

Theatre born out of struggle

"TOLL on church bells toll the night away tonight is judgement day".

And, judgement day it was for two families living in Soweto at the height of the boycotts and unrest in 1976. It was judgement day for the people of South

Africa. "Night of the Long Day", is a sensitive play about the pain and suffering, the hopes and dreams, the tragedies of life in our country. It is also a play of birth and death. Of relations between parents and children. Between the

struggle to survive, disillusionment and the ideals of freedom.

The play was written by one of our very own playwrights, Dukuza Ka Macu. The play opened at the Dhlomo Theatre Club (DTC) in Johannesburg recently.

DTC is a new theatre

which was started and is run by a group of Black artists. It is a theatre which was born out of the real life experiences of our people and their struggles.

Benjie Francis, the director of the play says that the theatre hopes to explore our history and culture. To do this, it must have a vision of a future South Africa. It must give birth to action.

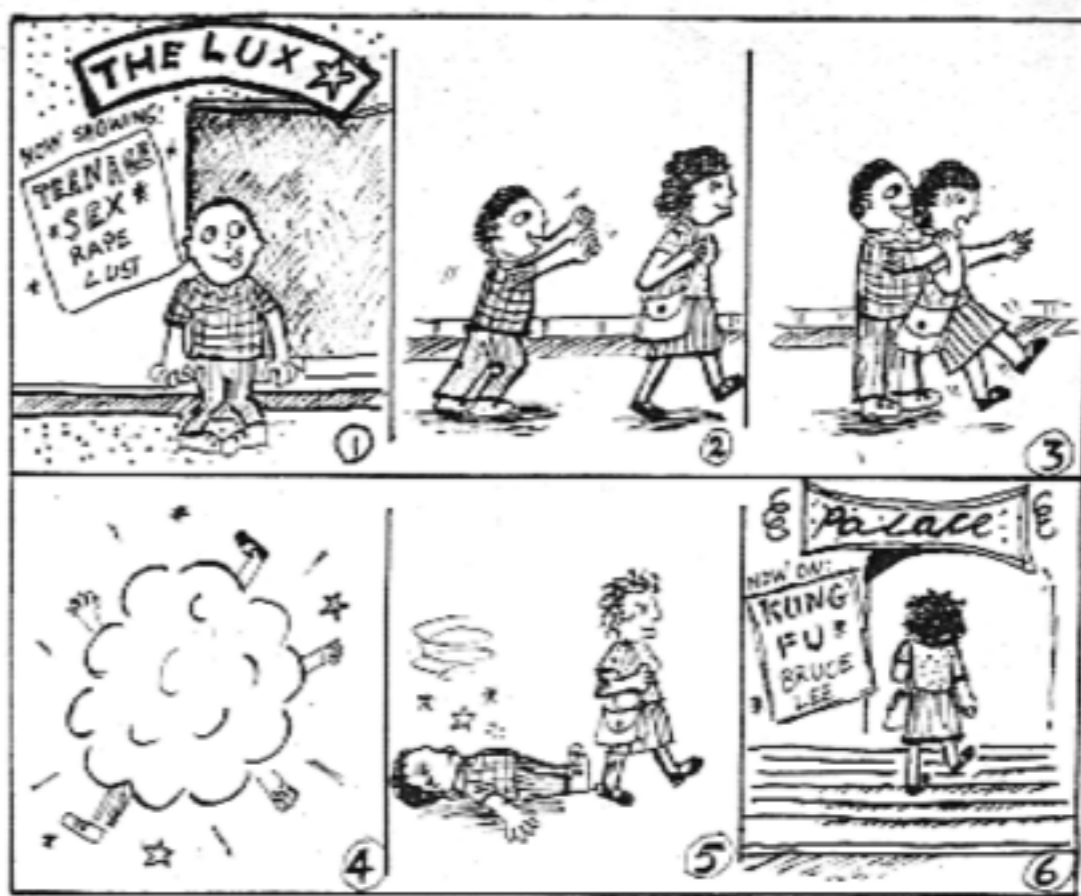
Instead of promoting individual playwrights and actors, it will emphasize collective play creation and acting. This is a new theatrical experience where the playwright, the actor and audience are full participants.

It is also the aim of the theatre club to run workshops and to develop the skills in writing, producing and acting. Dlomo is a non-subsidised theatre and needs the support of the community to fund it and help it grow.

DTC runs a membership scheme for individuals, art groups, schools and other groups of people.

In this way, tickets are subsidised at a price that people can afford.

The organisers of the club hope to take plays on tour around the country.



A scene from 'Night of the long day'.

Drama about our history and problems

ALL over the townships of Langa, Guguletu and Nyanga community drama groups have been started. Some are based in houses and others in the township community centres.

Vulindlela, Nawe and Masikhululeke are the most active groups. They write their own plays, direct them and act in them themselves.

We have seen their plays at public meetings and in the communities.

Masikhululeke drama group told Grassroots that their themes come from the day-to-day experiences of township life. Workers struggles, evictions, housing, hooliganism and detentions form the subjects of their plays.

They say, "community drama should not only talk about how people suffer, but also explain why our problems exist and how we can solve them." "People must not think that they cannot be involved in drama. Everyone can take part. Community drama is about our people and their problems."

The groups also work on plays about our history. The history that is not told in our school history books.

Masikhululeke is working on a play about such an important event. - In 1857 the Africans were deceived by the whites. They were told to burn their cattle and crops because they would get more from the whites. But this was just a way of fooling the people and to force them off their land to work on the mines. This is the theme of their new play.

Masikhululeke, we are waiting to see this play.

Poet's corner

"The time of our lives" is a new anthology of poems written by FAROUK ASVAT. We have selected "Ou China en die Amper-Intellectual," from his book. Copies could be ordered from Black Thoughts Publications, P.O. Box 6002, Johannesburg at R2.50.

OU CHINA EN DIE AMPER-INTELLECTUAL
Heit! Hoezit daar?

Nee, is sweet my bra.
Djy's mos skaars né.
Waar was djy nou-die aan?
Aai, djy't weer 'n anne' dëng gemiss.
Ou China - djy ken hom mos -
Hy't 'n anne' situasie somme' innie fridge gebere
Omtese die situasie klim oppie stage
Nogal gecollar en getie
En hy adjust sy cufflinks so met 'n style
En hy bégëne woerawara in so 'n highbrow lingo
Iets van die modus operandie of - iets van Capitalism
En hy wietle what-what van Existentialism
En Socialism
En hy gaan aan en aan
Oor ek-wiet-nie-wat se moerism
En die majietas bégëne woelrig raak van die kakpraat
Maar Ou China hy sit net daar in sy hoek
Met sy Ayas oor sy ooge en slaap.
Kanti, net as die situasie klaar is met hom spieche,
En voor die Chairman nog ken opstaan,
Is Ou China op sy bene
En hy adjust sy Ayas so op 'n slant
En hy address die Chairman en die Ladies en
Gentlemen
- Djy ken mos Ou China -
Nee, daai bra van my het style
En hy bégëne om te sê
Die mense moet hum correct as hy verkeerd is
Maar hy voestaan omtese
Die gentleman het so 'n uuz too veel gecable
Oer 'n dëng wat ons in die 'kasies mos ken
Omtese, die lahnie ration ons met die lewe.
En djy wiet wat
Voor die outies hom nog 'n applause kan tchee
Sit Ou China somme' wee' nee'
Trek sy Ayas oor sy ooge
En slaap.

At the movies...

SATURDAY afternoon - I'm standing outside the bioscope with a group of friends waiting for the matinee show to come out. Only laaities go to matinee and they make so much noise that you can't hear a word that the actors are saying. So my friends and I go to the four o'clock show.

The doors open and the laaities come streaming out. All they are talking about is Chuck Norris and what a "main ou" he is. They have just seen a kung fu movie.

They really admire him. As soon as they get out of the bioscope they start jumping around in the air like a lot of baboons, imagining they are Chuck Norris - they start hitt-

ing and kicking at each other - they are kung fu heroes.

We go inside. The bioscope stinks of Jeyes Fluid and stale air. But, what does it matter? After all, where else can one go to a Saturday afternoon? They don't even wait for us all to be seated before they start the film. But what the heck, the action hasn't started yet.

What an action-packed film! The hero is a hired killer. He has a licence to kill. He goes around killing everyone who stands in his way. Fast cars, beautiful sexy girls, the film has them all. And you must take a look at his equipment - guns, knives, bombs, the works.

By the end of the

film he must have killed about twenty 'bad guys', yet not once is he arrested or even held for questioning. He just walks away with his girl at his side.

It was almost dark when we came out of the bioscope. The gangs were already gathering at the corners. There will probably be another gangfight tonight in the township. All the gangsters want to be another Chuck Norris or James Bond.

They think that it is 'cool' to go around behaving like the heroes they see in the movies. They think that they will get away with it, that the cops won't get them if they go around killing people.

But is real life what we see in the movies?

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