

## WORKSHOP PLAYS AS WORKER EDUCATION

Astrid von Kotze

---

The need to express oneself artistically becomes all the more urgent, when (a) access to cultural reproduction is denied largely, and (b) the working population is condemned to drudgery and long-distance travelling as in the structures of the South African apartheid system. Worker organisation in South Africa is increasingly becoming a social movement apart from a political and economic necessity. In this it brings together large numbers of people who initially related to each other according to immediate problems at the factory, according to campaigns and strategies - in short: they related primarily as workers and only secondarily as men and women with creative potential. It is this which has prompted the trade union movement to incorporate plays, musical groups and choirs as an extension of its education programme.

The so-called theatre experts and critics in the country focus largely on happenings inside institutionalised play-houses and the great shrines of the stars erected by the government, and while local plays increasingly portray working-class life and problems they fail to come to grips with the dynamics of working-class culture. Emerging worker-plays are not meant for a consumer public, and they are created and performed within the perimeter of working-class leisure time - and space. The need to investigate these developments in order to encourage and co-ordinate activity amongst worker groups prompted this article. Its intention is further, to describe how workshop plays are events of a different kind, obeying and evolving their own laws of development.

Towards Community Theatre: SECURITY.....

Responding to a union call for support in 1979 some of the members of JUNCTION AVENUE THEATRE COMPANY set out to do a workshop play. Within three weeks, working almost daily after their "regular" jobs they devised and rehearsed SECURITY. This 45-minute play depicts a man, who, unable to obtain work due to a tight labour market takes the job of a "watchdog" outside a factory. He is equipped with kennel and collar - jokingly admits, it might not be a "white-collar job" but a "dog-collar" one - and is trained by an aspiring middle-class clerk under the supervision of Mr Fatman, the boss. Through a gruelling process of learning to walk, sit and attack like a dog and unlearning speech he finally turns out to be no more than the "underdog" he was initially. The play was performed in community halls, churches and yards outside "white" Johannesburg mostly at weekends - this being the only time when working-class audiences could attend. This experience set the participants on a course of alternative theatrical exploits. More than the previous plays of the Company, SECURITY focussed on the dramatic presentation of cause - and effect relationships as they effect the exploited and oppressed peoples of this country; moreover it was the first step towards performing (a) outside established theatrical venues, (b) within the leisure time of the working-class, rather than the traditional evening shows, (c) at spaces, where people were already gathered for some common purpose, rather than inviting them to come specifically to see a play. For these reasons the format of plays would have to allow for the changed conditions of performance, but not only that: the plays themselves should be made and performed by the very audience they were meant for - working people.

After SECURITY the link with the unions became stronger and work on the first project in the new "mould" began. Three members of the JUNCTION AVENUE

## -Worker Plays-

THEATRE COMPANY joined workers who were currently involved in dismissal disputes in the dense industrial areas of the East Rand outside Johannesburg. They met nightly for three months and produced ILANGA LIZOPHUMELA ABASEBENZI (The sun rises for the workers). The play depicts the recent dispute at the factory, showing its history and causes and analysing the conflict by making the underlying structures visible. Active audience participation was inculcated into the play - the play in fact had different endings, depending on suggestions from the audience - and songs played an important role in constituting the framework of the play on the one hand, creating a common sense of solidarity on the other. The problems with making the play were enumerated, ranging from financial (since workers had been dismissed they had no income and often could not afford the busfare to come to workshops - this play, as all the others, was not subsidised in any way), to political (workers were endorsed out of the area of Johannesburg and sent to their "homelands" due to the illegal strike), to communicative (most participants were basically illiterate which made production of written "scripts" impossible - people had to rely on memory; in addition there was a wide range of languages spoken by the various participants, and the workshop co-ordinator could only speak English). Responses to the play were enthusiastic, and since it has been videoed ILANGA has been seen by thousands of workers throughout the "Republic". This in the final instance was very useful, because future workshop members could have explained what a play is and might look like by reference to ILANGA.

Workshops with women workers from a textile factory ensued. The economic and personal problems of these women were so severe however, that the project finally collapsed - leaving, however, a number of songs which shall be mentioned later again. Another play in the line of SECURITY was made; DIKHITSHENENG (In the kitchens) deals with the exploited position

of domestic workers, who live in the backyards of white Johannesburg. It was shown particularly on Thursdays ("Maids" "day-off") in suburban church halls and often "madams" and "maids" attended together, throwing furtive glances out of the corners of their eyes.

A description of the most recent play done and performed by workers shall serve as an example of this type of theatre, and a brief discussion of its educative values follows.

An Example of Workers' Theatre: THE DUNLOP PLAY

Project.....

After having moved to Durban two members of the Junction Avenue Theatre Company were approached by the Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU) with the request to workshop a play with some newly organised MAWU members from the Dunlop factory. The play was to be performed at the Annual General Meeting of the union some three months later. Meetings and subsequent workshops with workers from the plant were held at the union offices twice weekly after hours, i.e. in between the first shift knocking off work and the night shift. The time factor proved to be a major difficulty because the longest time span at any one point, when all final 13 members of the group could be present was approximately one hour, the play in its final state however was longer. Never once, therefore, could a full run-through of the play be achieved before performances. The workshop locality - a room of four by three metres - was another obstacle particularly when it came to more physical action and during the initial stages of workshops, when sometimes up to 25 people participated. However, there were advantages too - transport problems which the co-ordinators had been faced with in previous projects did not exist due to the close proximity of the factory; occasional interruptions of workers coming to speak to shop-stewards

## -Worker Plays-

about problems and grievances avoided the establishment of a play-reality outside the reality of work; in addition, the group got used to operating within a very limited space which proved useful for later performances as will be shown.

### Participants.....

The 13 participants, ranging in age from 20 to about 55, are all fairly well versed in English, they had a common language: Zulu and they are literate. Most of them are second generation township dwellers, i.e. they grew up and live in the segregated locations around the broader Durban area and spend up to two hours daily travelling from their homes to the factory.

Others grew up in the "homelands" Transkei and Kwazulu and came to Durban as migrant workers. Their immediate families still live there while they board with relations or live in hostels. Their previous exposure to the theatre was as varied as their backgrounds: while some had participated in school or church plays or seen plays by the township author and director Gibson Kente, some had no experience of institutional theatre at all. In order to explain the nature of a play to them reference to ILANGA LIZOPHUMELA ABASEBENZI was made, and thus an approximate mind's eye vision of a possible finished product was created. The overriding common denominator they all shared was the experience of being a black worker in South Africa and more specifically at Dunlop.

### Workshop methods: The making of a play.....

This common shared social and working-life basis served as the point of departure at the first meeting. Each man in turn introduced himself to the group by first saying, in which part of the plant he was employed and then miming his routine basic motions performed daily. To this was added an

acoustic imitation of the machine noises around him - and when "switched on" simultaneously the group in the end produced a lively and descriptive image of an assembly line type work-process. Any verbal altercations were recorded on tape and these tapes were subsequently transcribed. Since the language used during improvisations was Zulu, and the workshop co-ordinators however did not speak Zulu, the transcriptions had to be translated, so that the material could be edited and arranged into a script. "Scripts" were handed out as scenes emerged and except for those parts acted out in English the participants translated the script back into Zulu. Written scripts were thus a base for continual improvisations.

To describe the process of workshopping more fully the first scene of the play, which was created at the first full workshop, shall serve as an example. It was noticed that the old man, who has been working for Dunlop for 37 years, was wearing a gold watch. He explained that it was a gift from the company to acknowledge its gratitude for 25 years of service. He proceeded to describe a ceremony at which he and others were honoured and presented with their gifts, some meat ("Which was tripe, really"), some beers ("We were told to drink it there and then but not to get drunk - we were not allowed to take them home") and a little cake for the children at home. After the story had been told the group split up into "managers" and "workers". Suggestions as to how the white managers should be portrayed were tried out to the great amusement of everyone, and, judging by the laughter and enthusiasm, the most authentic presentations were mimes of great stomachs, an assumed air of superiority and the allegedly typical "stuck-up" way of walking. At the performance stage pink half-masks or just noses were added. The group quickly decided who should play the managers, and while they "rehearsed" their roles and prepared speeches the rest of the group arranged themselves as an audience behind the worker, who was

## -Worker Plays-

to be honoured. A "cheerleader" was chosen and he practised signals for studied laughter and applause; meanwhile the old man prepared his part: he became a shuffling embarrassed worker, who wrung his hands, pulled up his shoulders and bowed his head in submissiveness. For performances later he wore an oversized pair of boots which further enhanced the sense of acute embarrassment. The enactment of the ceremony followed; it was run through twice to give the different "managers" a chance to make a speech. These two speeches when transcribed and translated were made into one and subsequently split up between two actors. Equally, the various ideas from the two improvisations were gathered, the best ones chosen and edited into the speeches. This first workshop was so successful that no further work on the beginning of the play was necessary until the rehearsal stage.

The second workshop was dedicated particularly to the creation of songs. The group was split up into three, with the task of creating the lyrics and tune of a song depicting working life at Dunlop. After 30 minutes all met again and each group in turn performed their song. As in the speeches the lyrics of the three suggestions were contracted into one and a particularly musical participant was given the "homework" to improve the tune and fit the newly incorporated words into it. Songs played a vital role in workshops - they served to draw the group together as a whole at the outset of each meeting, they provided an essential warm-up exercise and a useful lead into further work on the play. Their role and function within the performance will be discussed further later. Equally, the participants were particularly conscientious about "homework" - at the end of each workshop suggestions about the content of the next meeting were put forward and without fail some members would arrive with a few notes and ideas both for new scenes and additions to old ones.

A series of workshops on the production process in the various factory floors and departments followed and participants created a scene depicting their lunch hour - for this they swiftly made a board and gathered some stones, so they could play a game of "checkers", which is very common and popular in factories. This became the framework for a later scene in which recruitment to the union and a discussion of the importance of unionisation were presented. In order to get different viewpoints from those held by all the participants they were asked to improvise a home scene in which a father, mother and various sons have a fight about unions. This method proved very useful for educative and creative purposes as will be shown later. The improvisation started with two people: a husband who comes home from work late due to a union meeting, and his disgruntled wife, who accuses him of seeing other women. Not believing his explanations she launches into an attack of what his late coming means for her in terms of the household. He tries to convince her of the importance of unionisation and worker solidarity, she cites her problems with the domestic functions he should share. As the conversation slackened the workshop co-ordinators "sent in" another participant as a homecoming son. The son, being more conservative, takes up the side of his mother but from a different point of view: being a union member is dangerous, the father might get sacked, police harassment and unemployment are pointed out. Against the ever increasing onslaught the father has to defend himself with yet stronger arguments, and, to assist him, another "son" is sent to join the scene. This improvisation was continued until the topic of unionisation was explored sufficiently. For the play the role of the mother became that of the "impimpi" (traitor; lackey), who openly adopted the side of management and taunted workers in order to report on them later. The dramatic tension of a scene like this is obvious, the humour it generated due to workers modelling themselves as actual "impimpis" and supervisors



## -Worker Plays-

provided the necessary entertainment, saving the scene from heavy-handedness.

This humour which was recognised as an essential ingredient of all plays was further played out in a subsequent scene. During the course of discussion the "impimpi" progressively lost ground, and when the others broke out into a song celebrating the strength of unity he was visibly shaken. Just at that moment the workshop co-ordinator sent in two "policemen" to break up the meeting and arrest the leaders. As they entered the workers changed the tune of their song and turned it into a hymn, picked up "bibles" and pretended to be gathered for religious reasons. The impimpi now showed his change of heart by becoming the leader in the game of deception. This conceit was arrived at in debate about which forms of gathering were legal and "innocent"; it was also pointed out, that during the political campaigns of the late 50's these tactics were indeed used.

The way in which to present 25 years of service at Dunlop caused the biggest problem to the workshop, since the method of story-telling would be too lengthy and inappropriate given the large audiences. The workshop co-ordinators suggested the use of a "crancy" - a device used particularly by the agit-prop groups of the 60's and 70's: onto a roll of paper or canvas continuous or individual images are painted, this roll is clipped onto a large frame and by means of a handle or "crancy" the roll is slowly unwound. The device is like a super-simple movie screen and lends itself for the presentation of a progressive time-lapse. After explaining the structure, use and method of a crancy ten historical moments were singled out to be portrayed as signal-type pictures and dates. To arrive at those ten moments each workshop member was given a piece of paper on which he wrote those occurrences between 1958 and 1973 most prominent on his mind. The participants then singled out the ten most important

ones in terms of their bearing on workers. The mid-60s which were relatively uneventful in terms of worker militancy were marked by the memory of the old man: he remembered the "man on the moon" - and in the later play he enacted a fictional conversation with Armstrong on the moon, where working conditions were different...

While half of the workshop then worked on brief introductions to each of the historical frames on the crancy - these were spoken by the old man as a retrospective following his "25 years service ceremony" - the other half worked on drawings for the frames. The making of the crancy generated a lot of debate about the role of the visual arts in working-class culture in South Africa, because it became obvious, that due to very minimal exposure there is no established code of signs and signals one could rely on. The traditional comic-strip representation of a prisoner in striped pyjamas with a large number, for example, will not be read by a worker audience as signifying prison, and the workshop members insisted on a more realistic rendering of images of people.

To further dramatise the 25 years some of the ten events were presented in short sketches or just tableaux - like a man with an umbrella chasing a worker with a broom who swept the "big flood of 1965" off the stage. The final result was a multi-media presentation which utilized fully all acoustic and visual means at hand.

How were the structure and content of the play established?.....

While individual scenes on a given topic were created spontaneously, swiftly conceptualising the play as a whole was a major difficulty for this group. At this point the co-ordinators had to assist with structuring and scripting more than at any other stage. They put forward various alternative

## -Worker Plays-

possibilities concerning the overall "story-line". In discussion it was decided to show a worker's history from him entering employment at the Dunlop plant during days of political turmoil through to the present, focusing on the one hand on specific developments within the plant as regards the various worker-management structures up to the present day recognition agreement between MAWU and Dunlop, and relating this development on the other hand to the greater labour movement in South Africa.

### THE DUNLOP PLAY.....

The play opens with the cast entering from the audience, singing the MAWU song. They launch straight into the first scene, in which the old worker is honoured for long standing service; Manager (addressing workers and audience alike):

Welcome to this great occasion, the 25th anniversary of some of our Dunlop workers...We are here as a big company because of your devotion to us...The people we are celebrating today are the people who bear foolproof to what I am mentioning right now: they should be an example to you all...

After being presented with an outsize paper-mache golden watch the old worker steps forward and replies:

They gained my sweat. They made money out of my sweat. I am sick and poor. Today we shall tell you of these 25 years that we gave away and what we got in return.

The old man becomes a young worker who emerges from the audience and mimes looking for work. He enters the stage and is sent from production manager to supervisor to "boss-boy"; each in turn explains to him what work at the factory is about and what is expected of him:

Supervisor: This is your machine. What's this?

Worker: This is my machine.

Supervisor: Wrong, you idiot.

Worker: But you said this is my machine.

Supervisor: Don't interrupt. This is your wife.

Worker: Ho, my wife, this thing? Aikona, this might look like your wife, my wife is back home and...

Supervisor: Forget about your wife back home, you won't see her for a long time. Here at work this is your wife. You are married to her now. You treat her right and she will treat you right too. You be nice to her, she will be nice back. But you mess her up, boy, and she will mess you up good and proper. Start work.

By instructing the young worker the audience gets familiarised with working conditions and routines at the plant, and some of the problems such as health hazards are introduced. The scene moves into a mime of the work process, interrupted by sirens which divide up the shift. As the sirens accelerate in frequency so does the speed of work - the end is a chaotic impression of bodies and tyres. The young worker is left exhausted:

I was tired that day; tired of work and tired of tyres. Twenty-five years of working for this firm while life by-passed me outside.

He walks to the cranky and starts to turn it, revealing the first image. During the following sequence of images, sketches and introductory comments by the old man - turned narrator the group sings a song of working life. The 25 years end with an image of strikers, denoting the great Durban strikes of 1972 and the strike at Dunlop of 1973; actor-workers assume a threatening pose, holding knobkerries (sticks) and shouting "Usuthu!" (a traditional war-cry). The young worker turns "impimpi" and is manhandled as scab-labour:

Send him down to the Mines! Scab! Impimpi!  
When everyone has downed tools, you join in,  
understand!

The general call for the manager is intercepted by

-Worker Plays-

the old man who turns narrator:

And so we got to speak to the boss. He made all kinds of promises and then came up with a new idea: a liaison committee.

The setting up of a liaison committee, the brain-child of the Department of Labour is ridiculed in a scene in which not even the bosses are quite sure as to the structure and workings of such a body. Workers in turn are not fooled by the proposed management-appointed representatives and only reluctantly draw up a list of grievances and demands:

I want to stop nightshifts!

I want a car like the manager!

I want to share the profits!

I want all the tyres back that I made in 5 years!

At this point the audience is invited to contribute demands and thus drawn into the dispute. The list of complaints is subsequently discussed in a meeting between managers, appointed worker-representatives and the boss-boy, who functions as a go-between and interpreter. He abuses his position of power and deliberately distorts facts in "translation". The entire scene is played in English, since the workers are capable of communicating in the manager's language, but the fact that they are subjected to the whims of the go-between renders them even more ineffective and becomes a sign of their voicelessness in negotiation processes.

Foreman (reads): They want an increase.

Manager: Increase? Now, gentlemen, there's been a slump in production lately...

Foreman: All the scrap you've been making. Scrap, scrap, scrap.

Manager: Ask them, who pays here.

Worker: You pay, but we work.

Foreman (to workers): Are you getting cheeky again?

(to manager): They say they understand. They do not want an increase.

Worker: What are you saying, man? (abuses in Zulu)

Foreman: Now listen here: You must start thinking for the firm - you are not here to represent the workers.

The old man - narrator tells the audience the obvious:

The liaison committee achieved nothing in its 8 years at Dunlop.

Meanwhile the work process is re-constituted and interrupted by the lunch-hour siren - the signal for a scene during which some workers discuss the need for effective unionisation while others play "checkers". Those members of the audience who are not members of a union can identify with the viewpoints of the hesitant and sceptical worker who claims: "The union just takes your money", but is immediately instructed:

Our contributions and membership fees... and a string of examples, how the union helped to fight a member's case. Informative pamphlets are handed out and just as the cast breaks into song the scene is interrupted by "police" - as outlined in the description of the workshop above.

Management, to whom the talk of unions is reported by the "impimpi" calls in their personnel manager. He suggests to start an in-house union: The Durban Rubber Worker's Union (DRWU) with its offices in the factory in order to stamp out "outside" influences.

The personnel man, now a DRWU organiser sets out to recruit members on stage and in the audience but he is heckled. A battle of words begins: DRWU and MAWU compete with each other, shouting arguments through megaphones:

DRWU: Think for the firm. The union does not want trouble. MAWU wants to break the firm, they want you to lose your job. MAWU will get you into trouble.

## -Worker Plays-

MAWU: We believe that workers should be recognised as people. We believe in democratic control. We demand a living wage...

Yet again the bosses are called to arbitrate - they ask the workers which of the 2 unions they want. The call for MAWU is a unified one and as a final "triumph" the boss-boy changes sides and joins his brothers from MAWU. At this stage the play re-enters the reality of the larger union meeting and the audience joins the cast in a victorious song celebrating unity.

### Performances and Responses.....

The premiere of the DUNLOP PLAY was in Durban, April 1983, at the AGM of MAWU, which was attended by some 1000 people. The hall had a small narrow stage which housed a long trestle table and chairs for union officials. These were cleared away and the play's only "scenery" - the cranky and a pile of tyres, which functioned as chairs, tables and factory products in turn - were set up. The audience of only about 400 - clearly did not know what to expect of the announced "play" and tensions were high. The play's opening song resounded in the corridors outside long before the players actually entered and squeezed their way through the extreme congestion, and by the time they had found their way onto the stage the audience was joining into the chorus of the song. Some confused and agitated spectators even followed the cast onto the stage and gave a brief impromptu song-and-dance performance. The acting area was a bare 2 by 3 metres, there was no exit from the stage due to crowding and the players had to work on vertical rather than horizontal movements. The natural lighting and the poor acoustics of the hall had to suffice.

Throughout the performance audience participation was lively, interruptions frequent and consequently a number of improvised responses were incorporated.

The old man deviated from the script to incorporate a special introductory address; the "impimpi" who was booed and hissed at played up to the occasion by threatening not only the player-workers but the workers in the audience as well; the "manager" excelled in his role and, requested to do so by the audience, repeated part of his speech routine for their amusement. In short, the play emerged not only as it was scripted but with additions and modifications to suit the occasion. This was the case of future performances also, and certain parts of the play which needed re-working were altered - making it a "work in progress". After the final triumphant song the players were lifted off the stage and carried shoulder high like celebrated soccer players.

The Dunlop worker-actors gained such popularity, that it was not surprising to find them being elected shop-stewards at the next election. Invitations to perform the DUNLOP PLAY poured in from all over the "Republic" - due to lack of funds only five, involving travel and taking off work could be accepted. The response generated was always enthusiastic and encouraging (apart from one celebrated South African authoress who found the play "boring" - needless to say, she does not speak Zulu thus had to rely on an understanding gathered from the visual elements). Now, a year later, the play is still being performed and cited as an example of workers' theatre, more of which should be done.

Evaluation.....

"Workshops are good. They bring people together. I didn't know anybody at the factory before. They knew me, because as a hyster driver I go all over the place - but I never saw them and never spoke to anybody." Themba reflects the extreme isolation of his job and his sense of isolation which was increased by him being physically elevated above



## -Worker Plays-

everybody else. Through the workshops he met some of those people and established strong links which have turned the workplace into a better place: "If you see someone at the meeting and then at work you can speak to him." Firstly, then, the workshops brought different people together as workers on the one hand, as men on the other. Given the opportunity to share some of their experiences in discussion and enactment drew them together and established a sense of solidarity with each other. While more casual meetings at the union offices and the like might have established a kind of empathy and intellectual understanding of the common ground for their grievances the workshops made them come to grips with the roots of their dilemmas and provided insights into the causal relationships: "I understood, why and how I am being taken advantage of". The experience that alienation and isolation at work could be overcome to some extent was very valuable and in turn, it became one of the aims of the play to tell the audience: "We must be together and fight together like the men in the play."

Secondly, each participant emerged from the workshops with a newly established sense of self-worth and self-confidence. Within the discipline of mass-production, where the worker is "Annexed for life by a limited function", where he is but a "fragment of a man"\* - and in addition within the specific South African context there are few channels open to a black man to stand up and be heard. The stage-fright of most of the participants was considerable. They overcame their fears with the confidence, that what they had to say was worthwhile and that it was important that they said it. The newly acquired skills of performance also came in useful during worker-management confrontations and negotiations: "Even now, I can stand up to my

---

\*K. Marx, Capital I, p523,799: quoted in N. Geras, Marx and human nature: refutation of a legend, (London 1982), p86.

supervisor and look into his face and tell him what I think", sums up Bongani. The worker-actors have emerged as leaders.

Thirdly, participants learnt about the other sections of the plant - and apart from acquiring knowledge about the manufacture of tyres they gained insights into the working conditions and hardships of fellow workers on different shopfloors: "You share the problems that hurt you and you can see what a man feels when he goes to work. I also saw that in some sections of Dunlop the dust and the smell and the heat is really bad - people get sick from it." More generally, workers learnt to articulate their insights through discussion, and the younger members of the group were familiarised with parts of worker-history they didn't learn about before; this arose particularly around the workshops dealing with 25 years of social and personal history. The fact, that so many of them did regular "homework" between workshops showed very clearly that they remained preoccupied with the topics and issues raised at individual sessions.

Fourthly, the workshop technique of assuming roles and arguing different view points mentioned earlier for having been very creative was also very useful from the educational point of view. It brought to light attitudes which were questioned as prejudiced and often unreflected, and frequently it led to confrontations between the older and the younger members of the group - but however deep the generation gap might be, they shared the basic premise: being workers at Dunlop - and as such they had to unite. Another important issue raised was that of the position of women in their double exploitation as workers and mother/housekeepers. Roleplay has been equally successfully employed in labour studies courses run for shop-stewards, with the specific aim to train participants in negotiation skills.

## -Worker Plays-

Fifthly, it has been mentioned, that songs play an important role in workshops and performances. In order to fully appreciate the position of music and song a brief note on indigenous forms of culture is necessary. Theatre as an institution has a thin base in the working-class life of South Africa. Where it occurred it was introduced through the churches and mission schools to promote their brand of education. Needless to say, the orientation was more to the established traditions of Europe rather than any local forms. Traditional forms of culture survive as oral literature mainly, but "story-telling" incorporates mimetic and re-enactment qualities akin to theatrical forms. This is where songs and dance-routines and much-celebrated individual performances come in. At any union meeting - and this was the framework of most of the performances of the DUNLOP PLAY - songs serve as an introduction as much as commentary on speeches. The call and response technique inherent to many of the worker songs - where one singer will introduce the song and ad lib any number of new verses, while the rest of the gathering falls in as a chorus - could be easily utilised by a play to achieve audience participation, and indeed, the DUNLOP PLAY closed with such a song. This song which had a strong rhythmic quality was taken from the play into the meeting, connecting the two and thus integrating the play into the larger context of the gathering.

How big a role songs in workshops play was demonstrated by three songs created during the workshops with women textile workers on the East Rand, two years ago. Although the workshops never resulted in a total play the songs survived: at one of the union meetings during which the DUNLOP PLAY was performed I was surprised to suddenly hear a familiar tune and words sung by the entire audience during the "warm-up" before the beginning of the meeting. It was clearly that song about "impimpis" which we created then - and two others followed: they have now been incorporated into the

general canon of worker songs and their origins will only be recognised by those who made them.

Sixthly, much has been said and written about the difficulty in measuring the effect of plays on social reality. It might have been coincidental, but at the same time as the scene about the potato boycott of 1958 was improvised, Dunlop workers went on a canteen boycott, as a result of which the canteen has been closed permanently. More directly related to the making of the play is the formation of a "cultural group" which incorporates members of the workshop as well as workers from other factories. They have begun to share and criticise their creative writings in regular meetings and one of them has written various play-lets and sketches in the tradition of "story-telling" and performance as well as the beginning of a novel. Similarly, other groups at other factories have begun to make plays as vehicles to voice their grievances and educate fellow workers about their rights and the need to stand united in their struggle.

This then is also the final statement of the DUNLOP PLAY - the struggle portrayed and the victory gained - albeit only in the play has become an inspiration for those workers who have seen it; let us stand together like those men in the play and we will win recognition. Plays like the DUNLOP PLAY have been nurtured in working-class experience and cultural practise in the South African labour repressive economy, and they reflect the political and moral considerations of an embryonic grassroots working-class movement.