their regular networks of support networks. Because Bricks prioritised community engagement, they always presented their plays in townships. According to Bricks, Philander's management of the venue preparations was counter-revolutionary. Philander disregarded these critiques, declaring at the time, "If we can't fight the colonialists in the bush battle, let us beat them on stage" (Olivier- Sampson, 2016, p.100).

According to F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) he utilised school halls, community halls, and the Warehouse Theatre. Philander never paid for the venues since he worked out a 50/50 split with the schools and other venues. The schools sold tickets that were sent to them in advance and received 50% of the proceeds, which Philander commented "I did it my way" because traveling with a large cast and set was difficult (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

Philander chose two or three performers who could fit into a vehicle and did not require a lot of décor. As a result, Philander favours the notion of 'Poor theatre'. V. Hangula (personal communication, August 23, 2022) asserted that Philander staged his plays in any church hall he could find, as well as NTN and secondary schools; Eldorado, Dawid Bezuidenhout, St. Joseph's RC High School Dobra, the Katutura Youth Centre, the UNAM Space Theatre, community halls, the Warehouse Theatre, and the Khomasdal hall. Rather than being restricted to a particular site or venue, he brings theatre to wherever there are people (V. Hangula, personal communication, August 23, 2022).

Participant 1 (personal communication, August 17, 2022) an award-winning actor and director in Namibia's theatre sector, believed that one of Philander's strengths is that he does not allow venues to determine the staging of his plays; instead, he stage his works wherever he can. The information indicated Philander does not allow venues to control him. It also indicates his notion of 'Poor theatre', perhaps maybe the reason he kept re-staging his plays.

## **7.2 Lights and Sound**

Philander began amassing a variety of technological equipment, such as an N\$80.000 sound and lighting system, with funding received from the American Cultural Centre in 1989 (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022). A. Kauazunda (personal communication, August 3, 2022) stressed that since 2002, he collaborated with Philander on lighting and sound projects. By that time, Philander was working for *The Namibian*, covering the arts in the sector of *The Weekender's* arts section. He was Asser Kauazunda's lecturer in scriptwriting, editing, and performances at the College of the Arts. Asser Kauazunda was encouraged by Philander, who introduced him to theatre and took him to numerous performances at NTN (A. Kauazunda, personal communication, August 3, 2022). Philander's support and enthusiasm to introduce Asser Kauazunda, is an indication of how Philander invested in those he worked with.

Mervin Claasen, a Namibian actor, and UNAM undergraduate drama student, performed in Philander's play *Waiting for Godot* in 2010. M. Claasen (personal communication, August 2, 2022) stressed that "Philander's usage of light was crucial, even though they were not that sophisticated as those that one would find in a theatre venue such as NTN, he would use house lights. "Lights must be turned on manually in some places, such as the Eldorado School Hall. These were circumstances that made the productions a little difficult, however Philander

embraced it the best he could” (M. Claasen, personal communication, August 2, 2022). Even though Philander had small lights along with the sound system, he would sometimes borrow lights where necessary on stage. But most of the time he would prefer to use house lights (M. Claasen, personal communication, August 2, 2022).

L. Pieters (personal communication, August 3, 2022) said that in the 1980’s, Philander had a cassette tape to he used during performances, during the first meeting of The Serpent Players. Philander began introducing more professional light and sound gradually, when he received a sound system of N\$80000.00.

N. Job (personal communication, August 10, 2022) claimed that he occasionally assisted with the lighting and sound for Philander's plays. It was customary to give actors a chance to handle lights and sound when they were not performing, allowing them to develop new skills in theatre production. The fact that Philander's daughters assisted with music and lights on multiple occasions, according to A. Visagie (personal communication, August 28, 2022) is vital for preparing the future generation.

This section indicated that Philander at first, used what he could to make his plays realistic. Later when he received his sound and lighting system, he trained his actors and daughters to assist with light and sound.

### **7.3 Décor**

According to M. Claasen (personal communication, August 2, 2022), “Philander primarily concentrates on the acting component of his performances. He makes use of few set props even if it is a big production.” The incorporation of minimalistic was always part of Philanders production, but it was different when he staged at the NTN, e.g., *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* which was a big stage setting as mentioned by Participant 4 (personal communication,

June 27, 2023) a theatre practitioner in Namibian. Participant 3, a drama teacher and theatre practitioner in Namibia, outlined that Philander's stage décor was minimalistic, but later, his sets became a bit more functional and symbolic. Philander's décor was entirely participative, which meant that actors were required to assist with specific items required by their characters (Participant 3, personal communication, August 17, 2022). In the case of some of Philander's plays such as *The Mole People* and *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* Philander would go all the way for a well decorated set.

#### **7.4 Costumes/ Props**

On choosing his performers, F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) indicated that he gave them the duty of providing their own props from home. Philander typically received suggestions from the performers and would either approve or disapprove of them or advice on the props. Every day the performers would bring their props to the rehearsals and take them home afterwards (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

J. Isaacks (personal communication, August 3, 2022) stated that Philander would always purchase a costume, whether he saw one in a store or on a hobo. Ronald Krotz a Jan Jonker Afrikaner High School teacher, managed the lighting and sound for Philander's productions while performing in the play *The Mole People*. Ronald Krotz mentioned that the props for the play *The Mole People* were detailed, e.g., firearms and outfits. Philander acquired costumes that made his performers look like actual police officers (R. Krotz, personal communication, August, 3, 2022). Sometimes Philander would provide certain props but the stage would have less décor.

As the actors performed as patients in an asylum for the play *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, Philander measured and purchased clothes for every performer. In order to make sure

the play's characters were accurately represented, Philander also purchased props (A. Visagie, personal communication, August 28, 2022).

In 1981 Vinette Tottie Ebrahim and Martina Schirmer acted in the play *Dark Voices Ring* by Zakes Mda (1979), which was directed by Philander. She performed similarly in ten skits for Philander. Schirmer said that she and the other performers would dress in whatever was required to represent their roles, whether it was a cap, scarf, school bag, or shirt (M. Schirmer personal communication, August 24, 2022).

Based on the information provided, this researcher understands that Philander collaborated with his actors to bring necessary costumes and props that fit into their character descriptions. What they could not find he would provide from his house or even buy from the shop or from a bum. Philander as much as he confessed to use 'Poor theatre' he would also try to create a good stage setting, which would seem to violate 'Poor theatre'. This did occur in cases where *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* was staged at NTN which has a big team that can set up a good stage.

### **7.5 Philander's selection of actors**

According to M. Claasen (personal communication, August 3, 2022), Philander was inspired to include clowning in several of his plays when he saw him act as a clown for an institution. They started working together on *Waiting for Godot* in 2010 when Claasen received a call from Philander requesting him to come read a stage play for him instead of going through an audition. L. Pieters (personal communication, August 3, 2022) stressed that Philander became a cultural icon due to his work on shows in Katutura, and many individuals outside of Jan Jonker Afrikaner Secondary School began to approach him to be cast.

According to (J. Isaacks, personal communication, August 3, 2022), Philander would fire an actor right away if he noticed that they were not giving their all in the performance. “Philander interpreted this as a sign that they were not committed to the project. Philander as a director, had the authority to promote or dismiss the actor, and he would choose another actor” (J. Isaacks, personal communication, August 3, 2022). While putting together a new show, Philander would begin by choosing actors that he was familiar with before including other individuals. To set the bar for the new performer, Philander enjoyed mixing seasoned and novice actors to set the bar for the new performer. He only cast seasoned performers in the roles of the major characters when the stage play presented a challenge (J. Isaacks, personal communication, August 10, 2022).

A. Visagie (personal communication, August 28, 2022) emphasised that he attended Philander’s auditions for the play *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. A. Shivute (personal communication, August 2, 2022) stressed that he did not attend an audition for Philander's plays *Katutura 59'* and *The Mole People* since Philander already knew him and was familiar with his acting ability. Philander was aware of the people who would bring life to certain roles in his plays. “Philander conducts a few auditions, especially if he already knows the people he wants to collaborate with. Philander is a man who understands what he wants in his performers” (A. Shivute, personal communication, August 2, 2022).

Information in this section indicated that Philander selected actors based upon impressions they made during a certain production. Others he would take through an audition, and often be placed into the smaller roles.

## **7.6 Philander, the director**

According to F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022), he generally allows his actors to go through the play script with him assisting them with pronunciations and interpretations. He would then ask them how they envision the part they are cast for, allowing them to provide their own thoughts.

Furthermore, F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) emphasised that he did not attend university to learn how to talk, walk, and move, which he considers a waste of time. He almost went to the University of Cape Town (UCT) to study acting and directing, instead opted to earn a degree or qualification to go teach and get a job (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022). Studying theatre at institutions is not a bad idea. Those who study acting and directing are trained to be professional in their respective areas so that they can excel in their career.

L. Pieters (personal communication, August 3, 2022) claimed that directing is a skill that must be studied to improve stage directing. However, Philander's directing approach allows the performers to voice their opinions, and he is not a tyrant. Philander would ask the performers if certain moves were working, and he would let them vote on certain decisions (L. Pieters, personal communication, August 3, 2022). Lucky Pieters statement proves that Philander's directing style would have been different if he had gone for training. However, Philander chose to direct his plays in a way which he understood based on his experience over the years and found no need to go study directing.

However, John Isaacks defines Philander's directing as the sort of director that gives a performer an authoritative platform while allowing the actor to express themselves creatively. Philander gives particular directions, such as "I don't want you to be there; I want you here" (J. Isaacks, personal communication, August 3, 2022).

N. Job (personal communication, August 10, 2022) indicated that it was the actor's duty to construct their characters. The actor must also know the entire script, including their lines and those of others, to assist those who are stuck. Philander is a hands-on director who expects his actor to do exactly what he says until he is happy (N. Job, personal communication, August 10, 2022). There are certain attributes that an actor must possess, such as natural talent and passion for acting in order to contribute to a play, but there are particular things, such as the ability to comprehend a character that Philander wants the actor to accomplish with their assigned role (M. Claasen, personal communication, August 2, 2022).

V. Hangula (personal communication, August 23, 2022) asserted that Philander's actors ended up repeating everything he says, which may have served as a form of discipline for them, as Philander is a strict director. But it is not a good habit. In the same manner that Philander guides his actors, Hangula recalled the style on how his late friend David Ndjavera directed him, which was similar to Philander's style of directing. A. Visagie (personal communication, August 28, 2022) emphasised that Philander always leaves room for the actor's thoughts on his or her role.

“A theatre practitioner like Philander would begin a project with 20 people and conclude it with three, leaving you to wonder what went wrong” (A. Kauazunda, personal communication, August 3, 2022). Unity Olivier was given room by Philander to express herself as an actress in the character as Eva in *King of the Dump*. “Philander will be direct with an actor about what he wanted to do, but not in an obnoxious way” (U. Olivier personal communication, August 9, 2022).

According to A. Visagie (personal communication, August 28, 2022), Philander is a perfectionist because he fired three actors from one of the plays *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* during rehearsing because they were not following directions. “When Philander asks

actors to go off script, the actors should be off script; otherwise, he would be dissatisfied. Philander wanted his performers to give every rehearsal their all as if they were performing live” (A. Visagie, personal communication, August 28, 2022).

A. Shivute (personal communication, August 10, 2022) mentioned that Philander would permit an actor to express himself, but only after having a thorough conversation with him about the kind of qualities he wants to see in that role. The actor would then have to fill in the blanks. “Philander is not a forceful type of director. However, he is quite clear about what he wants. He would want an actor to support what he wanted” (A. Shivute, personal communication, August 10, 2022).

P. Haman (personal communication, August 11, 2022) stressed that when a performer had memorised their lines, Philander would alter their character up to five to ten times throughout each rehearsal process. Philander would push the actors to greatness, which was why most of the actors in his plays remained the same. He even groomed young actors who won awards e.g., Adriano Visagie. When some actors quit before the actual performance, he would step into the role himself (P. Haman, personal communication, August 11, 2022).

Some participants pointed out that Philander allows actors the freedom to express themselves on stage. In contrast, to others who indicated that he is a strict director. He fired some who did not do well during the rehearsal process, perhaps this could have been the reason he started out with 10 or 20 people to few. However, the fact is that Philander received the results he wanted for his plays.

### **7.7 Rehearsal process with Philander**

The rehearsal process is an essential component of any theatre performance. Actors memorise their lines during rehearsal, which typically lasts one to three months, to the point where the

director may direct stage actions without the need for a script. Performers who collaborated with Philander related different experiences of this process.

Lucky Pieters remembers, the round table read, in which performers read the script for the first time, which was the first thing that the cast would undertake. Philander occasionally switched actors between characters during rehearsals if their voice sounded wrong (L. Pieters, personal communication, August 3, 2022). During, The Serpent Players era, the majority of the rehearsals took place in classrooms since Philander lacked a rehearsal space. After school, the performers would go home and then return to begin rehearsing from 14:00 until 16:30. The shows also took place at the Rössing Foundation, where the rehearsals also took place (L. Pieters, personal communication, August 3, 2022).

L. Pieters (personal communication, August 3, 2022) continued that the actors in Philander's plays repeatedly rehearsed the first scene of a play before moving on to rehearse the second scene, thus scene one and scene two would be performed together until the actors were ready for performance. After reading the script, the players were given deadlines up to a particular page and another deadline where the actor needed to be script-free. "Philander no longer wanted to examine any scripts at this time and found it frustrating to do so, instead he preferred to prompt the actors" (L. Pieters, personal communication, August 3, 2022). The word prompt in theatre means to help the actor with words in the sentences their character says, should they forget them.

The initial phase, according to M. Claasen (personal communication, August 2, 2022) was for Mervin Claasen to become familiar with and understand the play's plot, the character, and the complete production by asking questions such as, "Who is my character?", "What is the play about?" and "How does my character move?" (M. Claasen, personal communication, August 2, 2022). The stage movements and the script were the only topics covered during the initial

sessions, which were practiced at the Eldorado Secondary School Hall. There would only be three and a half weeks of rehearsals (M. Claasen, personal communication, August 2, 2022).

N. Job (personal communication, August 10, 2022) claimed the rehearsal process only lasted a month and it totally dependent on the scripts. “Philander required that the actor to read the script as it is and may not add his own words, and he hates improvisation, although with the exception that it is a live performance to continue the play” (N. Job, personal communication, August 10, 2022).

This section specified that Philander wanted the actors to know the script, and give their best in performances, and also wanted other actors to learn the words of others, so in case of problem they could step in to help. Some of his visits to South Africa over the years could have inspired him on how to get what he wanted from an actor. It could have also been that during a production that was not financially sponsored, it would cost much if the rehearsal process was to be prolonged. This could have contributed to the three or less months for production preparation.

### **7.8 How Philander got his actors to rehearsals**

The performers' transportation to rehearsals, according to F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) is their issue, or he would occasionally pick them up and drop them off at their residences, which costs him money. There was no funding for rehearsals, according to M. Claasen (personal communication, August 2, 2022) but most of the time Philander would try to pick up the performers with his car, which entirely depended on him. Both the rehearsal and performance costs were not provided for. “Philander fed us with his teacher's salary during the time of The Serpent Players” (L. Pieters, personal communication, August 3, 2022).

N. Job (personal communication August, 2, 2022) mentioned that there were several sponsorships in the 1990's, and actors received payment for both rehearsals and performances. This researcher understood that though certain performers benefited from Philander's sponsorships in the 1990's, some actors who appeared in his productions over the years were subjected to the ticket system whenever Philander did not receive funding.

### **7.9 Tickets**

M. Claasen (personal communication, August 2, 2022) stressed that the money received for appearing in the play depended on how many tickets were sold. During the staging of *Waiting for Godot* in 2010, Mervin Claasen had roughly 30 tickets. However, he could not sell them all, resulting in a revenue loss. The playgoers would occasionally purchase these tickets from performers. Young actors found it challenging because they are not well-known. "Although selling tickets is not the best approach for a beginner, it ultimately pays off" (M. Claasen, personal communication, August 2, 2022).

L. Pieters (personal communication, August 3, 2022) added that in the 1980's, when Philander chose to provide incentives to his performers, he would give them each ten tickets to sell. If they sold them, that was their money. Later on, the system altered to where the actors earned 50% of their ticket sales, and that would be the actor's wage. If they did not manage to sell the tickets, then the actors would have no one but themselves to blame (L. Pieters, personal communication, August 3, 2022).

### **7.10 Philander's engagement with audiences after performances**

Philander interacts from stage with the audience at the conclusion of his plays in order to enhance his work. He would ask the audience members to share how the performance was, and they would share their opinions on the play's storyline and the actors, something which Philander still does today. F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) stated that it

is always good to hear from the audience, so that he can improve his writing. Unlike movies, A. Shivute (personal communication, August 2, 2022) appreciates theatre because it provides direct input from the audience (A. Shivute, personal communication, August 2, 2022).

Lastly, M. Claasen (personal communication, August 2, 2022) noted that there were few engagements after performances when individuals expressed their thanks. "You would see people come back for a second night, which signified an actor did a fantastic job" (M. Claasen, personal communication, August 2, 2022). Furthermore, Claasen stated that the performers occasionally receive phone calls from other directors who wanted them. People did not forget the actors after a good performance, which also acted as a networking platform for new actors (M. Claasen, personal communication, August 2, 2022).

### **7.11 The advantages of working with Philander for actors**

It is critical to comprehend what performers acquired from working with directors and to pass on part of their expertise and experiences to the current and future generations of theatre practitioners. Many of the performers who worked with Philander were untrained, and with each performance, they gained knowledge and experience.

According to L. Pieters (personal communication, August 3, 2022), "working with Philander teaches you that nothing comes on a silver platter, that you must sacrifice to acquire the best that you desire, and it is all about passion." The entire process of putting plays together with Philander showed Pieters that theatre can be used to confront concerns and at the end of the day, theatre is not just intended to be entertaining but can also educate the audience on particular issues in their society (L. Pieters, personal communication, August 3, 2022).

Furthermore, L. Pieters (personal communication, August 3, 2022) mentioned that theatre in Namibia needs to be scaled up to become a business because it is a business. Theatre

practitioners in countries such as South Africa and Botswana are surviving and making money from theatre, and they travel overseas to perform on significant stages.

“Working with Philander, you learn that there are no lesser responsibilities since every function is significant” (J. Isaacks, personal communication, August 3, 2022). Philander often reminded his performers that even as a supporting actor, he could outperform any lead role. Working with Philander pushed the actors to improve accuracy and timeliness in acting (K. Ronald, personal communication, August 3, 2022).

According to A. Visagie (personal communication, August 28, 2022), “Working with Philander you learn the essentials of theatre; punctuality, devotion, and the necessity of delivering theatre to the people, taking theatre to locations like Katutura or Khomasdal gives a distinct experience.” Visagie also learned from Philander the value of having a strong stage presence and accepting the difficulty of a given character in a play (A. Visagie, personal communication, August 28, 2022).

A. Shivute (personal communication, August 2, 2022) stressed that even at 74, Philander has a tremendous enthusiasm for theatre and is still actively composing plays. Although he was aware of the poor wages in the Namibian theatre sector, Philander persisted and did not let obstacles, like money, stop him. “Working with Philander is rewarding since you are continually learning new things because he is a natural teacher and was a teacher before anything else” (A. Shivute, personal communication, August 2, 2022).

“When Philander puts his mind to presenting a play he is staging, you realise that he always gets his way” (U. Olivier, personal communication, August 9, 2022). Sometimes, it appears as though Philander is unconcerned with what an actor is going through personally. “For instance, with the performance *King of the Dump* performance in 1985, the show had to go on despite the fact that I accidentally cut myself with a beef can” (U. Olivier, personal

communication, August 9, 2022). Because Philander is decisive in his choices, the majority of the individuals could not handle the punch of his directing style while acting for him. Philander was familiar with all the plot threads of the characters in the play by heart during rehearsals (U. Olivier, personal communication, August 9, 2022). The actors learned about the importance of hard work, using theatre as means to educate and entertain at the same time. They also learned the importance of punctuality, devotion and stage presence.

### **7.12 What actors learned from Philander's plays**

According to N. Job (personal communication, August 10, 2022), Philander's plays made him a better person through his acting in those plays. Job claimed he could particularly connect to plays about apartheid at the time since he was seen as a troublemaker and was wanted by the police during a strike against the government in the early 1980's, which was reflected in *Katutura 59'*. "As Philander constantly sought to expose the truth, he sent many messages via his plays that some people did not appreciate. Some plays such as *The Porridge Queen*, *The Teacher*, *The Mole People*, are critiques of the Namibian government" (N. Job, personal communication, August 10, 2022).

Paul Haman, an actor from Namibia who has assisted with lighting design for Philander's productions, concurs with Krotz's statement that "I learnt a lot of history from Philander's performances" (R. Krotz, personal communication, August 3, 2022). Krotz learned through plays such as *Siswe Bunzi is Dead*, *The Railwayman*, *The Beauty Contest*, and several of Athol Fugard's plays, such as *My Children*, *My Africa* (R. Krotz, personal communication, August 3, 2022). For clarity, the plays *Siswe Bunzi is Dead* and *My Children My Africa* are not plays written by Philander, however, he staged them and actors learned from them.

P. Haman (personal communication, August 11, 2022) stated that “an actor learns from Philander that words do not make one an actor, and that all performers are equal regardless of who they are outside of the acting industry.” This was the strategy he employed in developing performers like David Ndjavera and other prodigies like Felicity Celento, Norman Job, and Lucky Pieters (P. Haman, personal communication, August 11, 2022). Philander’s plays carry a message that will either deal with social or political issues. The characters are relatable to its audience, because Philander writes based on his observation of what is happening in his community, and this is what the actors learned from Philander’s plays.

### **7.13 How actors developed their characters in Philander's plays**

An actor must first comprehend the role they are playing; they must also enjoy themselves while performing. The actor must next decide how the character behaves by assessing the character's age, speaking style, and line of work, and must have character’s consistency throughout the performance (M. Claasen, personal communication, August 2, 2022). To assist his performers in getting into character for the play *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, Philander frequently took his actors to a mental hospital in Katutura (A. Visagie, personal communication, August 28, 2022).

This researcher found that getting into character was mostly reserved for the actor; Philander would give the actor an idea of the character in context to the script, and the actor had to do research based on the guidelines provided. The actor was required to relate to their character. Philander rarely used educated actors because he believed they were not natural and preferred those without experience, so it was easy to relate to the characters. By not using educated actors, F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) referred to an incident had with of the students from UNAM, whom he claimed to not know her lines, and ended up firing her.

This bad experience unfortunately made it seem as though all trained actors are bad. Philander uses trained actors in some of his productions. He has worked with talented students from UNAM such as e.g., Inesh Dos Ramos, Walter Kahivere and Ute-Yan Smit. F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) stressed that natural acting refers to actors who are talented and have passion for acting. The researcher was made to understand that even in the midst of trained or educated actors there are those who are more talented than others, and these are the ones Philander likes to work with.

#### **7.14 Relevance of Philander's plays**

“My style of writing has been relevant to the social issue scene as well as to this society, longing to see the truth being exposed in no uncertain terms via my works,” claimed Philander (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022). M. Claasen (personal communication, August 2, 2022) emphasised that by “reducing information to its essence and making it enjoyable for the audience is one remarkable trait of Philander’s plays. Philander expresses his opinions without reservation, unlike other authors who occasionally hesitate to do so because of political allegiances or a wish not to endanger current connections.” Like Philander, writers who are not scared to express themselves via their plays are needed. Such plays help political leaders understand that the public is aware of and interested in what is happening in the nation (M. Claasen, personal communication, August 2, 2022).

According to Sasman (1996), although Philander created the play *King of the Dump* ten years ago, it does not mean that the play is outdated; instead, it is a timeless drama since the affluent and people experiencing poverty in societies. Play King (2011) stated that a play's relevance may be determined by the message it attempts to convey to the audience and the manner in which it does so.

R. Krotz (personal communication, August 3, 2022) stated that all of “Philander's plays are relevant because he wants to convey a message. Philander is a man who is not afraid to express his views.” R. Krotz (personal communication, August 3, 2022) further stressed that drama should be reintroduced back into classrooms to help students learn, and that there should be more authors like Philander who are not afraid to write about sensitive societal topics such as poverty and corruption.

Philander addresses issues at the heart of the Namibian communities, in most of his plays. For everything that is happening in the community, Philander turns it into a script. During the interview with this researcher, Philander indicated that there were other plays he was writing dealing with current issues in Namibia at the time of this research.

#### **7.15 Press reviews on Philander’s plays**

F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) stated that he does not encourage journalists to attend and assess his plays since they only enjoy what ‘clicks’ with them and do not offer honest feedback. “Some journalists only hurt authentic theatre, and collaborate with theatre practitioners (names withheld) they believe to be the best in the theatre industry” (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022). However, this was due to the fact that often press reviews were the total opposite of what Philander himself believed about his work and this could have led to him not wanting them to review his productions.

#### **7.16 How Philander acquired finances for his productions and activities**

Financial records were not available, so this research indicated several sponsorships, that were received by CAN over the years in newspaper archives. This information proves that the group received sponsorship for the Youth Theatre Festival and Assitej-Namibia, in as much as there were financial difficulties experienced by the group.

F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) stated that for the AIDS play, *The Trumpet Player* (2008), CAN attained financial support for Assitej-Namibia, from the Finnish Embassy. The Ministry of Education bought about 5,000 copies of the auxiliary books and prescribed them in the schools. The books were bought for grade 10 as auxiliary books in English (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022). The Ministry of Education paid Assitej-Namibia N\$500,000. This money allowed Philander to make trips around Namibia for Assitej-Namibia. The Ministry of Education also contributed small amounts, like sponsoring a return flight ticket for Philander to attend Assitej's congress in Seoul (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) stated that he received sponsorships from other local companies, like a fishing company in Luderitz: Pescanova Ceo Tordesill sponsored R10 000 for a Youth Theatre Festival competition staged at the Warehouse Theatre in 1992. Computer Solutions Namibia, a business company financially supported Philander and his theatre technician when CAN toured England in 1997 (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

Philander (2005) stressed that the prizes for the 22nd Annual Youth Theatre Festival were established with a sponsorship of N\$17,000 from First National Bank, which was divided as follows: N\$10, 000 for best play, N\$5, 000 for second best play, and N\$2, 000 for third best play.

Bricks (1989) accused Philander of being motivated by money and publicly requested that the Youth Theatre Festival organisers make the income from the Youth Theatre Festival and distribution of funds public. Bricks stated that the theatre was almost full for the four shows, and that the festival's proceeds should have been divided among all of the groups with the clear goal of strengthening and promoting those groups (Bricks,1989).

Olivier-Sampson (2016) stated that when asked to comment, “Philander claimed that the complaints were not new to him. Philander said there were constant efforts to delegitimise him at the time, and certain Bricks leaders were complicit in the claims against him” (p.106). Philander believed they were trying to discredit him because he had started Community theatre in Namibia (Olivier-Sampson, 2016). However, the enmity between the Philander and Bricks was because Bricks did Community theatre while Philander claimed to do Community theatre which he never did (Olivier-Sampson, 2016).

In addition, in reference to Philander being motivated by money, Olivier-Sampson (2016) asserted that:

Philander felt he owed no one outside the organisation an explanation for how the money was spent. Pre-paid tickets, entrance sales, and competition entrance fees were used to raise funds. Philander had assumed that everyone was aware that the proceeds were used to help outside groups attending the youth festival with travel and lodging expenses” (Olivier-Sampson, p.106).

The remaining funds were distributed as prize money. Philander claimed that he never made money from the youth festival:

We never received any money from donors, we refuse money from the government and the liberation movement to pay price (sic) monies, theatre rentals, transport fees for rural groups that took part, and fees to the Judges. This is how Strauss and his clique operated in dividing the arts fraternity so that today we still have tendencies of professional jealousy, envy, and mishandling among all artists of the country (Olivier- Sampson, p.106).

After being asked about this statements, F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) stated that Bricks was complaining and lied about him because they did not win at the Youth Theatre Festival with a play *In the Army*.

K. Rispel (personal communication, August 23, 2022) emphasised that Philander had to work extremely hard to secure sponsorship arrangements and make a livelihood. Philander had

conflicts with NTN's administration, but he survived by producing his performances in other locations. Philander mentioned that “he was banned from the NTN in 1989, Which Philander called confrontational attitude and the fear of impending political by the director of the theatre, Hannes Horne” (Olivier-Sampson, 2016). According to Stauffer (2009):

The most outstanding characteristic of Philander’s business is his strong sense of creativity and financial independence. Philander’s stance has always been to turn down government funding. People in his groups were allowed to apply for bursaries or awards in their own right. Philander’s stance of refusing government support and depending only on entry money is outstanding in a section of the globe where Community theatre is aggressively donor-driven in order to distribute some materials free to community members (Schauffer, 2009, p.140).

However, according to Schauffer (2009) foreign donor funds were initially denied but eventually accepted because there were no conditions connected, such as support from the American Cultural Centre or the Franco- Namibia Cultural Centre. Philander’s first thought was:

The foreigners came with their donor money and they selected and divided us. We refuse that money from the outset. We want our dignity. We don’t want to be kept hostage, culturally, for the rest of our lives. Being Independent, if we want to criticise the government in a play, we do so. We owe them nothing because they give us nothing... (Schauffer, 2009, p.140).

The area of finance was not extensively covered, but this research managed to cover that which was made available to the public domain through articles. There were some accusations, and misunderstanding in terms of money used in the Youth Theatre Festival. Whether the claims were true or not. It is difficult to determine truth when there was misunderstanding between two groups.

## **7. 17 Marketing and Advertising of the plays**

Philander avoids putting up giant posters that can be destroyed by people who do not understand what he's doing and, he believes posters are a waste of money because the ticket also doubles as the poster (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022). L. Pieters (personal communication, August 3, 2022) stressed that Philander, and other The Serpent Players would drive about Windhoek with a megaphone, announcing the site of a play. Since posters were not very popular at the time, an option was made to paste three posters on his automobile (L. Pieters, personal communication, August 3, 2022).

J. Isaacks (personal communication, August 3, 2022) stressed the performers went out into the neighbourhood, selling tickets and offering a background of what they were going to watch. The fundamental motivation for marketing and promotion was a love for theatre and entertainment, rather than monetary gain. N. Job (personal communication, August 10, 2022) claimed that Philander would utilise newspapers, radio interviews, and occasionally television to record or write portions on the play for publication during rehearsals. This researcher believes Philander could have been inviting journalist for advertisements purposes of his plays; however, he may have gotten upset when the reviews were not fair towards his work effort after the production.

A. Shivute (personal communication, August 2, 2022) stated that selling tickets motivated an artist to bring his or her audience to watch performance and allowed the artist to practice their marketing and communication abilities. “The ticketing system is helpful, especially for people in the arts; one must understand how to draw an audience and sell a show” (A. Shivute, personal communication, August 2, 2022).

M. Claasen (personal communication, August 2, 2022) claimed that some posters were utilised. Philander already has a list of his supporters, including Namibian College of Open

Learning (NAMCOL) students. The enormous response to the theatre show *Waiting for Godot* was incredible. “Philander utilised posters to publicise the plays that were to be presented in the neighbourhood for people to see” (U. Olivier, personal communication, August 9, 2022).

Philander’s way of marketing and advertising his plays has evolved over the years, but due to the nature of this research one may sometimes forget what happened in the past. Which was why probably Philander could not recall setting up posters. He promoted his plays with a mega phone during the early years of The Serpent Players, going out into the community to promote the productions. There were posters that were used sometimes, even though they are not used currently and the usage of the tickets is still used to date.

### **7.18 Awards won by Philander**

F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) recalled his first win for his Afrikaans adaptation of *King of the Dump* staged in Cape Town at a Provincial Theatre Competition in which thirteen Western regional groups were invited to compete. Hosts in South Africa learned of a new writer called Frederick Philander in Namibia, and CAN was the first group from outside South Africa invited to compete.

Edward Pieters and Unity Olivier were actors that accompanied Philander on a tour of rural Cape Town, performing the Afrikaans version of *King of the Dump* at high schools in Upington, and Beaufort West. Because the tournament was for amateurs, Philander’s actors received medals and trophies to reward for their outstanding acting for *King of the Dump* (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

After that, F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) emphasised that the play received positive feedback from newspaper publications such as the *Cape Times*, *Cape Argus*, and *Die Burger*. In 1985, Philander won the Best Actor Award, while Unity Olivier won the

Best Actress Award in Cape Town at the Kellerprinz Drama Festival. In 1996, Philander competed in the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the New York Radio Festival.

F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) went on to say that the British government had declared, via the British Embassy in Namibia, that they were searching for radio plays from all over the world to participate. Because Philander's play had won in South Africa, so he was confident enough to send a rough English copy of *King of the Dump* to London. It was accepted after two months by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) division on African Performance for broadcasting to African listeners (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

The play did not win the competition, but *King of the Dump* and other works from Kenya and Uganda were chosen to be staged in their nations, according to F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022). The BBC send Ledger, a short play director, along with a producer and a technician. David Mukoko, an ex-learner from Jan Jonker Afrikaner to be involved in the staging was cast, along with Felicity Celento (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) mentioned that "the performance was staged for two days in Windhoek at the dumpsite behind the UNAM." The article on the play in *The Namibia*, on July 5, 1996, stated the play co-directed by Philander and Fiona Ledger, earned £8,000, which Philander used to pay the actors. The official drama entry for the BBC was *King of the Dump*, which was chosen for its strong storyline, inventive technological design, and emphasis on African issues. Interestingly, when the play was first performed in Namibia, local newspaper critics panned it (King, 1996). Perhaps this could also be the reason Philander, does not trust the opinions of journalist critics.

The BBC then asked Philander for permission to enter the play in a larger international radio competition, the New York Radio Festival, which included 31 nations. An article on the play in *The Namibian* on May 6, 1996, stated that Philander went to accept the award after winning the contest. Several renowned authors, like the late Ken Saro-Wiwa from Nigeria and Wole Soyinka, who won the Nobel Prize for literature, had their works published on the same radio station as Philander's radio drama was broadcast 30 years later. Additional authors came from South Africa, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Malawi (Great honour, 1996).

According to Tjatindi (2007) Prominent Namibian playwright, Frederick Philander, was honoured for his contribution to the Namibian theatre sector:

Philander, who has been in theatre business for over 20 years, was honoured with award recognizing his tireless efforts in setting up and serving Namibian theatre, at the Namibian Theatre Awards 2007 (Tjatindi, 2007, p16).

In addition, Tjatindi (2007) stressed that beside this lifetime award, Philander scooped the Best Overall Play award for his political satire *Katutura 59*. "Philander also walked away with the Best Stage set, Costume and Technical Presentation award. The actors and actresses from his group, Committed Artists of Namibia, shared in the spoils also receiving recognition" (Tjatindi, 2007, p.16). Philander has won awards for his plays in Namibia, South Africa and United States of America. It shows the tangible effort of his work over the years.

### **7.19 Conclusion**

The discussion in this chapter focused on a continuation of Philander's data results. The chapter's main topic was the staging of Philander's plays, with particular attention paid to the sorts of settings, costumes/props, and stage design. Philander kept focused on his goal of communicating his plays to the audience in a way that would benefit the public by teaching and entertaining them. In this chapter, Philander's relationship with his actors is that of an

individual who brings out the best in his actors. The staging process, awards won and financial aspect was also deliberated on in this chapter.

## CHAPTER 8 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

### 8.1 Philander's contribution to the Namibian theatre

F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) stated that there are two aspects of his contribution to Namibian theatre he is proud of. The first is that he had the chance to engage with young people in Namibia via The Serpent Players, the Namibia Annual Youth Theatre Festival, and Assitej-Namibia. The second is while Philander was working with adults through the Windhoek Theatre Association, Windhoek Players, and CAN (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022). This research agrees that Philander has indeed made a contribution to Namibian theatre. Through his groups, Windhoek Theatre Association, Windhoek Players, The Serpent Players, CAN and also managing Assitej- Namibia. Philander has kept theatre alive in Namibia since 1979- 2021.

The late David Ndjavera, Norman Job, Felicity Celento, Lucky Pieters, and Richard Swarts were among his prodigies, according to Philander, who went on to claim that he had an advantage over other theatre practitioners (names withheld) in Namibia's theatre industry (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022). The advantage includes his awards from South Africa and accomplishments in England and United States of America e.g., the opportunity to perform his plays to 11 universities and winning a radio award for his radio drama *King of the Dump*.

He benefited the theatre by promoting Namibian theatre. By founding the Namibia Annual Youth Theatre Festival, Philander, allowed individuals the chance to showcase their acting and directing abilities despite financial difficulties when there were no sponsors. "Even if certain theatre practitioners (names withheld) disagree with Philander personally, everyone must acknowledge his contributions to the Namibian theatre" (N. Job, personal communication, August 10, 2022).

Being one of the theatre pioneers in Namibia, Philander, motivated new performers and gave them opportunities to act. F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) noted that the actors were given acting opportunities to help them hone their craft since he recognised their ability. Philander, who shattered apartheid's pillars and boundaries at NTN while the South African government ran it, is undoubtedly the pioneer of playwriting and performance in Namibian theatre. Most Namibian performers, including the late David Ndjavera, and Norman Job, were handled by Philander.

### **8.2 Philander did much to promote Namibian theatre outside the Namibian borders**

F. Philander (personal communication, Jun 9, 2022) emphasised his accomplishments made while visiting 11 universities, including winning an international award for *King of the Dump* at the New York Radio Drama Competition and gaining recognition abroad in Europe. Even though Philander's statements may appear as personal achievements, this researcher believes that that it is a contribution to Namibian theatre based on the fact that he showed the international community the type of theatre from Namibia. His personal achievements brought recognition to Namibian theatre.

The playwright Philander also travelled to Grahamstown, South Africa, with actors Norman Job and David Ndjavera to perform *Two Men and a Baby* and *Siswe Banzi is Dead*, according to J. Isaacks (personal communication, August 3, 2022). Philander had many tours to South Africa and those tours also represented Namibian theatre.

### **8.3 Philander provided acting opportunities for Namibian actors**

According to L. Pieters (personal communication, August 3, 2022) Philander developed black performers from Katutura and taught them how to comprehend theatre and how to perform

on stage. The Serpent Players began playing at Windhoek's schools, to inspire the young actors, Philander, brought them to Khomasdal Community Hall so his neighborhood could witness his performances.

In addition, because it was something new, Philander's influence spread beyond only local classroom experiences to performing for various schools, to numerous areas and towns. The plays by Philander were serious plays, but the plays were mostly presented in a comical manner to draw the audience's attention, e.g., certain moments and scenes in the plays *Katutura 59'* and *The Porridge Queen* that would make the audience laugh (L. Pieters, personal communication, August 3, 2022). The comical element practically always happened in Philander's plays, since the plays were written with comic-relieve moments.

Participant 1 (personal communication, August 17, 2022) stated that by giving opportunities to the next generation, like Inesh Dos Ramos in *Agnes of God*, Philander has made a contribution. Philander made a significant contribution to Namibian theatre by encouraging many actors to pursue their careers as outstanding theatre practitioners. Being an actor, and director, Philander has a diverse body of work. He has pushed the envelope in directions most theatre practitioners might not have gone, such as with *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, which significantly advanced the Namibian theatre sector (Participant 1, personal communication, August 17, 2022).

“Philander does a fantastic job by finding vintage plays and staging them, showcasing pieces from Namibia that many viewers would not be aware of (Participant 1, personal communication, August 17, 2022). This researcher begs to differ to a certain extent with Participant 1, just to clarify that vintage plays have been staged in Namibia by other playwrights, perhaps the way how he directed them was unique, since every director has their own way of doing things. By staging the vintage plays, Philander has kept the theatre alive and providing

actors an opportunity to showcase their talent. Even though, he has not been the only one what has been giving actors acting opportunities over the years, there are others such as the NTN, Senga Brockerhoff, Laurinda Olivier-Sampson, Sandy Rudd and others.

According to S. Majiedt (personal communication, August 9, 2022) Philander was instrumental in exposing theatre to young Namibians, who then contributed to the growth of the country's theatre industry. Severius Majiedt had Kubbe Risppel as his mentor, but both owe their engagement in theatre to Philander. Philander was responsible for organising the Namibia Annual Youth Theatre Festival, which let participants interact with other performers and advance their careers (S. Majiedt, personal communication, August 9, 2022). The actors who were part of the Youth Theatre Festival, inspired other actors and those actors are still active and working with the current generation of actors, a good example is Senga Brockerhoff who was trained by Severius Majiedt, and is still active in the Namibian theatre industry.

Assitej-Namibia at Okahandja Secondary School exposed Fillimon Handukeme, a Namibian stage manager at David Benade Audio (DB Audio) and theatre practitioner, to the works of Philander in 2005 (Handukeme, 2022). The presence of Assitej- Namibia at Fillimon Handukeme's school, gave him inspiration to pursue a career in acting and producing films, one of which is on YouTube titled *Oushimba (City)* (2021).

#### **8.4 Most of the actors that came through Philander shaped the Namibian theatre industry**

Others like late David Ndjavera, late Stanley van Wyk, John Isaacks, and Adriano Visagie, Felicity Celento among others, collaborated with Philander and influenced Namibian theatre, according to M. Claasen (personal communication, August 2, 2022). The people with whom

Philander collaborated testified to his accomplishments in preserving Namibia's theatre history. N. Job (personal communication, August 10, 2022) stated that Philander had the majority of his plays published and left a lasting legacy.

“Philander attempted to resurrect theatre in schools despite it having begun to fade over the years. Philander feels discouraged because he is not receiving the credit he deserves” (R. Krotz, personal communication, August 3, 2022). There researcher disagrees with the Krotz sentiments that Philander is not receiving credit that he deserves, if it were not so he would not have received a lifetime achievement award. Philander is presently working for Namibia’s National Broadcaster radio station, assisting with radio drama. R. Krotz (personal communication, August 3, 2022) further mentioned that “due to differing approaches to theatre, Philander and several other individuals (names omitted) in the theatre industry had disagreements.” Philander has people in the theatre who do not personally like him because of some of their differences with him, and intern he mentioned during the personal interview that he does not care.

Participant 3 (personal communication, August 17, 2022) concurred with others who have praised Philander and says that while he may not have been simple to deal with, his impact was felt by many theatre practitioners. Late David Ndjavera, Norman Job, late Stanley van Wyk, and Vickson Hangula would not have become titans in the theatre industry if it were not for Philander (Participant 3, personal communication, August 17, 2022).

Participant 3 (personal communication, August 17, 2022) further mentioned that although, performers may have established their own distinctive styles, they were greatly impacted by Philander's work in terms of both theatre style and subject when they first started out, whether through collaboration with him or inspiration from him (Participant 3, personal communication, August 17, 2022).

Namibian war veteran Ueshitile Peyolo, better known as Bana Shekupe, is a musician and one of the founding members of the Ndilimani cultural group (a Namibian music band that sings political songs about the liberation struggle of Namibia). U. Peyolo (personal communication, August 11, 2022) stated that Philander contributed to Namibian theatre by composing and conveying tales that are authentic and approachable to Namibians. Which is true, according to this research, Philander has more plays written that are Namibian based, of which he still continues to write by the time of this research.

U. Peyolo (personal communication, August 11, 2022) further mentioned that Philander is another theatre practitioner who has remained committed to the field after being fired from teaching. Working with Philander on the stage production of *Katutura 59'* in 1990 gave Peyolo the chance to hone his acting skills in the character of Boetie. His acquired abilities helped him get the lead role in the HIV/AIDS film *Remember Elifas* (2010) (U. Peyolo, personal communication, August 11, 2022).

According to A. Shivute (personal communication, August 2, 2022) Philander's contributions to the Namibian theatre are comparable to those of many other practitioners in the field, including Aldo Behrens, those who worked for NTN, and other theatre practitioners who preserved the art form and provided opportunities for aspiring actors. As a result, the Namibian theatre industry expanded.

A. Shivute (personal communication, August 2, 2022) further outlined that because of individuals like Philander who have given with their blood and sweat, the industry is still alive; otherwise, it would have died. By staging stage performances, Philander, according to A. Visagie (personal communication, August 28, 2022) made a selfless gift to Namibian theatre. This cleared the path for Visagie to become an award-winning actor and opened doors for him in the theatre and film industries.

### **8.5 Philander went extreme with his performances, such as performing naked on stage**

Philander was also the first person to undress in a play. In *The Beauty Contest*, he and his then girlfriend Felicity Celento, were naked on stage, something that had never been done before in Namibia. He stretched the boundaries in the play, *The Beauty Contest*. Since its original performance, the dialogue has been modified, and the actors used clothing such as a swimsuit. The swim suit was used to tone down the play while maintaining functional nudity.

However, the scene about Sarah's breast remained and is shown as follow:

**Sara:** (*Touches*) Oh Klaas. You say such nice things about my body. (*She hugs him, the moment he had been waiting for. He opportunistically unties her bra to expose her breast*).

**Klaas:** (*Besides himself with excitement at what he sees*) Just look at these tits. Mama Mia. They look like ripe watermelons waiting to be plucked. (*He attempts to touch the breast but is prevented*).

**Sara:** Oh, no. Hands off. Eyes on.

**Klaas:** Okay Sara. Please do not feel offended I was only admiring them. Show the breast they look like miniature mountains, which should be climbed every day of the year exercise. (*Turns to the breast but is prevented with a wave of hands*) (Philander, 2005, p.77).

*The Beauty Contest* was a controversial play, because of the nudity, and that generated a lot of attention, bringing crowds to the theatre (S. Majiedt, personal communication, August 9, 2022).

### **8.6 Philander has always remained consistent in staging his plays and documenting his work**

Vickson Hangula is a theatre practitioner and filmmaker from Namibia. "I looked up to and was inspired by Philander" (V. Hangula, personal communication, August 23, 2022). V. Hangula (personal communication, August 23, 2022) claimed that Philander has consistently assessed the arts throughout the years, regardless of whether any theatre practitioner or critic

agreed with him. Some theatre practitioners (names withheld) certainly forget that there is more to his plays and personality; theatre practitioners fail to recognise that each individual Philander affected, influenced others.

Muhindua Kaura, is a Namibian theatre practitioner. Kaura (2022) stated that he met Philander in 1993 at the Grahamstown Arts Festival, when he saw Athol Fugard's piece *Siswe Banzi is Dead*, directed by Philander. He agrees with Hangula's statement that Philander has attempted to get the majority of his work published, which is highly significant since it provides the content to be documented for future generations (V. Hangula, personal communication, August 23, 2022). Participant 1 (personal communication, August 17, 2022) emphasised that Philander has covered practically every aspect of theatre, such in the fact that Philander worked for *New Era* for many years as a theatre review critic and reporter on Namibian theatre problems. This researcher found that, Philander worked as a journalist for newspapers such as *The Namibian*, *Times of Namibia*, *The Windhoek Advertiser*, *The Windhoek Observer* and *New Era*. He used his position as a journalist to review and write on Namibian theatre. The articles he wrote over the years were beneficial to this study.

### **8.7 Philander's success as a writer and producer**

Participant 2, a Namibian theatre practitioner, emphasised that Philander is a mass producer when it comes to theatre, despite the fact that his method of doing theatre is not of high quality, but it should be noted that every director has their own method of directing (Participant 2, personal communication, August 25, 2022). M. Schirmer (personal communication, August 24, 2022) claimed that Philander contributed to Namibian theatre despite several of his shows being unable to be staged due to a lack of funds. Even after losing his job Philander has been dedicated to theatre to date.

K. Rispel (personal communication, August 23, 2022) stated that Philander was the most influential figure in Namibian theatre. "With the Youth Theatre Festival and producing shows, Philander accomplished more than NTN in terms of producing more local plays and generating performing opportunities for performers like myself, directors, and writers" (K. Rispel, personal communication, August 23, 2022). Participant 4 (personal communication, June 27, 2023) stated that Kubbe Rispel could be referring to Philander's personal work as an individual playwright when he mentioned that he produced more local plays. Because theatre has been used before independence a form of Protest theatre, so more people could have been producing local plays.

Romulus Peterson, a Namibian theatre practitioner who has worked with Philander, believes that Philander's persistence in creating and staging plays over the years has significantly contributed to Namibian theatre (R. Peterson, personal communication, August 3, 2022). Romulus's and other theatre practitioners mentioned in this research validated Philander's dedication and enthusiasm for theatre.

It is a fact according to this researcher that Philander was and is indeed active in producing plays. The sheer volume of his plays is impressive. Philander's consistency in producing plays is never deterred by the negative reviews on his plays over the years; instead, he uses them as fuel to write even better. Philander's consistency in staging plays has allowed journalists and researchers to write about him and document his plays. By the time of the personal interview with this researcher, Philander was writing more plays for CAN, and his personal autobiography, in the autobiography he is currently writing, in which he intends to address some of his 'enemies' in the theatre industry over the years.

## **8.8 Philander's overview of the future of Namibian theatre**

The future of the Namibian theatre, according to F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) is gloomy because the institutions responsible for national theatre promotion have been dithering and skipping out on their moral obligation to actively encourage and promote real theatre among the general public.

Moreover, F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) noted that theatre efforts are as rare as the proverbial 'chicken teeth' since the leaderships in charge of the country's creative institutions lack compelling and perceptive concepts. However, this research, begs to differ with this statement, theatre there is hope for theatre. There are institutions such as UNAM and NTN that are still producing plays. Therefore, there is hope for theatre in Namibia.

“Unlike music, I humbly believe that theatre must need heavenly intervention to continue existing as a vital form of artistic expression for the next 50 years” (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022). The researcher agrees with this statement by Philander, there is more that needs to be done to make theatre a fulltime career for Namibian actors.

Furthermore, F. Philander (personal communication, June 9, 2022) added that one of the main reasons for this is that NTN is missing its mission by miles with a panel of so-called independent theatre judges serving for the past 20 years or so! “Those old and irrelevant people, who in my view had never ever acted or written any play of note, are still being used by NTN to do the job” (F. Philander, personal communication, June 9, 2022). Participant 5 (personal communication, July 19, 2023) a Namibian theatre practitioner, stated that Philander complains about the judges because he has tried to enter some plays over the years which never won.

Participant 5 (personal communication, July 19, 2023) further mentioned that the judges during the Theatre Zone awards and Bi-annual Theatre and Film awards were appointed based

on their experiences and qualification by the NTN. In his discussion with Schauffer about NTN, Philander revealed that he is an ardent critic of NTN. In connection with the latter two assertions, Philander said to Schauffer:

The NTN, it does not serve its' mission. We are abstaining from them. There is a problem there; our expectations have not been met. A lot is happening there that is causing frustration amongst the artists and writers in this country. There is great dissatisfaction with the things are being run there now. It creates limited opportunities for certain people with the result that there are people who... shouldn't be running theatre... They bring in the French. They stay for a month. They go, the actors are left. It's not an ongoing consistent program of development. It makes a mockery of development (Litkie, 2003, p.121-122).

Litkie (2003) stated that Philander's remark about the French referred to the French-Namibian exchange show that was showing on NTN at the time of the interview. It was a localization of Jean Cocteau's *The Eiffel Tower Wedding Party*, performed by a combination of trained French actors and a group of Namibian performers.

Litkie (2003) further mentioned from the perspective of the French government, the exercise must have appeared to be a co-operative venture into cultural exchange with a new state in Africa that could stand-in goodwill and introduce a little French dramatic tradition to a non-francophone part of Africa. Litkie (2003) emphasised further that Philander and other prominent theatre practitioners in Namibia observed it from a contrasting standpoint. Litkie outlined that Schauffer and his Indian research assistant stated:

Attended the opening night of the production in question. It was strange sitting in the auditorium of a National Theatre in a newly independent African country to witness a performance of a work by Jean Cocteau! It felt even stranger to look about and to realise that the audience was composed of white members of the diplomatic corps, Embassy staff, Field workers, and local expatriate continentals - except for the Black African lady

behind us who spoke French - and Nivashni Naidoo my research assistant. If this was being presented for the benefit of Namibian cultural development, where were the Namibians I wondered? (Litkie, 2003, p.123).

Even though Philander still believes the NTN is not doing its job as it is supposed to, Participant 4 (personal communication, June 27, 2023) stressed that NTN has no issues with Philander, and one of his plays is still on the waiting list to be staged. This researcher, understands that Philander is not happy with where theatre is at currently in Namibia, due to the pace of theatre plays produced and some of the message description in some of the plays.

### **8.9 Recommendation**

This study focused on Philander's contribution to Namibian theatre by giving an overview of his actions in the Namibian theatre industry from 1979 until 2021. Nonetheless, more investigation is required concerning Philander's involvement in Namibia's film industry. There is a further need to constantly document theatre in Namibia, and document the work of theatre practitioners who have been active in the Namibian theatre, such as Aldo Behrens, Vickson Hangula, Laurinda Olivier-Sampson, David Ndjavera, Sandy Rudd, Senga Bockerhoff, and Tanya Terblanche and others. These practitioners have been active in Namibian theatre over the years by writing plays and staging productions.

### **8.10 Discussion and Conclusion**

This study's brought forward Philander contribution to Namibian theatre. The study used a narrative approach that showed that from his youth Philander was passionate about theatre, which ignited with his first play in primary school in front of his peers. He also continued

while in high school, staging a play to make an income for his school. His desire for theatre further prompted him to act in plays in college as well.

After graduating as a teacher, Philander started a theatre group, with a group of young people whom he calls the out of school learners. After that Philander came to Namibia, and was introduced to the Namibian scene, and made a name for himself, as the first man to stage a play as a 'black' in an 'all-white' theatre in 1979.

This study further found that after his historical moment in 1979 at the Windhoek Theatre, Philander started staging plays by Adam Small and Athol Fugard. Philander would then create theatre groups such as Windhoek Players, The Serpent Players and Committed Artist of Namibia.

While a teacher at Jan Jonker Afrikaner Secondary School, Philander started a group with a group of learners called The Serpent Players. The Serpent Players would then perform at the ATKV competition in South Africa. After the success of The Serpent Players Philander created the Namibia Youth Theatre Festival. The Youth Theatre Festival became the hub for youth theatre. Allowing learners from different schools to compete annually. It gave an opportunity for those who were artistically talent to show case their work. Some of the young people who participated in the Youth Theatre Festival such as Vickson, Lucky Pieters, Norman Job and Frieda Karipi are still active in the same discipline they were in years ago, and have ventured into film productions.

Philander's contribution is evident in the people he gave an opportunity to show case their talent. Philander has written more plays as a Namibian theatre practitioner and some of the plays he performed won awards. Plays such as *King of the Dump*, which won is South African and as a radio drama in United States of America. Another play is *The Beauty Contest*, a play that was controversial, because of the actors who performed naked on stage. With *The Beauty*

*Contest* Philander has pushed the boundaries of theatre in Namibia. He also performed some of his plays at the Grahamstown Arts Festival. Philander toured with the late David Ndjavera to England for six weeks with the plays *The Railwayman* and *Will of Die- Hard Soldier* in 1997. Due to his England tour, Philander was later fired from his job, but he remained consistent in keeping theatre alive for 44 years to date.

Philander's determination to stage productions even when there is no sponsorship, serves as an inspiration to any person who is involved in theatre. So far Philander is the only theatre practitioner who pays his actors based on the tickets sales system, when there are no sponsorships for his productions.

There was evidence from some sources that not everybody agreed with the opinions raised by Philander himself, such as Philander's definition of Community theatre, which was challenged by Andre Strauss and Laurinda Olivier-Sampson. This research found that Philander's definition of Community theatre is based on his personal understanding of the way he writes his plays, which is basically writing about things happening in his community. This research found that there were some theatre practitioners and journalists questioned the standard of his plays. This study came to the conclusion that as Philander re-staged his productions over the years, different audiences would have different opinion on his productions; be it good or bad. Reviews on his plays however shows the consistency of his involvement in theatre. Looking past the negative reviews on his plays, seems not to deter him from writing and staging plays. Philander is an inspiration to the younger generation of actors with passion for theatre. This research has found that Philander made a significant contribution to Namibian theatre from the period of 1979- 2021.

## **RESEARCH ETHICS**

The researcher sought ethical permission from the Ethical Clearance Committee at the University of Namibia. Although the identity of some of the individuals who volunteered to participate in the study was kept secret, several participants requested that their identities be revealed in the study.

Apart from the researcher and the supervisor, all data was treated privately. All participants were informed about the study before it began, and their agreement was requested. Participants were free to withdraw their involvement at any moment during the trial with no repercussions. The interviews with the participants were being recorded; however, when participants discarded the recording, the researcher had to resort to taking notes.

Interviews with theatre practitioners lasted 20 minutes, and the interview with Frederick B. Philander took 45 minutes. The data collected through the interviews and questionnaires were kept on a secured, password-protected computer. The data will be kept for five years before it is disposed of. The researcher used information from various information centres for material on Philander and his theatre activities. The documents in the public domain required no special permission to use.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Ethical Clearance



#### ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

**Ethical Clearance Reference Number: SHS 0043    Date: 29 July 2022**

This Ethical Clearance Certificate is issued by the University of Namibia Decentralized Ethics Committee (DEC) in accordance with the University of Namibia's Research Ethics Policy and Guidelines. Ethical approval is given in respect of undertakings contained in the Research Project outlined below. This Certificate is issued on the recommendations of the ethical evaluation done by the School of Humanities, Society & Development Decentralized Ethics Committee.

**Title of Project:** Frederick Philander: An exploration of his contribution to Namibian Theatre [1979-2021]

**Researcher:** Melgisedek Nehemia

**Student Number:** 201403447

**Supervisor(s):** Dr. Suzette Van der Smit

#### Centre for Research Services

Take note of the following:

1. Any significant changes in the conditions or undertakings outlined in the approved Proposal must be communicated to the ethics committee. An application to make amendments may be necessary.
2. Any breaches of ethical undertakings or practices that have an impact on ethical conduct of the research must be reported to the ethics committee
3. The Principal Researcher must report issues of ethical compliance to the ethics committee (through the Chairperson) at the end of the Project or as may be requested by the ethics committee
4. The ethics committee retains the right to:
  - i) Withdraw or amend this Ethical Clearance if any unethical practices (as outlined in the Research Ethics Policy) have been detected or suspected,
  - ii) Request for an ethical compliance report at any point during the course of the research.

The ethics committee wishes you the best in your research.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Trywell Kalusopa', written over a horizontal line.

Prof. Trywell Kalusopa (Chairperson, Decentralised Ethics Committee)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Davis Mumbengegwi', written over a horizontal line.

Prof. Davis Mumbengegwi (Head, Multidisciplinary Research)

## **Appendix 2: Personal interview guide**

### **Personal interview guide: Theatre Practitioners**

My name is Melgisedek Nehemia, and I am a University of Namibia Master of Arts (Performing Arts) student. The goal of this study is to examine Frederick B. Philander's contributions to Namibian theatre. You actively choose to participate, and you are free to stop at any moment. Unless you specifically request that your identity be included in this study, the researcher will maintain confidentiality. The interview with you will last 20 minutes. We really value your involvement in this study.

#### **Question for theatre practitioners**

1. How did you get to know Philander?
2. Did Philander's plays have an impact on you, if yes, name a play and state how
3. How would you describe his staging set up?
4. How long have you been involved with the theatre practices of Frederick B. Philander?
5. What have you learned from working with Frederick B. Philander?
6. When acting for Frederick B. Philander did you do auditions before the time?
7. Did he pay you, for your performances?
8. How does Frederick B. Philander prepare you as an actor for a specific character in a play?
9. How would you describe Frederick B. Philander's contribution to the Namibian theatre?
10. Describe the relevance of his theatre in this era.
11. Describe the usage of language in his productions.
12. Describe Frederick B. Philander's directing style.
13. Do you agree with the themes of his plays or do you only see your character as role?

14. In what capacity do you know Frederick B. Philander?

15. Have you seen any one (or more) of Frederick B. Philander's plays? If yes, please give your impressions of the play?

#### **D. Personal interview Guide: Interview with Frederick B. Philander**

My name is Melgisedek Nehemia, and I am a University of Namibia Master of Arts (Performing Arts) student. The goal of this study is to examine Frederick B. Philander's contribution to the Namibian theatre between 1979 and 2021. You can choose not to take part in this research at any time because it is optional. You can choose to give the researcher access to take notes rather than record the interview. The researcher will spend 45 minutes of your time. The researcher will guarantee privacy. This research appreciates your involvement in the study, you also have the option of asking that your identity be used unless you specify that it should not be revealed. We really value your involvement in this study.

#### **Personal interview questions: Philander**

1. Who is Frederick Brian Philander?
2. What theatre groups did you create when you arrived in Namibia?
3. What are some of the awards that you received over the years?"
4. Describe your staging: Venues, Décor, Technical
5. How did you accumulate finances for your productions?
6. Did you make a profit from your production?
7. How did you pay your actors for performance and rehearsal?
8. Describe your rehearsal process.

9. How did you get props and costumes?
10. What is the relevance of your plays to the Namibian theatre and society?
11. How did you market and advertise your plays?
12. How would you describe your directing style?
13. Have you ever co- directed or written a play with anyone?
14. How would you describe language in your plays?
15. Why do you engage with the audience after your shows?
16. How would you describe your contribution to Namibian theatre?

### **Appendix 3: Email Questionnaire**

My name is Melgisedek Nehemia, and I am a University of Namibia Master of Arts (Performing Arts) student. The goal of this study is to examine Frederick B. Philander's contributions to Namibian theatre. You actively choose to participate, and you are free to stop at any moment. Unless you specifically request that your identity be included in this study, the researcher will maintain confidentiality. The interview with you will last 20 minutes. We really value your involvement in this study.

#### **In what capacity do you know Frederick B. Philander:**

- A as Stage personnel \_\_\_ Fill in Section A
- B as Theatre practitioner\_\_\_ Fill in Section B
- C as Other\_\_\_ Fill in Section C
- D. Frederick B. Philander

If you know Frederick B. Philander in more than one capacity, please be so kind and fill in the relevant sections.

#### **Section A: Stage personnel**

1.How did you get to know Philander?

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2. Did Philander's plays have an impact on you, if yes, name a play and state how?

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3. How would you describe his staging set up?

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**Section B: Actors**

1. How long have you been involved with the theatre practices of Frederick B. Philander?

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2. What have you learned from working with Frederick B. Philander?

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3. When acting for Frederick B. Philander did you do auditions before the time?

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4. How does Frederick B. Philander prepare you as an actor for a specific character in a play?

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5. Did Philander's plays have an influence of you, if yes, how?

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6. How would you describe Frederick B. Philander's contribution to the Namibian theatre?

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7. Describe the relevance of his theatre in this era.

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8. Describe the usage of language in his productions.

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9. Describe Frederick B. Philander's directing style.

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10. Do you agree with the themes of his plays or do you only see your character as role?

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**Section C:**

1. In what capacity do you know Frederick B. Philander?

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2. What have you learned from working with Frederick B. Philander?

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3. How would you describe Frederick B. Philander's contribution to the Namibian theatre?

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4. Have you seen any one (or more) of Frederick B. Philander's plays? If yes, please give your impressions of the play?

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**Appendix 4: Register of plays by Philander performed in different periods from 1979-2021**

This is a list of plays directed by Philander. It should be noted that Philander frequently restages his work, and the information provided on the plays may not be the exact origin of the date the play was produced, but rather what is documented in the materials obtained by this researcher. The table contains a combination of Philander's plays and those by other playwrights. Philander founded the Namibia Annual Youth Theatre Festival in 1984 to provide Namibian playwrights a platform to display their work, and some of his pieces have since been restaged.

Date	Play Title	Playwright	Group	Director	Actors	Venue
1979	<i>Joanie Galant-Hulle</i>	Adam Small	Windhoek Players	Frederick B. Philander	Frederick Philander, Felicity Celento, Basil De Walt, Milton Louw	Rössing Education Centre.
1981	<i>Dark Voices Ring</i>	Zakes Mda	N/A	Frederick B. Philander	Martina Schirmer, Vinette Tottie, Ebrahim	Unowned

1982	<i>Boesman and Lena</i>	Athol Fugard	The Serpent Players	Frederick B. Philander	John Isaacks, Robert Isaacks, Hansina Isaacs	Jan Jonker Afrikaner Secondary School open square.
1989	<i>The Beauty Contest</i>	Frederick B. Philander	<i>Windhoek Players</i>	Frederick B. Philander	Frederick B. Philander as Klaas and Felicity Celento as Sara	Warehouse Theatre.
1991	<i>Will of a Die-Hard Soldier</i>	Frederick B. Philander	Windhoek Players	Frederick B. Philander	Felicity Celento (Lola Curry), Blossom Louw (Maggie Curry), Georgivis Izaakz (Jamesie Curry) and Freddie Philander (James Curry)	Academy Theatre
1997	<i>The Railwayman</i>	Frederick B. Philander	Windhoek Players	Frederick B. Philander	Frederick Philander	Unknown

2000	<i>Victim of Love</i>	Frederick B. Philander	CAN	Frederick B. Philander	Frederick Philander as the Teacher	Unknown
2005	<i>My Africa my Children</i>	Athol Fugard	CAN	Frederick B. Philander	David Ndjavera (Mr.M), Norman Job (Thami) and Felicity Celento (Isabel Dyson)	Ultimate Theatre (Khomasdal)
2005	<i>The Teacher</i>	Frederick B. Philander	CAN	Frederick B. Philander	Frederick Philander as the Teacher	College of the Arts

<p>29 and 30<sup>th</sup>  August  t  2007</p>	<p><i>Katutura</i>  59'</p>	<p>Frederick  B.  Philander</p>	<p>CAN</p>	<p>Frederick B.  Philander</p>	<p>Botha Ellis as Major Lombaart) and his two reservists  (Armas Shivute, as Pineas and doubling as Jakop and Tjireya  Hipikuruka as Klaas), Anna Louw as Gerty, Liz Kubersky as Miss Louw as Missies  Lombaard and Stanley van Wyk as Oom Booi. Intila Katambo as (Meide), Romanus Mukutu as Takal</p>	<p>Boiler room  Katutura.</p>
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2007	<i>The Mole People</i>	Frederick B. Philander	CAN	Frederick B. Philander	of Basil De Walt (Camp Commander), Neville Hipikuruka (Captain Danger), Armas Shivute (enemy spy), Maria Guriras (raped woman), Ronald Krotz (internal security), Menghis Kamsay (prisoner 2), Richard Swartz (supreme commander), Sakeus Kanyanda (sergeant), Anna Louw (Guard 2), and Milton Hochobed	Katutura Arts Centre
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					(Internal security agent 1)	
2007	<i>Election Fever</i>	Frederick B. Philander.	CAN	Frederick B. Philander	Unknown	Katutura Arts Centre
2007	<i>The Porridge Queen</i>	Frederick B. Philander	CAN	Frederick B. Philander	Elzaan De Wee as Handjievool, John Isaacks as The Worker and Ou Booi, Danny Matroos as the health inspector and Ou Six, Frederick Philander as Caspie and Jehova; s witness, Zenlia Philander as the insurance and political agent	Unknown
2007	<i>The Bigamist</i>	Frederick B. Philander	CAN	Frederick B. Philander	Armas Shivute as the Charlatan Kazara, Arlene	Unknown

					Mouton as ex-wife Baba, Dedrei de Wee as raped daughter Kinnie, Intila Katambo as the Oshiwambo wife Nadula and Albert Ricketts as Pastor	
03 and 4 <sup>th</sup> October 2008	<i>King of the Dump</i>	Frederick B. Philander	CAN	Frederick B. Philander	Freddie Philander (Pompie), Felicity Celento (Eva), Richard Swarts (Driver)	UNAM space Theatre
03 <sup>rd</sup> September 2009	<i>Two Men and a Baby</i>	Frederick B. Philander	CAN	Frederick B. Philander	Frederick Philander as Nelson and David Ndjavera as Juba	Ultimate Theatre (Khomasdal)

2010	<i>Blood Brother</i>	Frederick B. Philander	CAN	Frederick B. Philander	Intila Katambo, who was acclaimed best newcomer on stage during 2007 Theatre Zone Competition for her role portrayal of Nadula in the CAN production 'The Bigamist'(Carla , Christel Nassauw (Shirley), Petra Coleman (Debbie), Romulus Pietersen (pastor and doctor, veteran actors, Kibbe Rispel (Ralph, the	Unknown
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					pimp), and David Ndjavera.	
2014	<i>Waiting for Godot</i>	Samuel Beckett	CAN	Frederick B. Philander	Zabeth Philander as Boy, John Isaacks as Lucky, the slave, Mervin Claasen as Vladimir, and Estragon by Felicity Celento and Pozzo by Frederick Philander	Ultimate Theatre (Khomasdal
2015	<i>Agnes of God</i>	John Peilmeier	CAN	Philander B. Philander	Inesh dos Ramos as nun Tanya Hartz as Martha Livingstone Felicity Celento as Mother Mariam	Ultimate Theatre (Khomasdal

2015	<i>One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest</i>	Dale Wasserman	CAN	Frederick B. Philander	Philander as the Colombian Chief, David Campell, Brumelda English, Adriano Visagie, Anthony Titus, Wayne Beukes, Peter Peter. and Lynn- Jacobs as Nurse Ratched.	Ultimate Theatre (Khomasdal)
2021	<i>Pandemic: Effects and Defects 2021</i>	Frederick B. Philander	CAN	Frederick B. Philander	Frederick Philander	Theatre School (College of the Arts)
2022	<i>Conspirators</i>	Frederick B. Philander	CAN	Frederick B. Philander	; Zenlia (Sarah & Lopes), Felicity Celento (The Voice & Head of Department HOD), Arlene Mouton (The	Theatre School (College of the Arts)

					Head), Andreas Mulenga (TV- Reporter) and Frederick Philander (Frederick Philander).	
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