

"All seemed to be well and her season was an enormous success, after which she left London and returned to Paris. Although I did not know it at the time, it was the start of an association which has continued for nearly 22 years and has meant working in practically every major city in the world.

"She would normally attend lighting rehearsal and stand in. This was an exacting exercise for both lighting and sound balance: it required setting up each state for a particular song and correcting levels and sometimes colours if she was not happy. She was critical but if, due to local conditions, certain units were not available she would accept my explanation with 'O.K. Let's go on . . .'"

One can only speculate on the extraordinary range of makes and types of switchboards he encountered during his long career. And how to communicate with their operators: at first those shouting matches across the footlights or the message distorted in transit from mouth to mouth; then phone and inter-com systems until, finally, the operator himself alongside in the stalls with a panel truly portable. Everything from the downright primitive to the over-sophisticated: those decades in which to plot, re-plot and, above all, to go-back were time-boggling tasks right 'thru' to the instant 'punch-up' expected today.

On the visual side every spot and flood had, once upon a time, not only to be carefully masked itself but all tell-tale flares excluded: whereas from 1960 fully-frontal exposure has not only been excused but seems often to be *de rigueur*. However, whatever fashion or technology dictated and the director or designer demanded, Joe must have come to terms with it. But let him — the Doyen, as we affectionately and rightly came to call him — sum up in his own words:

"The most important preoccupation for me of pre-war years was the development of a relationship with the producer whose control of the production was absolute. It took a long time and people were suspicious because it was an age when the producer, as he was then called, liked to and did his own lighting and often very well. Even if it took a long time, labour was cheap. He was after all the only one who knew where his actors were going to be, what the mood was and what was going to happen at what time. Many of them were wary of the technical innovations in equipment and began to see that there was a benefit in having someone technical, and perhaps artistic, to allow them to concentrate on directing the actors.

"Peter Brook, with whom I worked on many productions much later on, made a very shrewd remark. He said '*the lighting of a production is only as good as the design*'. The point he was making is a very important one. If the equipment — the lanterns or instruments — is of the right type and hanging in the right position you can do anything you want to do. If you haven't got the right layout you can't produce the right results and you are in trouble."

The quotes come from *Tin Mug* by Joe Davis in *Tabs* Vol. 21, No 3, December 1963 and from an interview with him in *Sightline*, Vol. 10, No 2, Autumn 1976.

The Market Theatre Johannesburg

STEPHAN CHAMBERS

South African theatre has had a great deal of attention in Britain recently. Nearly 7,000 people saw the twenty five performances of Athol Fugard's *A Lesson From Aloes* at the National in 1981. More recently, *Woza Albert!* has achieved extraordinary success both in Edinburgh and London, *Master Harold and the Boys* has enjoyed critical and popular approval at the National and the musical *Poppie Nongema* is well received at the Riverside Studios. Before this there was *The Blood Knot*, the first South African play to win international critical acclaim, and earlier still, in 1974, there was the Royal Court's South African season which featured *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and *The Island*, again by Fugard, both of which were hugely successful. These productions argue well for the state of South African drama and for the home of many of these productions: The Market Theatre in Johannesburg.

The Newton fruit market was built in 1913 to meet the demands of a fast growing city. Its steel girder structure was shipped from Britain and an octagonal building erected over the Fordsburg spring. In 1974 the fruit market moved to a different location and the steel girdered building was listed for demolition. The efforts of conservationists concerned to save the handsome building with its distinctive portico, and the interest of an experimental theatre company combined to rescue the building and it was put up for tender. The Company, founded by Barney Simon and Mannie Manim and established to break with bureaucratic and apartheid tradition, was quick to see the potential of the old fruit market and with the help of funds from various sources, won the tender. Renovation began in July 1975 when The Company moved into the market and made the new upstairs theatre its permanent home. They opened in 1976 with *The Seagull* and later in the same year the main auditorium opened with Peter Weiss' *Marat-Sade*. Two years later Pieter-Dirk Uys' play *Die van Aardes van Grootoor* was performed in the third auditorium, ironically named the Laager (an Afrikaans word for a white wagon enclosure). From these beginnings, The Market Theatre has expanded and flourished. It now houses three theatres, a bookshop, bar, restaurant, two galleries, a museum and a cabaret venue. Despite extensive renovation however, the building remains substantially unchanged. The girders of its steel structure rest on ball and socket joints which are still

visible at ground level in the main auditorium. The same theatre also still contains billboards advertising the fruit vendors who occupied the building from 1913 to 1974.

The success of The Market Theatre Company is largely due to its commitment to an artistic policy and to its adventurous administration. Dedicated to mixed casts, mixed audiences and plays which confront South Africa's manifest racial tensions, it provides a focus for difficult and developing identity. It draws on director Barney Simon's work in starved rural areas and brings together talent which, for political reasons, would otherwise find scarce outlet. Energetically administered by Mannie Manim, it remains resolutely committed to progress and integration. Manim has been criticised because of this, and The Market Theatre's concentration on black theatre questioned. He answers this criticism firmly: "To those critics who say they cannot face another black play at The Laager, I say that they will have to face another twenty, and another twenty after that." Together with this strength of artistic purpose, which Manim characterises by five near synonyms: "enterprising, innovative, challenging, inviting and demanding", he combines a flair for publicity and fund-raising. A flair which is essential in view of his own statement that The Market Theatre remains an embodiment of Grotowski's 'poor theatre', which needs to make up with talent and energy what it lacks in material resources. An acclaimed lighting designer who has lit 200 major productions in twenty years, Manim is ingenious in raising funds. A recent scheme, for example, invites the Market's patrons to "hug a pillar". To subscribe in other words, R25,000 over five

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