Their Place on the South African Stage:  
The Peninsula Dramatic Society and the Trafalgar Players

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Graduate Program in Theatre

The Ohio State University  
2010

Dissertation Committee:

Lesley Ferris, Advisor
Nena Couch
Alan Woods
Abstract

Racial segregation was a long-standing practice in South Africa, but until the National Government formalized it under apartheid in 1948, social groups formed based on familial bonds, common education and economic status. Consequently, within certain culturally diverse communities, South Africans of various ethnicities interacted with minimal regard for the barriers imposed by state mandated separatism. South African communities such as Cape Town’s District Six were one such microcosm, where multi-ethnic performance groups such as the Peninsula Dramatic Society (PDS) and the Trafalgar Players (TP) were born. This historiography explores the relationship between the apartheid these groups. Through oral histories collected from surviving members of the troupes, this study illustrates the impact of social constructs such as race and caste on theatre communities in South Africa. It extends scholarly knowledge regarding the epidemiology and social impact of apartheid and highlights Resistance Theatre as cultural phenomena, a declaration of identity and vehicle for equality and social justice. Most important, it brings into focus, some of the individuals who, through their stagecraft, gave shape, form and voice to coloured resistance theatre.
Dedication

To Bishop Desmond Tutu, for his many prayers and good wishes.

Most especially to my mother, whose courage and love of story

has inspired me more than she knows.
This dissertation would not have been possible without the aid and generosity in spirit of many people. First of all, my heartfelt gratitude to the surviving members of the Peninsula Dramatic Society and the Trafalgar Players who lived the tale and generously shared their stories, memorabilia and time. Thanks to the National English Literary Museum at Grahamstown, South Africa, who went the extra mile to get me the access that I needed. Also, to my dissertation committee: Nena Couch, who sparked my love of special collections; Dr. Alan Woods and Dr. Lesley Ferris whose patience and forbearance enabled me to realize my goal. Finally, to the University of Louisville professors, Louisville playwrights and various Louisville friends and family, whose generous financial backing helped me with a final push.
Vita

Born September 22, 1974 Louisville, Kentucky

1998 B.F.A. Theatre Performance, University of Kentucky

2003 M.F.A. Performance, University of Louisville

M.A. Pan-African Studies, University of Louisville

Graduate Certificate African American Theatre, University of Louisville

2004 to 2008 Graduate Teaching Associate, Department of Theatre, The Ohio State University

2008 to 2010 Instructor in Theatre, The Ohio State University – Lima

Field of Study

Major Field: Theatre
# Table of Contents

Abstract ............................................................................................................................... ii  
Dedication .......................................................................................................................... iii  
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................ iv  
Vita .......................................................................................................................................v  
Preface ..................................................................................................................................1  
Chapter 1: The Tangled Roots of It All ................................................................................9  
Chapter 2: Education as Cradle of the Resistance ..............................................................39  
Chapter 3: Apartheid’s Mirror: Resistance Theatre In Action ..........................................45  
Chapter 4: Politics and the Universal Man: The Peninsula Dramatic Society and the Trafalgar Players ..........................................................................................................57  
Chapter 5: Conclusion: Impact and Legacy .......................................................................91  
Notes ..................................................................................................................................97  
References ........................................................................................................................101  
Appendix A: IRB Process Materials ...............................................................................107  
Appendix B: Peninsula Dramatic Society 1951-1964 ...................................................... 118  
Appendix C: Owen Pegram ............................................................................................. 131  
Appendix D: Amelia Blossom Pegram ...........................................................................139
List of Tables

Table 1. PDS Repertoire and Production Details ...............................................................83
List of Figures

Figure 1. Trafalgar Players newspaper clipping: testimony of performance

(Owen Pegram Archive) .............................................................................................................66

Figure 2. Amelia Blossom Pegram in University of Cape Town graduation robe

(Amelia Pegram Archive) .........................................................................................................68

Figure 3. Owen Pegram in University of Cape Town graduation robe

(Owen Pegram Archive) ..........................................................................................................68

Figure 4. Playbill that acted as club membership (Owen Pegram Archive) .......................70

Figure 5. Playbill inside spread (Owen Pegram Archive) .................................................71

Figure 6. New Theatre playbill for The Blacks (Owen Pegram Archive) .........................73

Figure 7. The cast and crew of The Blacks (Owen Pegram Archive) ...............................74

Figure 8. Playbill information (Owen Pegram Archive) ..................................................75

Figure 9. New Theatre mission statement (Owen Pegram Archive) .................................76

Figure 10. ‘Henry V.’ newspaper clipping (Owen Pegram Archive) ...............................79

Figure 11. Non-racial Theatre Group newspaper clipping (Owen Pegram Archive)........80

Figure 12. Theatre Group newspaper clipping (Owen Pegram Archive) .........................82

Figure 13. Coloured Theatre newspaper clipping (Owen Pegram Archive) ....................95

Figure 14. PDS Constitution (Owen Pegram Archive) ..................................................... 119
Figure 15. PDS Ticket/Playbill, cover (Owen Pegram Archive) .......................................120
Figure 16. PDS Ticket/Playbill, inside spread (Owen Pegram Archive) ..........................120
Figure 17. The Lower Depths Ticket/Playbill, cover (Owen Pegram Archive) ................121
Figure 18. The Lower Depths Ticket/Playbill, inside spread (Owen Pegram Archive) ...122
Figure 19. Street Scene Ticket/Playbill, cover (Owen Pegram Archive) .......................123
Figure 20. Street Scene Ticket/Playbill, inside spread (Owen Pegram Archive) ..........124
Figure 21. Henry V. Ticket/Playbill, cover (Owen Pegram Archive) .............................125
Figure 22. Henry V. Ticket/Playbill, cast (Owen Pegram Archive) ..............................126
Figure 23. Henry V. Ticket/Playbill, production staff (Owen Pegram Archive) ..........127
Figure 24. PDS Makes It’s Debut newspaper clipping, August 7, 1951
( Owen Pegram Archive) .............................................................................................128
Figure 25. Deep are the Roots full cast call (Owen Pegram Archive) .........................129
Figure 26. Deep are the Roots Act I (Owen Pegram Archive) ....................................130
Figure 27. Owen Pegram in Cambridge professorial robes (Owen Pegram Archive) ....132
Figure 28. Amelia Blossom Pegram headshot; London, England; late 1960s
( Amelia Pegram Archive) ...........................................................................................141
Figure 29. Gloria Fahrenfort (Gloria Fahrenfort Archive) ............................................157
Figure 30. Gloria Fahrenfort (Gloria Fahrenfort Archive) ............................................157
Figure 31. Gloria Fahrenfort dancing The Charleston (Gloria Fahrenfort Archive) .....158
Figure 32. Gloria Fahrenfort jazz routine (Gloria Fahrenfort Archive) ........................158
Figure 33. Gloria Fahrenfort performing for student group at UCT, early 1970s

(Gloria Fahrenfort Archive)........................................................................................159

Figure 34. Leggy Lineup, Cape Herald newspaper clipping, August 2, 1969

(Gloria Fahrenfort Archive)........................................................................................160
PREFACE

In recent years, numerous South African books and articles have documented the achievements of the theatre companies which, during apartheid, fought to elevate racial self-identity among people of color and advance their agenda of gaining independence. However, these works have focused either on the contributions of tribal affiliated groups (i.e., South Africans categorized as “black or native” under the apartheid regime) or of white South Africans. The literature is virtually silent on the various theatre companies that operated within the so called “coloured community” during the period. In addition, ethnic theatre companies (i.e., black, coloured or racially mixed groups) which were not managed by white South Africans also have been largely under-represented in the literature.

For example, Loren Kruger’s The Drama of South Africa: Plays Pageants and Publics illustrates how South African drama has historically been used to advance a number of political viewpoints. However, this well-respected history restricts its discussion to theater produced by the English, Dutch and Native artists. There is little or no acknowledgement of community theatrical groups that helped mold and shape the country’s rich theatrical landscape. Similarly, Sense of Culture: South African Cultural Studies, which notes an impressive array of theatrical sources, makes virtually no references to theatre companies that were not affiliated with Zakes Mda, Barney Simone,
or Athol Fugard, demonstrating again a void in the documentation of other relevant, trailblazing theatre companies.²

One minor exception was a scholarly treatment of the Trafalgar Players and the Peninsula Dramatic Society as topics in a panel discussion on South African Theatre, at an African Literature Association (ALA) conference in Ghana.³ Beyond that, these theatre companies have been overlooked in articles and books purporting to address the history of South African theatre in a comprehensive way.

Thus, in addition to addressing the gap in scholarly work, this research provides a more complete picture of the broader theatrical landscape of South Africa, through the oral histories provided by people who lived the story. It addresses the impact of apartheid on self-identity, cultural dynamics and dramatic arts in South Africa, most notably on the Peninsula Dramatic Society and its counterpart, the Trafalgar Players. Perhaps the most arcane caste system to govern a modern nation, apartheid officially ended just six years shy of the 21st century. Yet its profound influence on every aspect of South African culture was deep, broad and has extended beyond its place and time.

To the westerner, apartheid’s peculiar manifestations and its far-reaching consequences are almost impossible to grasp, without first understanding how South Africa began. In terms of this research, this necessitated a sweeping overview of historic events, as well as contemporary and subsequent interpretations regarding impact, cause and effect. Consequently, this research is a historiography, relying on meta-analysis of numerous period documents and artifacts to facilitate an analysis that extends beyond a superficial re-counting of historical facts and statistics. Each selected source has been
interpreted according to its temporal context and contemporary motives, as understood by a post-colonial Western observer, from a 21st century vantage point.

So, for example, selected biblical scriptures are referenced in this work, as are their utilitarian interpretations formulated long ago by the European — primarily Dutch — colonialists who ultimately shaped South Africa. Thus, a quasi-primary source, and its subsequent use as cornerstone to a cultural mythology were examined in light of their influence on subsequent cultural norms, law and practice.

These and other sources helped foster a better understanding of the social constructs of race, class, ethnicity and caste — not in a broad sense but in what was unique to the South African experience. Once determining that a historiography was the appropriate choice, the research proceeded according to the following phases:

**Pre-Study Phase: Fact-Finding Tour**

The late co-founders of the Trafalgar Players, Isaac and Oscar Pfaff, both went into exile to Canada, as did some of the author’s relatives who happened to be Peninsula Dramatic Society alumni. Consequently, a content assessment was conducted there during the summer of 2006. During this visit, Oscar’s widow allowed a cursory review of her late husband’s papers and artifacts. Between this and preliminary discussions with the Peninsula Dramatic Society members, it was evident that sufficient secondary and primary sources existed to support this research. Equally important, former members of the Trafalgar Players and Peninsula Dramatic Society expressed a willingness to participate in some fashion, should the study be approved. Though conditional in some
cases, their help was crucial.

One of the vestiges of apartheid is the lingering uneasiness regarding interactions with those perceived as “outsiders”, however benign the exchange. As a young American, the author’s inquiries would naturally be suspect and ignored, without the intervention of these South African ex-patriots. In fact, the assistance of family members and family friends would prove invaluable in opening doors that otherwise would have been firmly closed because of perceived ethnic group differences. Also, these connections were instrumental in obtaining the endorsement of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, whom — among this group of subjects — was the ultimate stamp of approval.

With these assurances, the author submitted her study proposal, to Ohio State University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) in 2007. The stated research objectives were these:

I. Conduct a review of the literature pertaining to the apartheid system and its impacts on theatre arts in South Africa from the 1940s – 1960s.

II. Identify individuals who were members of the Peninsula Dramatic Society or the Trafalgar Players and collect oral histories from those who are available and/or willing to participate.

III. Examine extant documentation related to the Peninsula Dramatic Society and the Trafalgar Players and the time period in which they operated.

All research proposal materials, including consent statements and oral history format are reflected in Appendix A. IRB granted permission to proceed in 2007, paving the way for worldwide data collection conducted over the next 2 years.
Phase 1: Oral Histories and Tapping Private Archives

Initially, there appeared to be ample opportunities to access primary materials relevant to both the Trafalgar Players and the Peninsula Dramatic Society, most of which have not been studied by other scholars. The first step was to compile a list of surviving participants and principals of both groups to establish the depth and breadth of the pool from which to draw. This involved compiling what has been discussed over the years at the author’s family gatherings. In addition, relatives who had been involved in various performance initiatives helped identify contacts. Amelia Pegram, a former Peninsula Dramatic Society member who resides in Louisville, Kentucky, her sister Naomi Bossman who lives in England, brother Professor Owen Pegram who now lives in Spain and Cousin Gloria Fahrenfort who still resides in Cape Town all helped along these lines. From Canada, additional relatives and members of the Pfaff family also help building the list of potential respondents. The result was a list of potential contacts, which the author subsequently approached via telephone or email. Among those agreeing to help, whether residing in Europe, North America or South Africa, most participated by telephone and/or internet correspondence. Some, though willing to participate, agreed to do so only under pseudonyms. This concession was made, in deference to the lingering concerns respondents felt resulting from years of exile and memories of apartheid before leaving South Africa. In fact, one particular interview with a former Peninsula Dramatic Society performer who wish to be known only as “Claremont 1”, underscored not only the poignancy and longevity of such fears, but the importance of documenting the unique experiences of this aging group.
His interview had necessitated a second trip to Canada in the winter of 2007, where in addition to interviewing “Claremont 1”, the author spent considerable time with Oscar Pfaff’s widow, who made available all of her deceased husband’s papers for review and proper preservation. Since Isaac Pfaff was the musician for the Trafalgar Players, this included access to scripts of his original compositions, tapes, and other artifacts—including a notebook in which he noted, shortly before his death, various observations about life under apartheid.

Also, while in Canada, the author interviewed Oscar’s brother, Isaac Pfaff, the Trafalgar Players’ playwright, who published under the nom de plume, Paul Roubaix. Known as “Pfaffy”, he and his wife (who preferred to be known as “Wellington 2”) spoke extensively about the Trafalgar Players. They also granted the author access to a plethora of documents, including scripts and playbills autographed by the casts — evoking a sense of time and place, as few other documents could. From Spain, Professor Owen Pegram was among the first to share elements from his archive, including photographs of productions, programs, published reviews and scripts. A compete listing of the historic memorabilia that was loaned, given or used in any way by the author appears in Appendix B.

Finally, it should be noted that while the interviewer used a standard line of questions with all participants, it was essential to couch these areas of inquiry within a relaxed, conversational approach. By and large, the participants had been exiles — expelled from the land of their birth, because their work challenged or defied apartheid rhetoric. Referencing this context, that of unimaginably painful and life-altering
experiences, some noted they associated standard interviewing techniques with state interrogations they had experienced as dissidents. Thus, rather than collecting information through a linear administration of the core questions, the same information was collected within the framework of “Tell me about the time when…” “What was the funniest thing…” or similar ice-breaking techniques.

Phase 2: Accessing Primary Source Documentation

Acquiring information pertinent to South African history and its social evolution proved more challenging. Even in the aftermath of apartheid, possession and access to such materials are complicated by remnants of the class, racial and even language barriers; so, once again finding intermediaries was essential. For example, when examining the pseudo-religious basis for apartheid, it would have been useful to examine biblical phraseology exactly as it appeared in a colonial testament or one from the apartheid era. Unfortunately, obtaining an Afrikaner bible proved impossible, so the author accessed her family’s 19th century bible to extract the verbatim biblical references used by apartheid “framers” to legitimate racial separation and justify caste and class hierarchies.

Similarly difficult to obtain were reference items pertaining to South African laws, District Six and other period memorabilia. Though on-line searches confirmed their existence, it was not until the author established a connection with a South African archivist at Graham Town that a pathway to access was established. Fortunately, this connection proved accommodating enough to enable access, regardless of the challenges
that presented themselves. For example, when it proved impossible for the author to order certain documents, such as the taped version of District Six the Musical and a listing of apartheid laws, the archivist obtained them on her behalf and sent them on. In this manner, the author was able to procure a script and videotape of District Six the Musical, a list of apartheid laws, and newspaper articles on the coon carnival that are not available in the United States.

Over the course of the data collection, the author was privileged to peruse and handle singularly unique memorabilia. She had the opportunity of organizing one collection that remains in private hands. All oral histories were audio-recorded and memorabilia donated for the research have been catalogued and stored for protection. Select items have been scanned or photocopied and incorporated in this paper. Copies will be made available to libraries at Ohio State University and Grahamstown archive in South Africa. The originals have been returned to the collections from which they were borrowed. Thus, the items that supported this effort have been documented and preserved, thereby providing an extended life to irreplaceable documents and artifacts that could enable future related research.
CHAPTER 1:
THE TANGLED ROOTS OF IT ALL

The roots of colonial rule and white supremacy in South Africa run deep. They stretch back more that three hundred years. From the very beginning… the history of white colonization was one of conquest, plunder, and dispossession of the indigenous…

Ernest Harsch, *The Anti-Apartheid Reader* ⁴

The etymology of “apartheid” is European, stemming from the Dutch expression for separate (i.e., “apart”) and the French term for setting something aside (i.e., à part) and incorporating the Dutch word denoting “ness” or “hood” — “heid”. ⁵ By 1947, “apartheid” had become the formal policy of racial segregation in the Republic of South Africa resulting in political and economic discrimination against citizens who were descendants — in part or in whole — of non-Europeans.

My mother was born and grew up in South Africa. Consequently, conversations at family gatherings frequently led back to that country and the era that shaped my mother, her relatives and peers. I have come to understand why for them almost every aspect of life was viewed through the filter of apartheid. So, when I began my research on theatre and performance in South Africa the concept of apartheid and its far-reaching effects became a major and unavoidable backdrop. This research explores
how the determining of self in the face of apartheid became a catalyst for the Trafalgar Players (TP) and the Peninsula Dramatic Society (PDS). Details regarding the rationale, methodology and execution of this work are outlined in Appendix A.

Regardless of the country of origin, theatre expresses points of view. It describes culture through stories. It provides a window through which we may examine society’s fabric and history. Greece had its Sophocles and England, its Shakespeare. Similarly, South Africa had its own chroniclers — particularly during the tumultuous apartheid era. Athol Fugard, Barney Simone, Zakes Meda, Adam Small and Phatama Dike are among the pantheon of South African dramatists that delivered to the world something singular and unique. They provided outsiders, who had never experienced apartheid, access to a real-life drama they could not have imagined otherwise. This singularity extended beyond social description or commentary. So often, South African theatre conveyed a “call to action” few could ignore. Thus, the peculiar bond that developed between victims of apartheid and those who empathized enough to assist them, often began after witnessing an unforgettable theatre performance.

Under apartheid, theatre was a booming, tangible, and respected national institution as long as they enjoyed government endorsement. Athol Fugard’s Market Theatre in Johannesburg and Barney Simon’s Serpent Theatre were examples. Black theatres, such as the coloured EOAN Group, did enjoy this status; however, it should be noted they, unlike their PDS or TP theatre counterparts, had white management. Ironically, in this way, South African stage incorporated all South Africans — regardless of race or class — in spite of the unrelenting societal emphasis on class distinction and
group segregation. However, it should be noted that plays exploring the harsh realities of apartheid were not state sanctioned; and, when performed in country, they were illegal. Despite this, using theatre as a social protest vehicle was commonplace in South Africa — though performed most often outside of the country.

Before discussing the focus of this research, the Peninsula Dramatic Society, which emphasized multi-racial casting and resistance through education, or the Trafalgar Players, a group based upon the “concept of liberation of all oppressed peoples and the brotherhood of all men”, one must understand the contemporary sociopolitical context. Specifically, four laws are particularly relevant to the discussion: The Racial Classification Act (RCA), The Group Areas Act of 1966 (GAA), The Education Act (EA), and The Jobs Reservation Act (JRA).

Though the Racial Classification Act was the first formalized advance under apartheid in determining to which social and racial groups one belonged, the racial designations utilized were inconsistent and confusing. For example, while some of its statutes were based on the customary division of four racial groups (i.e., White, Bantu, Coloured, and Asiatic), other statutes distinguished between whites and non-whites, Bantu, and Coloured. Despite this, these statutes were used in tandem with other laws to implement apartheid.

While the Racial Classification Act categorized people racially, the Group Areas Act determined where they would live. According to John Dugard, the Group Areas Act specified that: Among three groups, namely white, Bantu, and Coloured, allow[ed] the State President to define any ethnic, linguistic, culture or other group of persons.
belonging to the Bantu or Coloured groups and then treat them as a separate group for the purposes of the Act. This, in turn, facilitated the mass grouping of people by color in the forced “homelands”, the government designated group areas. Whether small as a city block or large as a town, by law, many were forcibly, and sometimes violently, deported to these state authorized habitation zones.

The Education Act and The Jobs Reservation Act also operated in tandem. The former determined the maximum level of education available based upon racial designation, with the highest level reserved for South Africans deemed white and the lowest relegated to the Bantu, Black or African. The latter stipulated which jobs would be available to the individual within a particular racial caste. Again, the highest paying jobs were attainable only by people designated as white and the most menial and low paying jobs were designated as Bantu, Black or African. To understand how these laws and the subsequent practices effected the “coloured” educators, particularly those who participated in this study, it is useful to examine the typical educational track of one Cape Coloured child.

Path of the Messenger: One Coloured Child’s Educational Journey

Along with her siblings, Amelia Blossom Pegram grew up in a segregated neighborhood called Wynberg where they all attended the Ottery Road Methodist School, which was within walking distance from their home. When interviewed, Ms. Pegram noted that she and her peers attended church sponsored schools because the state did not provide primary schools for the coloured communities. This was often the case even for
secondary and teacher training because the state controlled access to education, according to one’s racial category, as defined by apartheid law.

The rationale was that educating non-white children in a manner similar to their white counterparts resulted in “imitation Europeans”, who had no place in apartheid society. In 1954, the Minister of Native Affairs indicated so, in this cautionary observation:

“There is no place for him [the Bantu] …above the levels of certain forms of labour.” Consequently, “What is the use of teaching Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice? That is absurd… Education must train and teach people in accordance with the opportunities they have in life… It is therefore necessary that native education be controlled in such a way that it should be in accordance with the policy of the state.”

Still, as often is the case, those denied an education, desired it the most, as Ms. Pegram’s personal experience confirms:

Ottery Road Methodist was one main building and a prefab addition. I started school before I was officially supposed to. The school started in a Kindergarten — Sub A and Sub B. Some children had to do both A and B years. I was three years old [and was used as] ‘the messenger… I used to spend my day at the school running errands for the principal.

As a coloured, by law, Ms. Pegram could not be allowed to attend school until age six. However, as a three year old, she routinely accompanied her older brother, who had taught her to read, to school. In one of many ways coloured educators skirted the education guidelines, a school official granted her a unique function, the bearer of the principal’s notes.
One day, he sent me with a note to a teacher and I returned it to him without going to the teacher because I wanted to point out errors he had made in the note. He “enrolled” me in a class with clear instructions to leave class and come to his office for message duty, if an Official School Inspector made a surprise visit. Since there were different designated entry ages for different racial groups, inspectors would make periodic checks. White children could start at 5, coloured children at 6 and Bantu children at 7. The curriculum varied accordingly.

Impressed by the precocious 3-year-old’s ability and promise, the principal circumvented apartheid laws to facilitate Ms. Pegram’s early admittance to school. This was not without risk, since school inspectors were routinely dispatched to guarantee schools complied with the race related rules. Like many in the coloured community, the principal weighed the risks against his sense as an educator. Understanding the importance of nourishing a ready mind, he defied state mandates in favor of what was best for a child.

After attending that school until Grade 5 (the equivalent to American Grade 6), Ms. Pegram was transferred to Livingston High School in Claremont, a non-secular and government controlled institution. Amelia and her older brother Owen would walk the mile to the train station, careful not to be late because they had to procure a seat in the “coloured” section of the train. Since space was limited and only Whites were allowed in the 1st carriage, arriving late could mean all available seats would be taken. They would miss school and face the long walk home. However, once reaching Claremont, it was an even longer walk from that station to the school.
Once at school, the Pegrams and their peers were offered the sub-standard materials and abject treatment, deemed appropriate for their caste.

At high school the faculty included a few white teachers. I remember the eccentric art teacher who one day arbitrarily decided what names best suited each student and that is what he called us — instead of our given names. Our classes were large, but ill-equipped. Our books were used, donated by members of the community members and teachers.

Then in one of the many ironies under apartheid, the state evaluated children in ways to confirm the precept that intellectual ability differed according to race and class:

At the end of our junior year we wrote a national exam for a certificate. The following year, we repeated a similar process for a senior certificate. In both cases, though we did not have the advantages of our white counterparts, sufficient number of teachers, rations or supplies, we were evaluated according to the universal or national standard.

Arguably, lack of supplies, beginning school later or being assigned an “appropriate name”, in isolation, perhaps constituted minor indignities. But what was the impact of a steady diet of such treatment? Raised in a vortex of racial loathing and class bias, daily life alone imposed weighty responsibilities on children like the Pegrams (e.g., “What time should we leave home, so we can get a seat on a segregated train?”). More importantly, long past high school they would face a life-time of choices effecting not only themselves but society as a whole.

Would they accept the state’s definition of their worth or find an inner compass to determine their own path? How could they maintain a sense of self, in an environment where they were constantly reminded of their inferior status? And finally, what, if
anything, could they do — not only to maintain their own integrity — but to provide a path to elevation for others?

No doubt, under apartheid, people of every class and hue faced similar questions. However, at Trafalgar and Livingston High Schools, a sub-culture arose defying societal norms and daring to gamble on the potential the community knew it possessed. In a 2003 interview, former Livingston educator, Richard Dudley, summarized such sentiments in recalling what he once told his students,

> The government in this country wants the boys in the class here to go work on the farms. My job is to keep them off the farms. They want the girls here to go work in the farmer’s wife’s kitchen...I don’t want...you to work in Mrs. Van der Merwe’s kitchen [as a meid]... I don’t care what they prescribed for you outside: at Livingston we don’t do what they prescribe. We do the things we are supposed to”.

Consequently, whenever the South African government imposed measures to limit and control the educational experience of their coloured students, teachers like Mr. Dudley devised ways to circumvent or side-step the effort. Take, for example the edict from the Cape’s Education Department that Afrikaans should be every school’s language of instruction — in a multi-lingual country. The long and complicated evolution of the state’s position on language use in the schools is beyond the scope of this work; however, it has been duly noted that Afrikaans was ultimately imposed as the instructional language which was another means of denigrating non-white culture.

At Livingston, such efforts were perceived to be direct assaults on the quality of education. So, the staff had creative ways in which they resisted state law to retain bilingual instruction, for the benefit of the students. This agenda was advanced in
numerous ways ranging from voluminous letter writing campaigns to more inventive measures reminiscent of the principal at Ms. Pegram’s elementary school. As noted by Richard Dudley,

Let me put it this way, we dealt with this in ways in which the pupils would benefit. We used to tell the necessary lies…to serve the pupils.10

Elsewhere and sometime later, stealth and cunning was abandoned in favor of open rebellion. The most famous social revolt against South Africa’s Educational Act and its language mandates was the 1976 Soweto Uprising. What started as a protest against the compulsory use of the Afrikaans language in South African Schools for students classified as Bantu ended in bloodshed that shocked the world:

The rebellion started in the Phefeni Junior Secondary School around the corner from the Tutu's house… On May 17, pupils in Form I and Form II went on strike and dumped their Afrikaans mathematics, geography, and biology textbooks at their principal's door… At least six other schools joined the protest, for varying periods… On June 16, columns of schoolchildren converged from all over Soweto on the Orlando West School where the strike had begun, intent on marching across the valley bellow and up a hill on the other side to the Orlando Stadium. Numbering between 10,000 and 20,000, they with posters such as ‘Down with Afrikaans’, ‘To Hell with Bantu Education’, and ‘If We Must Do Afrikaans’, ‘Vorster Must Do Zulu’.11

This educational glass ceiling was also manifested in the Jobs Reservation Acts which described what people of different colors could do and ”although these statutes did not expressly discriminate against blacks, in practice they usually were invoked against black employees only”12 to discourage people designated as Bantu to aspire above their
station. The system of apartheid laws had an insidious impact on one’s job prospects, even in the theatre. Thus, Bantus or Africans were deemed unable to perform in plays using certain texts due to the government’s biased perception of the Bantus’ ability to comprehend their meaning.

This was, in part, considered a result of their education level but it was also rooted in the pseudo — scientific brain function argument accepted by the government. Additionally, the geographical location of where the perceived “job” was taking place came into play if the area was not a Bantu area. The maze of laws governing who could perform what jobs and where had a significant impact throughout society, but particularly within the ethnic arts community.

A person who was deemed African was prohibited from performing in a mixed cast. This was problematic for the Peninsula Dramatic Society traditionally known for using mixed casts in their productions. However, the Trafalgar Players were mindful of the political repercussions if members were designated subversive. Therefore, they chose a more subtle approach towards their mission. To better understand the classification of Coloured it is imperative to look at a summation of the law in reference to Coloured, white, and Bantu (also known as Indigenous, Black, Tribal, African, or Aboriginal) as discussed by John Dugard:

The legislature has had considerable difficulty in finding a definition that will defy all attempts to cross the color line and the definitions of white, Coloured, and Bantu therefore it has been frequently amended. [As of 1978] definitions are based on the criteria of appearance, social acceptance, and descent, are as follows: A white person is one who in appearance obviously is a white person and who is not
generally accepted as a Coloured person; or is generally accepted as a white person and is not in appearance obviously not a white person, provided that a person shall not be classified as a Coloured person or a Bantu person; a Bantu person who is or is generally accepted as a member of any aboriginal race of tribe of Africa; and a Coloured person is one who is not a white person or a Bantu.

In deciding, whether a person is in appearance obviously white, his habits, education and speech and deportment in general shall be taken into account. Moreover a person shall not be deemed to be generally accepted as a white unless he is so accepted in the place where he resides, works, and mixes socially. These tests of appearance and social acceptance are subject to the test of decent where the natural parents are both known and classified.

If a person’s natural parents have both been classified as white he will be classified as white; if his natural parents have both been classified as Bantu he will be classified as Bantu; and if his natural parents has been classified as Coloured, or if one of his natural parents has been classified as white and the other natural parent has been classified as Coloured or Bantu, he will be classified as Coloured…

The state’s definition for “Coloured’ was very dependent upon where one fell on the racial continuum within South Africa. The laws created a void where personhood, if not grasped by oneself, could easily become prescribed for the individual under the state’s rule. The subjects of this study, the Peninsula Dramatic Society and the Trafalgar Players were the natural, though expected, result of the system that defined and oppressed them. To grasp who they were and what drove them as educators, one must first understand the peculiar impact of Dutch colonization on their education, passions and methods. Thus, a brief overview of South African history is helpful — not only in understanding these two companies — but in understanding the role of
theatre, pageantry, and public performances of identity in apartheid South Africa.

In addition, by elaborating on the details associated with colonialism and the subsequent social formation of identities, a greater appreciation of Resistance Theatre extending beyond its histographical qualities may be established.

**Justifying Racial Categorization and Separation**

History, like beauty, depends largely on the beholder, so when you read that, for example, David Livingstone discovered the Victoria Falls; you might be forgiven for thinking that there was nobody around the Falls until Livingstone arrived on the scene.

> Bishop Desmond Tutu

Even those casually acquainted with apartheid are familiar with many of its players; however, without some back-story, the staging detail can be foggy. South Africa is the country located on Africa’s southern-most tip. The region is “old in terms of human habitation. Many fossils of humanity’s ancestors have been found”.15 This contradicts the Standard Ten History, released during the 1960s by the South African government. This text declared that when the earliest European settlers arrived in what would later be known as the Natal and the Orange Free State, few if any native to Africa resided there.

> When the missionaries came to Africa they had the Bible and we had the land. They said, ‘Let us pray’, we closed our eyes. When we opened them we had the Bible and they had the land.

> Bishop Desmond Tutu

20
According to Dutch Reform Doctrine and Afrikaner lore, when colonialists brought Christianity to the region, they also initiated the “Godly use” of land that had lain fallow and neglected by uneducated and godless people. In fact, these areas were occupied and cultivated by the indigenous. The colonials either exterminated the native residents or subjugated and labeled “black” those that survived the initial onslaught. Ultimately, this term become synonymous with “African” and the racial nomenclature did not expand to include “Coloured” until after 1892.

After the discovery of “significant deposits of diamonds in the late 1890s and gold in 1886 in the Transvaal”, the Dutch conquerors greatly extolled the righteousness of their mission and viewed the newfound treasures as a gift from God and evidence of their divine destiny. Subsequently, the disputes over South African land became so embittered they precipitated the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1903. The Afrikaners, often referred to as “Boers” (i.e., “farmers”), assumed the mantle of God’s “chosen” — fighting Pharaoh’s army (i.e., the British). They temporarily ceded the legitimacy of this claim, after their brutal defeat by the British in 1903. However, the Afrikaners reclaimed their anointed status when the Nationalist Party regained control in 1910.

The doctrine of “separate development” began with Dutch Reform Church theology. It mandated the Dutch in particular could lay rightful claim to South Africa as the new Eden or Jerusalem. This doctrine evolved over time. Actually, it is an amalgamation of Dutch Reform missionary ideals and the reactionary protectionism of the French Belgian Protestants that migrated to South Africa, fleeing religious persecution in the early 1800s. From this strange crucible, the Nationalist Party’s ideology of
“separate development” arose. It was a highly xenophobic, fundamentalist system of beliefs — shorn up by selected bible verses that, at casual glance, appear to bear no relation actual events. For example:

God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. They shall rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on earth.’

King James Bible, Genesis 1:26

For Afrikaner poet, J.D. du Toit, this scripture confirmed his assertion that racial segregation was God’s will and racial mixing contrary to his grand plan. Also, each race must have its own separate territory on which to develop in its own unique way. This verse was also interpreted as establishing man’s sovereignty over all earth’s non-human but sentient beings. Thus by extension, since apartheid judged people of non-European descent as inferior to the Europeans, people of color, like cows and fish, fell under the domain of the white ruling class. In fact, their “personhood” diminished in degrees reflecting the relative proportion of European heritage reflected in their family tree.

The Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and placed there the man whom he had formed.

King James Bible, Genesis 2:8

In the eyes of the Afrikaner nationalists, this confirmed the state’s precepts stipulating that every nation was God’s creation expected to fulfill its unique destiny. By extension, Afrikaner doctrine asserted that God had placed Europeans of various
origins on South African soil; thereby, giving them dominion there and a divine role in
the unfolding of God’s design.

The Lord God took the man and placed him in the Garden
of Eden, to till it and tend it.

King James Bible, Genesis 2:15

or

And the Lord God formed out of the earth all the wild
beasts and all the birds of the sky, and brought them to the
man to see what he would call them: and whatever the man
called each living creature, that would be its name. And the
man gave names to all the cattle and to the birds of the sky
and to all the cattle and to the birds of the sky and to all
the wild beasts but for Adam no fitting helper was found.
So the Lord cast a deep sleep upon the man; and, while he
slept, he took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that
spot. And the Lord God fashioned the rib that he had taken
from the man into a woman; and he brought her to the man.
Then the man said, ‘this one at last is bone of my bones and
flesh of my flesh. This one shall be called woman, for from
man was she taken.

King James Bible, Genesis 2:19-2.23

These passages justified the colonialists’ belief that the African land they acquired
by force was indeed their Eden, bestowed by God. Moreover, God empowered Adam
by requiring him to name all creatures within this new realm — as if life had not
existed before this moment. He also establishes a socio-sexual hierarchy by fashioning
an appropriate helpmeet (i.e., Eve) from the flesh of Adam. By extension, the colonists
would claim that only that which stems from the flesh anointed by God could hold
dominion over this new Eden; thereby, establishing not only a socio-sexual hierarchy
(i.e., male over female) but establishing that people of native descent or resulting from miscegenation would naturally hold lesser status — subject to being re-classified and governed by the ruling class.

Numerous Christian ideologues have used Noah’s story to validate subjugation and enslavement within their culture. The Afrikaners were no exception. For them, this passage provided a rationale for apartheid’s social hierarchy. Thus, though all of Noah’s sons were poised to father nations, only Japheth demonstrated worthiness at the critical, defining moment. At that very same juncture, his brothers demonstrated they lacked the necessary ability and judgment. Their subsequent actions — albeit well-intended — revealed their flawed nature and comparatively limited capacity. By extension, the Dutch used Noah’s story to justify the Great Trek, the acquisition of the land and its resources, and the subjugation of the indigenous and racial classification that would follow.

Let me pass through your flock, removing from every speckled and spotted animal, every dark colored sheep and every spotted speckled goat.

*King James Bible, Genesis 30:32*

and

But Jacob dealt separately with the sheep; he made these animals face the streaked or wholly dark colored animals in Laban’s flock. And so he produced special flocks for himself, which he did not put with Laban’s flocks. …Thus the feeble ones went to Laban and the sturdy to Jacob.

*King James Bible, Genesis 30:40*
As apartheid evolved, The Dutch Reform Church relied on the two previous passages to justify its obsession with racial purity — by likening the colonials’ experience to Jacob’s. In both cases, prosperity was the direct result of carefully executed separatism — resulting in superiority and strength. God granted Jacob prosperity because he had separated the goats from the sheep and the speckled or darker animals from the white.

Using this frame of reference, the ramifications for the Afrikaner were immense. By extension, they established themselves as superior human beings and all others, were merely chattel. Furthermore, the passage suggests God would not favor those following Laban’s example of allowing mixture — even through marriage. This scripture set the onus on excessive contact between races, especially inter-racial liaisons-declaring them corruptive and destructive for all involved.

**Birth of a Theocracy: Pageantry and the Great Trek**

I have heard the moaning of the Israelites because of the Egyptians are holding them in bondage, and I have remembered my covenant. Say therefore, to the Israelite people: I am the Lord. I will free you from the labors of the Egyptians and deliver you from their bondage. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and through extraordinary chastisements. And I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God. And you shall know that I, the Lord, am your God who freed you from the labors of the Egyptians, I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession.

*King James Bible, Exodus 6:5*
In perhaps the most twisted irony of all, the Dutch were able to cast themselves in the role of persecuted — by likening themselves to the Israelites fleeing an all-powerful, oppressive Egypt. John Hayward has noted:

> It is often claimed that the British abolition of slavery throughout their empire in 1834 was the main cause of the Great Trek, but this was only one among an accumulation of grievances. Boers did not like the British administration’s liberal attitude to the Khoi Khoi, or its encouragement of missionaries who taught Africans that they were equal to Europeans in God’s eyes.18

Thus, their mass immigration from Europe to South Africa was construed as the modern day equivalent of the ancient Jew’s sojourn to the promise land. Consequently, all else that followed — from the conquest of the indigenous to the establishment of apartheid — was performed in God’s service. The Boer’s were “the chosen”, crossing continents to execute God’s will. South Africa was their “promise land”, where they were destined to enjoy exalted status and well-deserved prosperity.

All cultures possess mythologies, but as will be later noted, in South Africa the myth was not only preached from pulpits or recorded in texts, but “enacted” regularly for broad public consumption. These public pageants rivaled a Charlton Heston classic, in that they, in spectacular fashion, depicted the sojourn of European forefathers as the anointed tribe destined to conquer and rule over the faraway land they eventually find and inhabit. Furthermore, South Africans of non-European descent were compelled not only to watch, but participate in pseudo-religious; state sanctioned festivities proclaiming the darker “races” could only aspire to full humanity and were destined to be chattel.
The extent to which such pageantry influenced self-identity among South Africans is worthy of treatment but beyond the scope of this paper. For now, imagine walking up a street lined with women dressed in white prairie dresses and bonnets, declaring they are human beings of the highest order, of the chosen class — while you, if you happened to be a person of color, are an animal that walks on two legs placed in their Eden to govern. Imagine, the fervor of such celebrations — matching that of ancient Greek or Roman pagan festivals. That, in sum, was South African pageantry depicting the founders.

Indeed, through such dramatic celebrations, the Dutch Reformed Church and the numerous cultural associations elevated the saga of the Afrikaner “volk” (people) to miraculous, worthy of stylized rituals, impassioned ceremony and a casts of martyrs. Stressing the divine intervention that released the volk from the persecuting British and likening that experience to the Jews fleeing Egypt, The Great Trek became the essential core to Afrikaner self identity — though relatively few had actually been involved.\[19\] Indeed the “voortrekkers”, mythologized over time, became the Afrikaner ideal; and, the Saga of the Trek, detailing conflicts with the Zulu, the Covenant and the Battle of Blood River invoked such intense nationalism that the annual Day of the Covenant celebration became the most important Afrikaner ritual. Thus, under heavy influence of primarily Afrikaner theologians and other academics, a theocratic framework for apartheid was forged and Afrikaner nationalism established the nation, rather than individuals or family as the basic unit of moral and cultural life.

Separately, biblical verses and tales of colonial expansion are inconsequential. Woven together, they formed the bedrock from which oppressive laws sprang. These
laws, arising from a theological touchstone, engendered an unshakable perception of
an infallible ruling class, who had only to invoke God to justify the convoluted nature
and ambiguity of their laws. These laws, in turn, influenced not only daily life but also
how South Africans, of every class and hue, ultimately reacted to the system. To fully
appreciate the depth and extent of this influence, it is helpful to examine how early
colonialism gave rise to apartheid in South Africa.

**Dutch Colonialism: The King James Bible, Genesis of Caste**

Colonial alienation takes two interlinked forms: an active (or passive) distancing of oneself from the reality around; and an active (or passive) identification with that which is most external to one’s environment. It starts with a deliberate disassociation of the language of conceptualization, of thinking, of formal education, of mental development, from the language of daily interaction in the home and in the community. It is like separating the mind from the body so they are occupying two unrelated spheres in the same person. On a larger social scale it is like producing a society of bodiless heads and headless bodies.

——— Ngugi wa Thiong’o 20

Long before apartheid was formally codified in 1948, racial segregation had been the defacto practice throughout South Africa. “The Cape”, which since colonial times had included “Cap stead” (i.e., Cape Town) and the immediate surrounding areas, was no exception. In fact, the colonial caste system was well established within The Cape during its earliest days as a Dutch holding.
Yet, historic accounts consistently, and with some ferocity, underplay the early origins of color classification — suggesting it was practiced with less cankerous intent than what would later be enforced under apartheid. Such literature implies that a permeable membrane existed between racial groups allowing co-mingling when the colonial powers deemed it convenient and advantageous.\textsuperscript{21} In \textit{The Shaping of South African Society 1652–1820}, Herman Giliomee and Richard Elphick state: “…a useful reminder that in 1820 Cape society was not as rigid, as in modern apartheid society [was that] Europeans and non-Europeans lived in close contact, especially in Cape Town”.\textsuperscript{22}

A convention of close societal contact between races began in the 1590s, with the founding of the trading frontier—“when Dutch and English ships began to put in regularly at Table Bay [a natural inlet that modern day Cape Town overlooks] en route between Europe and the Indies”.\textsuperscript{23}

For South Africa, the term “frontier” conjures up complex cultural scenarios. Richard Elphick describes this frontier as “…a region where regular contact takes place between 2 or more culturally distinct communities, and where at least one of the communities is attempting to control others but as not completely succeeded in doing so”.\textsuperscript{24} This framework accommodates not only the colonial concept but also the expansionism that followed.

Eventually, the Cape became a pre-colonial port of call for the replenishment of supplies and shore leave for sailors. This afforded the shipmen access to females from the indigenous group — the Khoi. Though historians have called them by various names
(i.e., Khoikoi, Hottentots, Khoikoi, or Hottentots), all are terms derived from the earliest Dutch label for the local people residing on Cape Khoi.

Many historians have noted the significance of “the arrival of Jon van Riebeeck in 1652” and the “start of a refreshment station which would supply fresh fruit and meat to Dutch ships enroute to the East Indies” for the “Netherlands East India Company (VOC)”\(^{25}\) As the Dutch became more entrenched, they aggressively pursued cheap labor with disastrous results. Six unsuccessful years of coercing the Khoi to become a subjugated work force deteriorated into armed conflict. The displacement of the Khoi from their lands and their refusal to acquiesce to the demands of the growing colonial power provoked much of the tension. Ultimately, the VOC imported enslaved labor from other parts of the region — starting with a “substantial” group in 1658.\(^{26}\) At that point, the Cape began to acquire its unique character—which is fundamental to this study.

**The Impact of Slavery on an Evolving Class System**

The term ‘slave’ frequently invokes an Americanized symbol — a shackled West African, destined to be sold on an auction block in the Deep South. South African slavery was no less horrendous but unique in two regards: the ethnic, religious and racial mix of its enslaved workforce and the social substructures that evolved under colonialism.

Individuals destined for enslavement in the Cape outpost included Malagasy political prisoners and captives from Malagasy, Mozambique, Angola and India. These, the Khoi captives, and the offspring of the Dutch and the indigenous comprised the Cape’s multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-hued slave labor force. It was in this
environment of ethnic diversity, that Afrikaans, a hybridized language, took shape. It is an assimilation of various languages from within the region but rooted in Dutch-facilitating communication between the dominant and all subordinate groups in the Cape. As this language evolves, we also see the first glimpses of the color, class, and caste separations that would exemplify South African later.

All enslaved people were held in the “companies slave lodge, a brick structure built in 1679, which measured “86 by 42 meters”. From there, the captives were checked in or out, as needed by company members, free men of color, governing officials or “Freebourghs”. The latter term refers to the Dutch settler class. “Freebourghs” would eventually be shortened to “Bourgs” — a term which, depending on the tone, inflection, or speaker represented either a racial class identifier or slur. Similarly, the Bourgs categorized others, as one historian has observed:

… given the varied origins of Cape slaves it is not surprising that the freebourghs developed stereotypes of individual ethnic groups, particularly regarding their capacity for different types of labor since “the Dutch in the New World stigmatized any person with the slightest trace of Negro ancestry and denied Mulattos the prospect of gradually progressing towards the status of whites.

These attitudes were firmly rooted in the early colonial Cape and would be in full blossom under apartheid in 1948.
Ethnic Intermingling: Caste Stratification and Law

Apartheid is upheld by a phalanx of iniquitous laws… which decrees that all South Africans must be classified ethnically, and duly registered according to these race categories. Many times, in the same family one child has been classified white whilst another, with slightly darker hue, has been classified coloured, with all the horrible consequences for the latter of being shut out from membership of the greatly privileged caste.

Bishop Desmond Tutu

By 1674, the master slave dichotomy was in full implementation, resulting in an array of social complexities. For example, before long three-quarters of the children born to enslaved women were of European and non-white lineage. In response, Commissioner van Rheede issued several edicts establishing status for these children in the social hierarchy, while attempting to inflict some controls over ethnic intermingling. Thus, van Rheede decreed that slaves of mixed parentage (i.e., European and non-White) would be freed upon reaching adulthood. Additionally, the law now prohibited marriages between Europeans and freed slaves without European blood — even if Christian.

It should be noted that the socially constructed norms of the 1800s accepted “education and Christianity” as proxies for respectability and was how those “who were acceptable in society were distinguished from the disreputable”. However, church documents of the period indicate that ten percent of the total officiated ceremonies involved marriage between a person of mixed parentage (usually female) and one who was not. This presented a dilemma. Since the non-European spouse was usually an
indigenous female and by law the children of intermarriage assumed their mother’s social status, a segment that didn’t fit neatly into existing categories emerged. This compelled officials to establish a mixed caste group — providing yet more fertile ground for paradox, ambiguity and crises in identity.

The governorship of Simon van der Stel (1691–1699) typifies the many ironies resulting from the color barrier. By apartheid standards, van der Stel would have been classified as Coloured. Yet, it was he that implemented the Dutch East Indies mandate with the tandem decree that white children would not be allowed to attend slave schools; nore, would salve children be enrolled in mixed schools.

Thus, through stacking of laws, the colonials were trailblazers for apartheid’s modus operandi. When enacted as a unit, colonial laws became the legislative equivalent of chains for free people of color — while compounding the stigma and the societal pressure imposed on the lowest caste — the enslaved. Yet, as the society evolved, so did labor practices and needs — having a paradoxical result in area of great importance — education.

**Education on the Cape: A Function of Caste Stratification and Labor Needs**

Education is the generator, the key. Without it life is restricted, the world remains closed.

Hilda Bernstein

In the American South, educating blacks was neglected, discouraged or most commonly, outlawed. By contrast in “1685 the VOC founded slave schools which lasted
till the end of the Company Post period”. In these schools, “the teachers were often slaves or free blacks”. In fact, well into the 1700s, the Freebourghs often hired out enslaved workers who were teachers to the Dutch who could not make the journey to a school for their own children. It should also be noted that when the first school was established at the Cape in 1658, no distinction was made between enslaved children and the Burghers children. In 1663, only 11 years after van Reibeeck arrived to the Cape, a mixed school was established. However, as the seventeenth century advanced, caste stratification evolved and was ultimately embraced by society. Subsequently, slave schools no longer included Europeans students.

During the late 1700s the colonialists routinely captured the Khoi children who had survived the Dutch’s brutal attacks on native communities. These enslaved youngsters were forced into servitude and tasked to become skilled apprentices. Their subsequent success as skilled workers would forever undermine a basic tenet of apartheid’s pseudo-scientific ideology — that lower castes were intellectually inferior. Furthermore, it has been noted: “The continued importation of slaves and the expansion of the non-white labor force available to the white settlers prevented the development of a white laboring class. As visitors to the Cape noticed, first it led to an increasing view that menial labor was beneath the dignity of a white man and, secondly, to a pattern of class distinction which corresponded closely to differences in color.”

By 1706, the enslaved and mixed ethnic group populations outnumbered free whites. Furthermore, by 1717 the importation of slaves and the absorption of Khoi into the labor force precluded a white working class and business opportunities in Cape
Town could not provide openings for more than a small portion of the growing white population. This was especially the case because the largest percentage of students that attended the integrated Cape Town Public Schools in 1779 were enslaved.39

Eventually, as V. A. February stated “Slavery and serfdom gradually gave way to a new system of wage labor in the nineteenth century”.40 Fundamental to this system was the multi-ethnic, cross-cultural group that became the betwixt and between under apartheid— the “Coloureds”. From this group, the Cape’s European ruling class had inadvertently created a classically trained artisan segment, whose expertise and dominance in their fields rivaled that of the medieval craft guilds and often exceeded that of their “betters”.

From 1792–1834 the Cape “saw a growing impact” of British control which spurred a new sensibility regarding the ideas and cultural conventions that had been established by the Afrikaners. “The emancipation of slaves in 1834 was perhaps the strongest example of this influence”.41 Initially, this raised hope for the formerly enslaved and the offspring of multi-ethnic marriages. Under servitude, they were educated well and had become highly skilled, which should have automatically guaranteed them equal status in a slavery-free society. Similarly, Booker T. Washington believed that the emancipated American slave would gain acceptance among the skeptical, hostile whites by demonstrating skill and a strong work ethic. However, just as Washington’s dream never materialized, so too in South Africa, the lower and mixed castes were denied equity — with the exception of those who managed to pass for white.

Even so, education remained a primary goal because it remained the best avenue
to advancement of any kind. Still, one’s position on the social spectrum changed according to the changing power structure. The country shifted between Dutch and British rule, finally culminating in the Anglo-Boer Wars (1880–1881, 1899–1902). When the National Party rose to power 1948. Social Darwinism, caste stigmas and theology blended to advance the “education policy from 1905 to 1984” which “aimed to entrench not only racial segregation but also division along language lines within the various officially designated race groups”.

Just as the Cape’s educational system had evolved via incremental changes, so evolved the educational policy that virtually defined South Africa for three quarters of the 20th century. “It moved from selection of pupils by race to selection of teachers by race to prescription of different subject syllabi for different race groups. There were also nationwide changes in the structure of control over state schools for different race groups.” This progression, implemented in tandem with restrictive laws, was intended to correct the education imbalance in favor of white South Africans over Native or Coloured, thereby, retooling the system accordingly:

The colonial element in schooling is its attempt to rationalize the irrational, and to gain acceptance for structures, which are oppressive. Such colonization does not require imperialism since one class can colonize others… but imperialism requires colonization. A nation or a people will not choose to be economically exploited or culturally dominated. They must be colonized to accept that role. Once colonized, their identity rests with the metropole’s institutions.

This is where the power of well-trained educators came into play. The law now mandated they impose a very colonial mindset on the students. Schools were to train
their students to embrace their own exploitation and accept full society segregation.

No doubt, in the minds of the Afrikaner social engineers, this would simply be a matter of implementation. Yet, for Coloured teachers who had been classically trained and educated — often far better than their white peers — it was a painful dilemma. How should educators respond when told to indoctrinate rather than educate? No doubt, individuals responded to this dismal prospect in a myriad of ways.

However, for teachers like Amelia Blossom Pegram, who refused to develop a less demanding curriculum for students of a “lower caste”, exile from her country was preferable to acquiescence. Such was the insidious, life altering power of apartheid law. In addition to providing a framework for a rigid, separatist society — it also prescribed imprisonment or death to anyone challenging the system in any manner. This was legality in apartheid South Africa. These were the laws that laid the groundwork for resistance.

Thus, despite their lesser social status, non-white South Africans had a long tradition of education and accomplishment that had been fostered by the very system that had oppressed them. This would be a compelling dynamic in the case of ethnic theatre. This became a politically charged microcosm, wherein teachers and students pioneered “subversive” theatre, incurring the alarm and ire of the apartheid regime. In fact, the edgy theatre practiced by the Trafalgar Players and the Peninsula Dramatic Society not only pre-dates the Soweto riots- which are often cited as the impetus for radical theatre. It also precedes the famous efforts of notable white South Africans, such as Athol Fugard, who claimed in several interviews that the invention of a theatre that was free and fearless
was his alone. These exemplify the typical “oversights”, which have virtually expunged from history the significant role the “Coloured” and enslaved blacks played in advancing their own cause.
CHAPTER 2:
EDUCATION AS CRADLE OF THE RESISTANCE

The classes fighting against imperialism even in its neo-colonial stage and form have to confront this threat with the higher and more creative culture of resolute struggle. These classes have to wield even more firmly the weapons of the struggle contained in their cultures. They have to speak the united language of struggle contained in each of their languages. They must discover their various tongues to sing the song: ‘people united can never be defeated’.

Ngugi wa Thiong’o

Teachers associated with the Peninsula Dramatic Society and the Trafalgar Players utilized various strategies to share their ideology and encourage the use of theatre as a resistance method by students and the overall community. These educators were products of a strong, cross-generational, didactic tradition rooted in the “passing down” of experience and history. This cultural inclination facilitated the transfer of first-hand political history across generations, rendering a knowledge base that was accessible and present throughout the community. Consequently, the pedigree and sphere of influence enjoyed by various political groups were widely known and respected.

For example, The African Political Organization (APO), founded in Cape Town in 1902, was the first group to exert influence in the Coloured community. As noted before, at this point in South Africa’s history, the Anglo-Boer War was nearing an end.
In May 1902 the republics had to surrender their independence but in return, apart from the release of Boer prisoners of war, the British government aware of Boer feelings agreed to a clause in which Britain promised that the question of an African franchise would not be raised… in agreeing to this clause the British authorities threw away their best chance ever to exercise their moral responsibilities towards the great majority of South Africa’s population. From then on it would never again be possible for the British government to impose a policy, which might have opened the way to eliminations of the color barriers.\textsuperscript{48}

With the agreements made by the British, the future course seemed set; yet the Coloured community long maintained hope that some degree of equality would follow. Eventually when the Dutch colonial ideology elevating Europeans over non-whites became firmly embedded in the post-war Afrikaner National identity, this manifesto was the result:

1. The A.P.O. set out to “create unity among us”
2. Education was seen as the key to success…
3. The A.P.O. did not seek social integration with White People
4. Class Legislation (i.e. discriminatory color legislation) was opposed

The manifesto’s second tenet gave rise to the teachers unions, which came into being. Thus, the Teacher’s League of South Africa (TLSA) was born.\textsuperscript{49} Additionally, another organization known as the New Era Fellowship (NEF) was founded in 1937. The latter was a think tank which boasted several aims, one of which was to reform TLSA’s organizational culture, which was perceived as antiquated, racist, and blind
to contemporary developments. Ultimately, the TLSA, which had been “established in 1913 as a teaching organization which would cater for the educational needs of the ‘Coloured’ school child” appeared isolated and ill informed. As numerous groups within the Coloured Community continued to lose rights, protectionism set in for some. Certain intellectuals came to consider themselves a protected category until the Smuts Government established a special advisory council for the coloured community, the Coloured Advisory Council (CAC). This prompted some members of the “Coloured” community to oppose this apartheid move and form themselves into an Anti-Coloured Affairs Department (abbreviated to Anti-CAD) towards the middle of 1943. The Teachers League had now split into two factions, a more progressive TLSA and a conservative Teachers Educational and Professional Association (abbreviated to TEPA). The latter teachers’ body was naturally welcomed and recognized by successive South African governments. No such official recognition was accorded the Teachers League of South Africa.

Activists formed the more political Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) in 1944. It soon banded with the TLSA and the Anti-CAD. Henceforward, this alliance worked to change the political landscape of South Africa. Many students of the “major centers for learning in the Cape” such as the Trafalgar High School, Livingstone High School and Harold Cressy School were influenced by these organizations.

It should be noted, NEUM declared publicly that apartheid would be a new version of imperialism coupled with capitalism. This assertion underestimated the vast change to come, and did serve, in effect, as political call to action. It should also be noted
that the “concept of racially being half a person was never accepted by the NEUM or the TLSA”. Thus, the framework for resistance took shape and, more importantly, took root in what would become the virtual hub of resistance, District Six.

**District Six**

When I remember District Six, I don’t just remember District Six. I remember Cape Town, my city…so when we were thrown out of District Six. I mean District Six was destroyed. You were thrown out of your city.

Vincent Kolbe

It should be noted that within Cape Town, “the oldest part lies within what was known as the Bowl—an area between Table Bay and the arc of the mountains at the northern end of the Cape’s peninsula.” Situated within the southeastern edge of this old section was “District Six”, one of the oldest Cape Town communities — though it wasn’t until 1867 that the city was formerly divided into six districts. McCormick has noted:

The sixth district lay between the castle moat, Canterbury Row, Constitution Street, Devil’s Peak, the Military lines, and the Toll Bar. Subsequently the official demarcation lines of District Six were slightly changed from time to time (as a result of coastal land reclamation, for instance) but there were no major additions to or losses from its territory. The adjacent residential areas have always been seen as culturally different.

McCormick clearly established that District Six was well established long before 1920 and he further notes that the region was ethnically diverse from the start:
District Six was the Harlem, the South Side Chicago, and the West Oakland of Cape Town. In 1966, in keeping with the illogic of white supremacy in general and the Group Areas Act in particular, District Six was declared a White group area. What followed, in the late 1970s, was the destruction of homes and business in which generations of families had lived and worked. The intent was to erase District Six from the map and memory of Cape Town if not the world.56

District Six became legendary when the Cape Town neighborhood was bulldozed to the ground, as the momentum of the anti-apartheid movement approached its zenith. The neighborhood fell victim to its success: its adaptability in coping under the storms of racial intolerance. In the complex wasteland of race classification, District Six represented the antithesis of apartheid, where people of every caste and category lived together in an urban setting, rendered almost oblivious to the surreal nature of the country outside:

…it’s only in the District that I feel safe. District Six is like an island…in a big sea of apartheid…we have never put up notices which say “Slegs blankes” or “Whites Only”, it is they who put up the notices. When the white man comes into the district with his notices he is a stranger, when we come out of the District he makes us realize that we are strangers.”

Zoot, from “District Six the Musical”57

To fully appreciate the significance of this, it is useful to review the social stratifications that came into play in the community known as District Six.

Ironically, the area’s most predominant group was the complex and ever-changing segment classified as “coloured” whose common characteristic was being, in some
degree, of African descent. A direct result of ethnic and racial blending, this was a
“buffer class”, a living visual marker, delineating the questionable divide between “black”
and “white”. As for the latter, this was the ruling class, which included the “Afrikaners”,
South African born individuals of Dutch descent. This group also included those who
considered themselves English by birth and South African by circumstance. In fact,
many upheld their British identity so strongly that writings of native South Africans have
frequently been mistaken for English. Other people of European decent (e.g., French,
German, etc.) also enjoyed ruling class status and the “advantage” of being “Christian”
cannot be over-stated. For though one’s skin could be perceived as white, practicing
Judaism or Islam rendered such South Africans to the unique fringe between the ruling
class and Coloured.

Considering all the unavoidable complications and tensions imposed by the
caste hierarchy described above, the comparatively lax observance of class divides
within District Six was legendary. In the post apartheid world, this reputation reached
mythic proportions. This study will elaborate later on the cultural ramifications. At this
juncture, it is sufficient to note that what was singular and unique about District Six was
a blatant contradiction to the apartheid ideal, rendering the neighborhood a threat to the
state and inviting its ultimate destruction. Tracing the roots of its demise leads inevitably
to two change agents within the district, The Trafalgar and Livingston High Schools.
CHAPTER 3:

APARTEID’S MIRROR: RESISTANCE THEATRE IN ACTION

Education is the most powerful weapon — which you can use to change the world.

Nelson Mandela

While segregation in some form had long been practiced in South Africa, it was only after the Nationalist Government instituted apartheid in 1948 that it was legislated and consequently enforced by the rule of law. Before then, group alliances were rooted in family ties, educational background, or economics. Consequently, intermingling among ethnic groups were not unusual in many communities. One such place was District Six in Cape Town, South Africa, which had a high concentration of mixed ethnic groups before apartheid was formalized by legislation. Eventually, because of the multi-ethnic make-up of District Six, the area was bulldozed out of existence leaving behind only select buildings, memories, and rubble of a once thriving neighborhood. Trafalgar High School, home of the Trafalgar Players, was among the structures in the bulldozed area of District Six.

When Isaac Pfaff, a teacher at Trafalgar High School, and his brother Oscar Pfaff founded their theatre company, they based it on the precepts of universal brotherhood and the equality of all persons. For the Pfaffs, the “question of how to theorize a
general human identity … [or a] … common South African identity” was fundamentally important. This is evident in many of their works. Consider, for example, Isaac Pfaff’s A Time for Compassion: Biko’s World in Six Plays. Written under his pseudonym “Paul Roubaix”, the publication begins with a Forward penned by Frank Birbalsingh who wrote:

Roubaix’s drama deals with wider themes of the freedom and dignity of each individual and his need for practical brotherhood within the context of a universal moral law whose purpose is to ensure the protection of human community and the survival of the species. 60

Know as “Succi”, Isaac and his brother expressed their passion for universal brotherhood — not only through their original plays but through classic works that addressed their favorite themes. Consequently, they developed a following that included not only the Coloured intelligentsia in Cape Town but other cultural segments as well. In addition to Trafalgar’s students, the community’s middle class, who had learned about the players through newspaper articles or word of mouth, began to take notice.

The Necessity and Nature of Protest

The cult of race superiority and of white supremacy is worshipped like a god. Few white people escape corruption and many of their children learn to believe that white men are unquestionably superior, efficient, clever, industrious, and capable; that the black are, equally unquestionably, inferior, slothful, stupid, evil, and clumsy. On the basis of the mythology that ‘the lowest amongst them is higher than the highest amongst us,’ it is claimed that white men build everything worth-while in the country.

Chief Albert J. Luthuli 61
With the government monitoring for seditious behavior among educators and artists, how did the Pfaffs avoid drawing the ire of authorities? As previously noted, the Trafalgar Players utilized classical vehicles such as Chekhov’s *Uncle Vanya*, and Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* to serve multiple purposes. First, they provided a means to hone and subsequently demonstrate the students’ skills in classical theatre. Importantly, these pieces allowed them to embed protest elements in productions that would have otherwise seemed benign. The co-founders of the Trafalgar Players made a conscious decision to use suggestion rather than overt protest to ensure the safety of all involved: the performers, the audience and those producing the plays. At the same time, this method enabled the brothers to connect thematic subject matter of respected classical works to contemporary issues relevant to life under apartheid.

Through their successful use of undercurrent messages, the Pfaffs skirted the elaborate system of informers and government agents charged with exposing protesters and dissidents. The subterfuge was necessary, since long before the razing of District Six, many government agencies were tasked to find subversives within the education community. As a student from another Cape school noted, students were well-aware of the dangers afoot. Amelia Pegram recalled:

> At Livingston High School there were a number of teachers who belonged to anti-apartheid groups. The Teachers League of South Africa (TLSA) had a mixed membership and therefore became a group to be watched. I recall students being recruited to “spy” on teachers. These students were supplied with watches that had recorders. They were used in classes taught by teachers who were being watched for their political activity.
Even so, many black and Coloured educators were tenacious in keeping the issue of freedom and justice ever-present in their thinking and efforts with their students. Theirs was a moral imperative, heartfelt to the core. Education was the natural way to convey important contextual information to offset the deleterious effects of the apartheid propaganda. The complexity of the consequent cultural tug of war cannot be overstated. How did human beings who valued education and the very pursuit of higher knowledge cope with the oppression of their humanity and life prospects? How does such a group express deep political convictions that, while confirming the group’s value and worth, challenges the very laws, indeed the very society which is rooted in the mythology of their inferiority and lack of promise.

In the face of the institutionalized inequities meted out under apartheid, educators of color were especially challenged. How do teachers ignore the need to establish a sense of humanity and self-worth among their charges? Ultimately, the weight of this question and the task of determining one’s own self-identity became the catalyst and driving force for the resistance theatre movement that evolved in Cape Town. Remarkably, this movement, whether manifested through the Trafalgar Players or the Peninsula Dramatic Society, began in some very humble ways, as Amelia Pegram suggested when she recalled a former teacher who was popular with the students at Livingston High School:

The teachers had to find ways to keep students thinking about the political situation but at the same time not risking their own freedom. Our geography teacher, Frank Grammer was instrumental in starting the Peninsula Dramatic Society (PDS). His wife, Eleanor, was keen about acting. For Mr. Grammer, PDS was a vehicle to educate people about the political situation without overt actions.
This was not an easy undertaking in an environment where government officials monitored operations either overtly or though the use of informants. Knowing the consequences of breaching apartheid laws, educators had to be clever. They chose plays that would provoke meaningful post-production dialogues by drawing a parallel to real-life political events.

Through their work, the groups revealed not only the ravages of apartheid, but its mythological underlay, including its credos regarding racial inferiority. This necessitated a mindful, cautious approach — both in terms of eluding the scrutiny of the authorities and maintaining a sense of professional balance. While the players’ performances belied state propaganda and reaffirmed their own intellectual prowess, it was essential to maintain perspective and to be diligent in avoiding detection. Thus, they were routinely brought back to center with reminders of their peculiar station, the risks imposed by the dominant culture and their ultimate goal as Ms. Pegram noted:

At Livingston High School we were out to show that the color of our skins did not determine what we could learn. Through all this we also had to be aware of the hold the government had on some people and the way they planted their spies. We had to be very careful.

With all the complications, resistance theatre became almost a higher calling and its adherents took steps to spread the word, despite the risks. All, teacher and students alike, were ever mindful of their “mission” and the significance of their work. Owen Pegram put it this way:

We took the productions beyond the city areas and had to perform in any available space even using the back of a truck as a stage. For Frank Grammer the driving force was
education. The discussions after the performance helped us to keep a focus on education. The participation in the group was an essential part of my political education. We were able to prove ourselves capable of understanding writers from Europe despite the government’s effort to cast us as inferior. We could read Shaw, Ibsen, Gorky, Rice, and Genet despite our so-called inferior mental capacities. People who came to the productions in the city or suburbs were able to see themselves through other prisms. PDS was not just entertainment.

For these youth, theatre was not a routine extra-curricular past time. It was an opportunity to grow, press the societal envelope and challenge the system, despite the risks. As noted, the government relied on censors to identify people encouraging any questions against the system. The penalties were severe. Even the mildest critics were branded as dissidents. Protestors of every stripe risked being banned, imprisoned, or even executed. Such possibilities deterred most from stepping outside convention. Even within the world of resistance theatre, people were motivated differently and made personal choices according to a complex array of factors. Consequently, resistance theatre in South Africa was varied in face and character, reflecting the relative weight of risk and purpose in the minds of those who chose to rebel. For PDS, the drive to grow intellectually and to disprove societal myths exceeded their fears, as Amelia Pegram said:

We had to learn. I was introduced to writers that certainly were not included in our school curriculum because our ‘limited mental ability’ would hinder our understanding. The ‘teaching moments’ could not be ignored. We were aware we were being watched by political groups. We were aware that we did pose a ‘threat’ to the ideology of the government and in a way this sense of ‘danger’ heightened our desire to learn and to teach.
In a community such as District Six, with its pervasive cultural tolerance and the successful use of subterranean protest efforts, isolation and suppression of the growing anti-apartheid movement was difficult. Eventually, after the Group Areas Act was invoked and the inhabitants of District Six were relocated and dispersed to other areas, resistance to apartheid rule could be detected more easily.

Until then, seemingly law-abiding citizens challenged injustice in manners difficult to discern involving the entire community. Many children were educated by teachers who refused the apartheid educational constraints of teaching students ‘beyond what they could achieve.’ Likewise teachers often refused to abide by the tenants of racial segregation and embraced different races freely mingling with one another when it was illegal. Consider the case of the Trafalgar Players, a company which included committed performers from different racial ethnic groups, such as Leonard (Lenny) Dixon, Colin Wynn, Bill Curry, Cynthia Fisher (Mrs. Jarari) and Rasheda Rassol. Without the cooperation and passion for justice demonstrated by socially conscious teachers, students, and community members, their work would not have been possible. Community backing was an essential element that inspired the company to weave social protest in their art.

What was the nature of this particular brand of protest theatre? What would have been so onerous to authorities? To begin with, Isaac fundamentally rejected the validity of color classification, a mainstay of apartheid. As Pfaffy has noted, his brother felt that race, skin color or culture had no inherent role in academic endeavors. The brothers chose plays on their merit, selecting according to the weight of the intellectual ‘ideas’
presented and the potential for accommodating social commentary and critique in an
understated way. This was the basis for choosing what the company would produce.

Thus, by careful selection of material, Isaac Pfaff empowered the performers to
convey concepts of brotherhood and equality even though this was outlawed by the state.
Without overtly stating so and counter to state mandates, he incorporated a classical
education with anti-oppression ideology, involving not only the local but also ultimately
a more global community in step against apartheid.

Paul Roubaix: The Voice of Isaac Pfaff Unleashed

Upon examination, the plays Isaac Pfaff wrote under the pseudonym Paul Roubaix,
invariably invoke the recurring themes of universal equality and brotherhood of all men.
Though contradicting apartheid dogma, Pfaff voiced his core philosophies under the
guise of Roubaix in numerous plays including *Hour of Glory, Though I Speak, Bitter
Road, Storm, Here Endeth the First Lesson*, and *The Yearning of My Heart*.

The play *Hour of Glory* is a one-act play explained by Frank Birbalsingh
as follows:

Set in an un-named country in which confrontation
between a revolutionary group and a government run by
the ‘master race’ strongly resembles South Africa after
1948, when the Nationalist Party won the elections and
began formally to institutionalize their creed of apartheid
or racial segregation. At the beginning of the play, Santos’s
revolt is already crushed and he is in a mountain retreat
holding Cherie, the President’s daughter, as hostage. After
a bewildering series of choices placed before him, Santos
makes a final choice which is both shocking and revealing
of the extreme despair into which an inhuman political
system can drive an idealist who has been kept artificially from sharing power in their own country.\textsuperscript{62}

Many of Roubaix’s plays are seen as merely skirting issues relevant to the brutal effects of apartheid and the ruling class which upheld it. However, \textit{Hour of Glory}, with its reference to Santos, a character evocative of the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century Mexican revolutionary Pancho Villa, has all the earmarks of a staunch anti-apartheid play.

Set in some unidentified location which is governed by a nameless, though clearly repressive regime, \textit{Hour of Glory} often alludes to a ‘master race’. A citizen’s revolt against the power structure, evidently a corrupt theocratic government, is in play. The possibility of significant collateral damage among innocent citizens is suggested. It is a bleak menacing setting.

Naturally, as conceptual devices, the play’s reference to theocracy and a racial superiority invite comparisons between Roubaix’s imaginary world and the one ruled by the Afrikaners. However, the play’s mysterious, undisclosed location, with its Mexican revolutionary affectations, provides a scrim behind which the playwright, director and cast could legally give anti-apartheid sentiment a vehicle and voice. Likewise, the ostensive storyline and heavy “new world” overtones provided a sufficient façade, protecting the audience from accusations of blatant subversion. Thus, the emblematic approach is central to Roubaix’s (Pffaf’s) didactic style.

Another signature feature of his work is the emphasis on inner struggle, as opposed to overt struggles against exterior forces. Pfaff advocated using one’s current lot in life, however unfair and limiting, as a means towards justice or better circumstances.
In this vein, Pfaff is somewhat reminiscent of Booker T. Washington who, post civil war, proposed that African Americans could ultimately improve their lot, by first acquiescing to their low societal status and excel in the lower level jobs or lesser educational opportunities that were afforded them. Over time, he reasoned, their industry would be rewarded by a gradual ascent up the socio-economic ladder. Washington’s philosophy was widely accepted by white American policy makers of his time, in part because it seemed to afford another means to extend, for a period, the status quo.

However, the creative tension between those that would settle for a slow progression towards equity and those who sought a more rapid transit caused much anguish in the United States, jeopardizing many relationships within the black community and pitting people with common goals but different method against one another. In South Africa, similar dynamics played out in ways that were unique to apartheid. One such example is highlighted in Roubaix’s Bitter Road. In his introduction to the anthology of Roubaix’s plays, A Time for Compassion: Biko’s World in Six Plays, Frank Birbalsingh explains:

Employing an imaginary setting in which social injustice and revolution are chief factors. The young revolutionary Andre, leaves his pregnant wife and homeland to develop into a feared authoritarian international figure known as ‘Arak the Terrible’, who twenty years latter invades the Fatherland to attempt a revolutionary takeover. In a forced landing, he is wounded and later sheltered by his wife, Moira, and his sister, Laura. Mario, who has never seen his father, has been brought up to believe that his father had been some national hero who had died defending his country. He has grown to hate warmongers like ‘Arak the Terrible’.63
Again, in this play, harsh South African realities are depicted under the guise of some un-named society, where families are separated through governmental classification systems and neighbors are secret informers. Most tragically, a son does not realize the reviled traitor, ‘Arak the Terrible’ is the father he has never known. All lend to the complex tensions that are evident in this exchange between the son (Mario) and his aunt (Laura):

Mario: I don’t understand, Aunt Laura. Everyone knows that Arak is a traitor.

Laura: Yes, that’s what the government says. Yet how many of our people agree with what he’s doing? How many of us simple folk worship this man in secret? Do you think his army could’ve overrun our country like this, if he didn’t have many friends in our midst?

Mario: Don’t you realize that this butcher is responsible for the deaths of thousands or our people? Don’t you forget your own husband was shot by his troops?

Moira: Mario, you forget yourself?

The exchange above typifies the marked division within families that apartheid frequently fostered. It also depicts how innocent, non-military people were pressed into serving the state’s agenda. Bitter Road also reflects the inner dialogues that Pfaffy favored — sometimes painful, often poignant. The following monologue speaks to a young man’s anti-war sentiment, his frustration with being herded toward slaughter like fodder. Yet, despite his distaste for all war making, the anger he conveys will ultimately end with patricide:

Life has taught me to take no mercy and to give none. It is bloodthirsty dogs like Arak, with his new politics, that
disillusioned me long ago. I have learnt to expect nothing from life, and then I know I won’t be disappointed. As soon as a young fellow begins to dream beautiful dreams about life, then the leaders of the world come along-the statesman, who are all fighting for freedom and peace-and drive you to the slaughterhouse to be killed like a pig-for their so-called principles, of which you understand nothing. You have no say in the matter; you must just go where the drive you. I tell you, I’m sick of the whole mess. Let the slaughterers be slaughtered, just for a change. And which of them deserves it more than Arak? 64

Like all authors, Isaac Pfaff tapped his life experience to fuel his art. He had witnessed the ravages of war and experienced first-hand the violence associated with apartheid. His response to oppression was to strive for material, intellectual solutions, rather than fruitless confrontation. So, in his plays, many of the most aggressive freedom fighters character suffer from a fatal flaw, hubris. They often lose the prize because they lack ability to see beyond their own agenda or to reach out to others who have a common goal but different approach.
CHAPTER 4:

POLITICS AND THE UNIVERSAL MAN:

THE PENINSULA DRAMATIC SOCIETY AND THE TRAFALGAR PLAYERS

That in fostering drama, no activity of the Society shall be in conflict with the aspirations of the non-Europeans striving for full Democracy on a principled basis.

Peninsula Dramatic Society Constitution, 1951

From its inception, PDS was a political group whose constitution challenged apartheid law. For some coloured South Africans, the organization that aspired to advancing non-Europeans toward full Democracy was revolutionary, innovative and groundbreaking. For the state, PDS would certainly be considered revolutionary, but in a dangerous and subversive way that challenged its mandates and authority. Likewise, the Trafalgar Players also aspired to elevate the status of the non-Europeans, though by more subtle means. Whether by overt statements, actions or merely intent, according to apartheid law, both PDS and TP were dissident organizations.

Both PDS and TP were the direct result of the apartheid system they challenged, as was the less politically subversive EOAN group. Though the EOAN group was under white management, all three groups provided coloured performers an artistic outlet and coloured audiences a means to access performance art. The emergence of these
groups perhaps could not have happened anywhere else. All were the result of a unique 
confluence of events, a singular sociopolitical system and the personal inclinations of the 
artists compelled to live under the stifling and dehumanizing system that was apartheid. 

To comprehend the significance of the dissimilarities and how these factors 
intertwined towards different approaches, it is essential to comprehend the impact of 
apartheid law on the human spirit, avenues for artistic expression and most fundamentally 
one’s very identity.

Determining self-identity is a universal life task, but in South Africa, it was a 
peculiar conundrum for those known as ‘coloured’. The enforcement of the RCA (the 
Racial Classification Act) and the GAA (the Group Areas Act) essentially rendered the 
Coloured group into seven groups by location and thus caste classification respectively. 
Consequently, the ‘Coloured’ of the Cape included those labeled as Coloured, Cap 
Coloured, Malay, Griqua, Chinese, East Indian, and ‘other Asiatic’. The distinction 
between groups, though subtle to the outsider, was monumental in South Africa. For 
example, because of their European heritage, the Cap Coloured enjoyed higher status 
than most of their other coloured counterparts, including the Malay who was descendants 
of Indonesian Muslims war captives. All groups were assigned a social hierarchy and 
governed by guidelines based on a racial pedigree established by state laws, which 
mandated rigid enforcement ignoring any exceptions including family ties across 
racial lines.

In the macrocosm of South Africa, the tiers of this complex caste system could be 
observed doggedly, effectively severing ties between racial groups as defined by the state.
Tragically, for coloured South Africans, whose lineage typically crossed numerous racial lines, apartheid also imposed modes of separatism within multi-ethnic families, infusing daily life with multitude of complications and choices.

**Education: Common Path to Social Elevation**

Despite the divergence in artistic approaches that would follow, all the principles in this research pursued a post-secondary education. All, whether university trained or trained at a teacher’s college, became educators.

The impact of social Darwinism in 20th century South Africa should be the subject of many studies to come. In this crucible, ingredients peculiar to the region combined to suppress or elevate generations according to societal status. Both current status and lifelong prospects were state prescribed through numerous cultural overlays including societal stigmas associated with racial or ethnic background, revisionist theology justifying Afrikaner dominance, and cultural engineering through caste based educational policies and restrictive racial segregation laws. The result was a caldron of suppression, familial disruption, general strife and a staggering waste of human potential. In the face of such powerful dynamics, the need of change was urgently felt though the prospect must have seemed remote.

Even so, the ideology of informed teachers at the Livingston and Trafalgar schools help instigate and form the resistance theatre movement in Cape Town. Historically, despotic governments have typically targeted the educated first for removal from society,
recognizing their potential for challenging the status quo in a credible way that will attract not only attention but followers.

In Cape Town, by the 1920s, coloured teachers found the laws governing their work was detrimental and contrary to their role of instructing children. To comply required a very colonial mindset that would supersede their sense of mission. It is not surprising that strategies of resistance came into effect.

Despite their different philosophies, both founders of PDS and TP believed that theatre was a dynamic tool that could raise awareness and spur social change. Teachers in both camps associated with the Peninsula Dramatic Society and the Trafalgar Players utilized various strategies to share their ideology and encourage the use of theater as a resistance method by students and the overall community. These educators were products of a strong, cross-generational, didactic tradition rooted in the “passing down” of experience and history. This cultural inclination facilitated the transfer of first-hand political history across generations, rendering a knowledge base that was accessible and present throughout the community. Consequently, the pedigree and sphere of influence enjoyed by various political groups were widely known and respected.

Their role extended beyond simply raising pertinent issues for debate. During this period, the use of dramatics in establishing and justifying apartheid culture was commonplace in South Africa. The pageantry was grandiose, multi-faceted and extremely theatrical in design and execution. The government routinely used this format to institutionalize the mythologies defining and justifying apartheid rule. For example, in the early 19th century, the white ruling class began a long tradition of dramatizing the
strange blend of revisionist history and religion to elevate white Europeans to the apex of colonial power. Those early pageants, commemorating the exploits of Van Riebeeck and the trek of the early colonials (Voortrekkers) became the cornerstones of colonial aggression.

Later, elaborate variations on their core themes would alter the narrative to accommodate social transitions — such as accepting the British South Africans into the ruling class, elevating them to the status of the Boers. Thus, “The Pageant of South Africa”, requiring a year’s worth of rehearsal was performed on four occasions in late 1936. Incorporating revised history, various societal icons, it culminated in a beauty contest for white women. Indeed, this South African pageant, far more complex than any western equivalent, could be likened to a combination beauty competition, state fair and historic re-enactment festival. Its primary purpose was to reconcile the disparities between British and Dutch accounts of South African history.¹

Even in District Six, such celebrations would have been common and difficult to avoid. The Voortrekker festival described in Chapter 1 was perhaps the largest and most dramatic event of this nature. Others were somewhat humbler efforts, marking holidays or other special events. However, all state sponsored functions of this type incorporated the typical recurrent themes to reinforce apartheid (i.e., the racial superiority of Europeans and their divine right to possess and rule).

Against this backdrop of such blatant denigration of the “lower” castes, there were efforts which, while not overtly challenging the state propaganda, projected the coloured
community in a totally different light. For example, study participants alluded to the cultural phenomenon known as the “Strolling Gentlemen” or “Walking Gentleman”:

They would all dress in beautiful suits and uniforms, some with special slacks. But they all would wear the same. Each group had its own tailor and its own particular uniform.

Claremont 1

Dressed in dark tuxedos with tails, replete with walking sticks and black silk top hats, the strolling gentlemen epitomized style and grace. This pageant made no reference to their comparatively low standing on the apartheid caste scale. In fact, the ‘gentlemen’ were usually the most accomplished men in the coloured community — respected persons in the local guilds, for example. They marked the beginning of a special event, crooning hymns or popular songs of the day, dressed in formal attire. Entering in an exquisitely choreographed fashion, they were followed by marching bands, string ensembles or choirs. As cultural icons, the strolling crooners and their entourage made a memorable and lasting impression:

Then behind them you’d have the choir and the choirs would sing. They would sing Christmas carols and ‘liedjies.’ These liedjies were indigenous tunes, like ‘Here come the Alabama’ and the choir would do that as well, but they had their own beats too. They had choreography. Then there were the string bands and what we called the Christmas choirs. These were major cultural institutions.

Claremont 1
Alas, the strolling gentlemen and choirs were strictly homegrown entertainment, designed for local, primarily coloured audiences. These affairs were positive and uplifting in nature, designed for enjoyment and devoid of reminders about one’s relative worth, within the larger scheme of apartheid. In some ways, the strolling gentlemen personifies the Pfaff’s concept of the ‘universal man’. Unfortunately, it was only within the coloured microcosm, that even a glimpse was possible.

The Trafalgar Players: Advancing the Universal Man Concept

According to Isaac Pfaff, the guiding force behind his brother’s works was to encourage brotherhood and connect the public with the notion of the ‘universal man’. The foundation of their belief was that man was naturally imbued with the ability to shape his own identity and destiny, regardless of race or so-called caste. The Pfaff’s believed that given a chance, each individual has the capacity to rise to the level of their own choosing in education and life. The only moral restriction towards any endeavor would be what one could accomplish through individual effort and hard work. Consequently, in Isaac Pfaff’s work, A Time For Compassion: Biko’s World in Six Plays, he demonstrates what all men can make of themselves, though their own hand and deeds. For in almost every play the antagonists’ fate is sealed, for the worst, by giving into the system of oppression. However, when given the chance to develop without hindrance the only limitations are those that the individual puts upon himself.

Grounded by this philosophy, the Trafalgar Players chose plays to demonstrate they possessed the skills and range to handle roles that the government’s pseudo-scientific
theory claimed was beyond their reach. To the Pfaff’s the greatest weapon against oppression was to illustrate, through example, that people of color were not limited in mental capacity as the dominant culture proposed. By producing credible theatre in the classical style from settings to costumes, the Players affirmed that they were as worthy as Europeans to hold the stage. If this were so, wasn’t it entirely possible that these coloured actors symbolized the untapped potential of a nation? If this were so, how many universal men who were being held back by a society that failed to understand their worth and promise.

Towards that end, TP conducted competitions for new works within the coloured community and produced them as the budget allowed. The topics were to be relevant to contemporary life under apartheid and, as with all their productions, utilized a coloured cast. As with the non-original works, TP selected material that was illustrative of their philosophies of demonstrating the talents and abilities within the coloured community to counter the apartheid propaganda.

Despite their refined and subdued approach, the Trafalgar Players were indeed subversive because, despite the subtlety, they were declaring apartheid wrong, each time they performed. While issues pertaining to race, caste and oppression were never the core element in their performances, each time the so-called coloured drama troupe performed a Shakespearean play using period dress and classical scenery, TP was serving up a blatant reminder that those considered “betwixt and between” racially were far from sub-human and un-trainable.
Off stage, The Pfaffs served as examples of the universal man by pursuing a classical education and aspiring to become something of a renaissance man. Through their pursuits, be it education, theatre, journalism or music, they strived to belie the government’s claims that those of non-European origins were intellectually inferior. As educators, they ascribed to Dubois belief that the 10% of the population that become the teachers were responsible to educate the rest. So, in addition to being committed to personal growth and achievement, they understood their responsibility to enable others to follow a similar path.

Ultimately, the Pfaffs entered self-imposed exile. Like the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, the South Africa government began to target educators as potential threats to the state. The Pfaffs and other educators considered immigrating to the United States, Australia, or England. Because Canada seemed most welcoming, the brothers moved there, becoming part of the massive South African brain-drain that occurred between 1960 and late 1970s. Canada is where they remained and are buried.
Enterprising Groups

TWO enterprising non-European dramatic groups are to give public performances next week and the following week in the Woodstock Town Hall.

Monday night will see a performance by the Trafalgar Players of Chekhov's "Uncle Vanya", produced by Isaac Staff, and from Wednesday, July 9, Carter Ebrahim will stage Elmer Rice's "Street Scene" for the Peninsula Dramatic Society.

Both are highly ambitious plays to tackle, but it is stimulating to see them being attempted in preference to trivial bits of stuff.

"Uncle Vanya" is an embittered and disillusioned man of 47. For years he and his relatives have slaved to support and educate Alexander, who turns out to be a shallow professor of literature. Nothing much happens from the point of actual action, but the play reveals the futility of people without a purpose, and the corrosive effect of egotism.

"Street Scene"—requiring a cast of some 30 actors and actresses—was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1929. Its emphasis is not so much on plot as it is on characterization; the stage set shows the facade of a New York tenement house, and various characters are introduced and touched by tragedy.

Malay Dancer

JOHAAR MOSAVAL, former of the University Ballet and the first member of the Cape Malay community to make dancing a career, is now a member of the Sadlers Wells Second Company. He studied at the Sadlers Wells School for 18 months and after passing his advanced examinations with honours, was given an engagement.

Commenting on this progress, John Cranko, another South African who was himself a choreographer at Sadlers Wells, says: "Johaar was by far the most outstanding of the male students at the school."

This will be pleasant news to the small group of Capetonians who made it possible for Johaar Mosaval to attain his ambition and work for a time overseas. His fare to Britain was provided by the Progressive Modern Society and the Axedley Street Primary School, which gave him his first education.

Figure 1. Trafalgar Players newspaper clipping: testimony of performance
(Owen Pegram Archive)
Peninsula Dramatic Society: Pushing the Envelope Towards Full Democracy

When a young Owen Pegram was upbraided and then beaten by a policeman for carrying “too many books”, this was not considered an unusual event for a person of his complexion and racial category. That he was jailed subsequent to this encounter at a train station, and no one knew his whereabouts or situation was likewise not unusual. When he did not return home as expected, his father started making inquiries. Owen’s father was a white European who had years before declared himself coloured in order to legally marry the woman of his choice, a Cape Coloured. Still, because he possessed the appearance of a white, the elder Pegram retained the status and connections to locate and gain the release of his son, who as a “coloured” person would never achieve the same status under apartheid.

Thus, the laws discussed in Chapter 1, the Groups Areas Act 1950 and the Racial Classifications Act attempted to retrofit existing communities with segregation, long after multi-ethnic families had been established. The impact was jagged, far-reaching and variable. The tenor of one’s response was perhaps tempered by the dissonance between self-perception and that mandated by apartheid law. For the Pegrams, though deemed inferior by the state, their upbringing and core spoke to the contrary. So for them, every life choice would reflect a higher sense of self than apartheid would allow. Consequently, both would ultimately be rejected by the state because they couldn’t comply with rules designed to repress or denigrate students because of caste. After all, higher education was important to them, as demonstrated by their obtaining university degrees and ultimately become educators. From their own experience, they understood that like them,
their students had far more potential than the state would perceive. So, as teachers and long before, as members of PDS, they, along with others, challenged the status quo in a comparatively strident way.

Figure 2. Amelia Blossom Pegram in University of Cape Town graduation robe (Amelia Pegram Archive)

Figure 3. Owen Pegram in University of Cape Town graduation robe (Owen Pegram Archive)

While the Trafalgar Players challenged apartheid by proving their own worth and encouraging personal growth and achievement, PDS attacked the fallacies and brutalities of the system in a variety of ways. For example, PDS gravitated towards
a more organic approach to theatre, trail-blazing environmental theater techniques.

If performing a classic Chekov piece, they would render a production with a modern edge, utilizing non-traditional costuming, inter-racial casting or engaging the audience directly. PDS provided cutting theater—not only through style and form but in material. Like the Trafalgar Players, the Peninsula Dramatic Society solicited new works; however, it sponsored competitions in schools, involving the students in various aspects of theatre production. So, while TP was claiming the rights of the so-called coloured to the stage through example, PDS was pioneering the notion of teaching and learning through drama.

The Peninsula Dramatic Society was also choosing work irrespective of the writer’s race. They routinely tapped talent outside the coloured community, be it through multi-racial casting or production of new work. This barefaced transgression against apartheid law was recognized as revolutionary and ground-breaking. During a 1976 panel discussion on South African theatre, panelist Cosmos Pieterse observed:

… passing from the Trafalgar Players to the Peninsula Dramatic Society, I should perhaps mention that a lady in the audience here, Amelia House, was a member of that society… They also sponsored a competition in which schools produced one-act plays… and they also tried to break the barriers that the South African system had imposed upon theatrical activity. In other words, they tried to break the color bar. This was a group that operated right across the so-called color lines. ³

Because of their anti-apartheid modes of operation, the group adopted various practices to elude detection or escape problems with the authorities. For example, ticketed programs were used to allow mixed audiences to intermingle in public venues, a practice that outlawed by apartheid. This operated as an event specific club
membership. Patrons purchasing “a membership” received a program for the evening’s performance. The perforated ticket on the cover secured entry for a selected audience.

Figure 4. Playbill that acted as club membership (Owen Pegram Archive)
A review of playbills from Owen Pegram’s collection/personal archive reveal the group also performed under alternative names and though the name changed, the cast remained very much the same. Subsequently, regardless of the moniker, the cast usually included Owen, Amelia and Naomi Pegram along with Eleanor Grammer Carter, among other regulars; and, Carter Ibrahim was likely to be the Producer. As “The Theatre Group”, it produced Bertol Brecht’s Round Heads, Peaked Heads; and, as “The Guild
Players” they performed Shakespeare’s Henry V. Also, in the group’s attempt to become a professional as opposed to community theatrical group, they performed a particularly controversial piece as “The New Theatre”. And, as Amelia Pegram’s following recollection suggests, PDS’ zeal for the controversial and avant-garde necessitated yet another method to circumvent the law:

The play that sticks most clearly in my mind is Genet’s ‘The Blacks’. PDS dared to have a mixed cast. The police came on stage to stop the play. We certainly could not have a mixed group as well as a mixed audience. The decision was made to have no more shows, but only ‘rehearsals’ that had audiences. It was always a matter of staying one step ahead of the authorities.

PDS’s penchant for the provocative is another characteristic that set it apart from contemporaries theater companies. They selected fare that challenged laws by questioning the numerous tenets of apartheid. Consider the two Genet plays they performed, The Blacks and The Maids. First and foremost, officials would have deemed Genet inappropriate based on his reputation alone. His body of work invariably addressed injustices associated with corrupt power. Through parody and very stylized costuming and sets, both The Maids and The Blacks employ role reversal devices — making the oppressed the oppressor. As in most of his work, social orders are challenged; the brutality and futility of oppression is emphasized. All this and more was a direct affront to the apartheid way of life and punishable by law. Nevertheless, PDS was motivated to expose the realities behind the societal mythology and indoctrination that sustained apartheid.
And What Say the Audience?

Figure 6. New Theatre playbill for *The Blacks* (Owen Pegram Archive)
THE BLACKS
(L’Negrès)
By JEAN GENET
Translation by Bernard Frechtmann

CAST:

ARCHIBALD .................................................... BILL CURRIE
VILLAGE .......................................................... OWEN PEGRAM
DIUFF .............................................................. HORACE MILANSKI
FELICITY ............................................................ SYLVIA TITUS
VIRTUE .......................................................... NANDIPHA JORDAN
SNOW ........................................................... FLORENCE PETERSEN
BOBO ........................................................ ZIZI DOLLIE
NEWPORT NEWS ............................................... JABST GRAPAW
QUEEN .......................................................... CHARLOTTE DU TOIT
GOVERNOR ................................................... ALEXANDER DU TOIT
JUDGE .......................................................... ANDREW MACKRILL
BISHOP AT LARGE ........................................... COLIN WINNIE
VALET ............................................................... JOHN RAMSDALE

Production by .................................................. CHARLOTTE PRETORIUS
Decor, costume designs and masks by ................. DEREK SHERWOOD
Costumes executed by ....................................... JOYCE VALDIAF
Stage Manager ............................................... CARTER EBRHAM
Prompt ................................................................ NOLA PEGRAM
Set executed by .................................................. DEREK SHERWOOD, VERNON JANSEN
AND JEFFERY WILLEMSE

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ALSO TO: Mr. George Ebrahim, Mr. George Veldman, Mr. William Currie, Mr. Peter Dreyer, Mr. Orrie, The Little Children’s Hotel, Mrs. Millicent Ebrahim, Mr. Dennis Hendricks, Mr. Jasper Walters, Mr. Sydney Tomlinson.

Figure 7. The cast and crew of The Blacks (Owen Pegram Archive)
JEAN GENET

Jean Genet is one of the most controversial modern French playwrights and, perhaps, the most bizarre literary figure of the century. “Liar, thief, pervert, saint and martyr,” Sartre once wrote of him. And Genet commented: “I said it all before Sartre. It’s true. So what?”

Born an illegitimate in Paris in 1910, Genet never knew his parents, was abandoned to the Assistance Publique and brought up with scant affection by a peasant family. He was caught stealing at the age of ten and sent to a reform school. After several years in such places he escaped and joined the Foreign Legion, but soon deserted. Then came years of picareque odyssey around Europe, begging, thieving and smuggling and being flung into the jails of many countries. By 1948 he had piled up so many convictions that under French law he lay open to life imprisonment and was spared only when Cocteau, Picasso, Sartre and others petitioned the Minister of Justice.

After 1948, Genet stopped stealing, or at least stopped being caught. And, strangely, for nine years he virtually stopped writing, having since 1942 produced three novels, two plays and some poems and memoirs. In 1950 he made a film about homosexual lovers in prison which, of course, has never been shown. In 1956 he started writing again and produced his bombastic The Balcony and then The Blacks. He is now busy on a new cycle of six interrelated plays, the first of which, The Screens, dealing with the Algerian war, will most probably never be staged in France.

Nowadays Genet lives quietly in hotels, not owning even a copy of his plays. He gives away most of his money. In Germany he has become the subject of university lectures and in America the “Beats” have made him their patron saint.

Genet calls The Blacks a “clown show.” The elegant and vicious ritual of The Blacks is a work of pure hatred. It is an elaborate coup de grâce struck against the “white” man’s distrust, fear and abhorrence of the Blacks. It is all done with a grin which has little horror though it will provoke a frightened laugh. It is an ironic howl at the mockery of everything the “white” thinks, says and, in furtive guilt and repressed aversion, fails to say against the “Blacks”. Paradoxically it communicates neither warmth or passion—“for murder may be haughty”.

For all the anarchy and personal stress of Genet’s dramatic work it is social and “revolutionary”. The Blacks is not the kind of “social significance” play that we are accustomed to; it is not melodramatic or banal. “It is dangerously explosive and that is one of its virtues.”

If an extension of the play’s content is sought we could say that The Blacks represent all the scorned, neglected, oppressed, ridiculed people thrust out by established society. The play may be thought of as a plea and a protest for the outcast—of whom the “Blacks” are a symbol. But it is a plea and a protest of a man who no longer permits himself the luxury of forgiveness. “It is a strong, hard, scandalous and utterly fascinating masquerade.” “It is also one of the most original theatre pieces of our day,” the eminent American critic, Harold Clurman, has said.

The Blacks has been staged in Paris, London, New York, Amsterdam and Warsaw. In New York it has been performed almost 300 times and was awarded the Obie Prize for “the best play of the year”. The author has displayed a keen interest in our production and gave us special permission to stage the play here in South Africa.

Figure 8. Playbill information (Owen Pegram Archive)
INTRODUCING NEW THEATRE

NEW THEATRE sets out with its production of THE BLACKS to create a theatre in South Africa national in approach and drawing upon all the resources of indigenous talent.

We cannot remain content with a theatre whose wit does not entertain us, whose spectacle does not instruct us and whose ritual is foreign to us. A theatre which has nothing to do with us. We will endeavour to establish a theatre which will present South Africa to itself truthfully and critically.

In this we will attempt to gain as much as possible from the theatrical tradition of other nations, but our specific purpose is to create a truly South African theatre.

To this end we are establishing a theatre workshop in which playwrights will be able to develop their work. We invite writers to let us have scripts for this purpose. We shall do all in our power to encourage the professional playwright, without whom there can be no indigenous theatre.

We intend, also, to put NEW THEATRE on a professional basis in order to reach the widest audience, and to establish effective contact with the public by sustained, regular and proficient work.

If you are interested in New Theatre's future productions, tear off this form and post to: The Secretary, New Theatre, P.O. Box 2071, Cape Town.

NAME: ........................................................................................................
ADDRESS: ....................................................................................................
......................................................................................................................

Figure 9. New Theatre mission statement (Owen Pegram Archive)
Naturally, one wonders how an audience living under apartheid responded to contemporary resistance theater. Where the plays well attended? How well were they executed? Where did these artists appear?

At present, other than a fleeting comment regarding a performance location within the oral histories, there appears to be little extant artifact documentation found for this investigation regarding the work of Trafalgar Players. Conversely, the Owen Pegram Archive boasts a wealth of news clippings, providing insights into their repertoire, their venues and casts. Although, the date and publication names are often absent, the journalists’ accounts enabled the author to flesh out and confirm much of the historic information provided through the interviews.

The print media coverage reflected in the collection is fascinating in the scope of information it conveys about the apparent popularity and sophistication of the performance community. It also suggests the broad offerings. For example, the New Theatre’s (aka PDS) production of The Blacks by journalist Denis Hatfield stated:

\begin{quote}
It pulses with puzzling life and is strongly performed by an almost uniformly good cast. I admired Sylvia Titus for the disturbing ferocity of her “Felicity”; Billy Curry for his vividly-sustained master of curious ceremonies; Owen Pegram in his early passages enacting nightmares-and Alexander du Toit’s Kipling haunted “Governor”.
\end{quote}

Despite missing information, the print coverage appears somewhat influenced by the race of the reviewer, whether or not the writer was part of a competing troupe and which publication. A sampling of the media coverage is reflected below. As evidenced
below, regardless of the periodic name change, the group in flavor and substance was essentially the PDS:

Article Title: ‘Henry V’ Produced with Ingenuity by a New Group

Author: Unknown

Publication: Unknown

Excerpts: Henry V, produced by Carter Ebrahim with Guild Players… In “Henry V” the Guild Players have tackled the least rewarding of Shakespeare’s historical plays in a vigorous and sometimes original way… The Chorus has some of the most beautiful poetry and while Owen Pegram speaks it fine understanding and fierce fluency he is far too restless…
‘Henry V’ Produced with Ingenuity
By a New Group

HENRY V, produced by Carter Ebrahim with Guild Players (Civic Centre, Claremont).

In “Henry V” the Guild Players have tackled the least rewarding of Shakespeare’s historical plays in a vigorous and sometimes original way. It was chosen, I imagine, because it will be one of the set works for students next year, and they as well as Bardolaters should see this production, for it has many merits.

The play is a series of speeches linked by alarms and excursions, with some patches of affairs poetry. Embittered spectacle brings it to full life on stage and screen, and this, by the nature of things, Carter Ebrahim’s production is not able to achieve.

CONVEX ATMOSPHERE

Certainly he has a good shot at it. His staging is ingenious but sometimes cramped entrances and exits. He has built a gallery on which part—though not enough—of the action proceeds; he used the inadequate lighting well (his Agincourt camp scenes are managed with admirable discretion); and the tableau of armies conveys atmosphere in quite an imaginative way.

SUSTAINS ROLE

The performances are uneven—no one must expect from amateurs, and sometimes students, players. The Chorus has some of the most beautiful poetry, and while Owen Pegram appears well with fine understanding, and fierce fluency he is far too restless. In the very bearded position he should give it smoothness. Reginald Norris—an actor new to me—is a modest, youthful, and high-spirited King, and sustains the role well. He has more variation of tone, pace and gesture, and with greater ease, could become a good performance.

A GOOD FOIL

As Hazlitt says, with Falstaff gone the comedy are satellites without a sun. Victor Benningham’s Pistol is often amusing; Edith Jumel’s Boy is brisk and engaging, and Denis Hendericks is excellent as...

Figure 10. ‘Henry V.’ newspaper clipping (Owen Pegram Archive)
An article announcing a performance of *The Blacks* reflects the group's new name, the presence of Owen Pegram in the cast and the play's national acclaim. It may also explain why the police Ms. Pegram noted happened to be at the theater:

**Article Title:** Non-racial Theatre Group Presents
**Controversial Play**

**Author:** A Reporter

**Publication:** Unknown

**Excerpts:**

New Theatre, the first thoroughly non-racial theatrical organization here, will present Jean Genet's explosive drama, *The Blacks*, in the Claremont Civic Centre on 22nd, 23rd and 26th to 30th March...A group of “blacks” are staging their nightly performance for a group of “Whites” and they perform for them what “whites” think “Blacks” are. “It is a strong, hard, scandalous and utterly fascinating masquerade” [says] eminent American critic, Harold Curman...

![Figure 11. Non-racial Theatre Group newspaper clipping (Owen Pegram Archive)](image-url)
One reviewer suggests something of a competitor’s bias in reviewing the group’s treatment of Brecht’s *The Exception and the Rule* and Genet’s *The Maid*, both on a single evening, produced in part by PDS regular Eleanor Grammer:

Article Title:  Theatre Group presents meaty and thoughtful plays at Claremont

Author:  Neville Dubow

Publication:  The Cape Argus

Date:  Wednesday, July 26, 1961

Excerpts:  One is indebted to the Theatre Group for having the courage to present meaty, thoughtful theatre in spite of all sorts of technical difficulties… Unfortunately, its producer and trio of actresses… were no equal to the admittedly difficult task and the grotesque irony of the climax [which] was reduced to domestic comedy.
The Theatre Group presents meaty and thoughtful plays at Claremont

ONE is indebted to the Theatre Group for having the courage to present meaty, thoughtul theatre in spite of all sorts of technical difficulties.

At the Claremont Civic Centre last night the group presented Jean Genet's 'The Maids' and Bertold Brecht's 'The Exception and the Rule' produced respectively by Eleanor Granier and Albert Thomas.

Both plays deal with master-servant relationships: one is specific, the other more general in its message. Both deal with power, fear and the lack of common purpose in a class-ridden society.

Genet presents the problem in terms of individual psychosis while Brecht's presentation is in broad, direct, political terms.

CRIPPLING SATIRE

Genet's crippling satire, in which two maidservants alternate in assuming the role of the mistress, calls for biting attack if it is to succeed at all.

Unfortunately, its producer and the trio of actresses (despite the brave efforts of Val Bresler) were nowhere equal to the admittedly difficult task and the grotesque irony of the climax - the laying bare of the 'mysterious soul of servitude' was reduced to domestic comedy.

'The Exception and the Rule', on the other hand, came off very well indeed. Here we have Brecht at his most splendidly didactic in exploiting and the exploiters' rationale.

His theme of man's failure to recognize humanity in a system where 'humanity is an exception' was vigorously realized by all the cast and special plaudits must go to Albert Thomas's total grasp of what constitutes a Brecht play and Alexander du Toit's intelligent handling of the role of the judge.

Both plays will be repeated tonight.

Neville Dubey
Selected complete articles are available for viewing in Appendix C. A table illustrating the scope and range of the Society’s repertoire is below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Production</th>
<th>Director/Producer</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May – August 7, 30, 31, 1951</td>
<td>Four One-Act Plays: <em>Suppressed Desires</em> by Susan Glaspell; <em>Escape</em> by The Peninsula Dramatic Society; <em>The Valiant</em> by Hall and Middlemiss; <em>There is no Glory</em> by Miriam Palmer and Andrew Mackrill</td>
<td>Miriam Palmer and Andrew Mackrill</td>
<td>Woodstock Town Hall</td>
<td>Actors: Eleanor Grammer; Owen Pegram; Venetia Agulha; Rhoda Samuels; Albert Thomas; John Thomas; Kathleen Blakeley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 12, 1951</td>
<td><em>A Family Man</em> by John Glasworthy</td>
<td>Miriam Palmer</td>
<td>Woodstock Town Hall</td>
<td>Cast: Andrew Mackrill; Kathleen Blakeley; Abe Poole; Michael Isaacs; Edward Petersen; Eleanor Grammer; Gwen Dreyer; Mervyn Wilcox; Rhoda Samuels; Chris Williams; Abe Plaatjies; Morice Johns; James Poggenpoel; Owen Pegram; Miriam Palmer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. PDS Repertoire and Production Details
Table 1 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Production</th>
<th>Director/Producer</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 21, 1952</td>
<td><strong>Street Scene</strong> by Elmer Rice</td>
<td>Carter Ebrahim</td>
<td>Woodstock Town Hall</td>
<td>Cast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mike Isaacs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ayesha Ahmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Eleanor Jacobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mary Petersen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Eleanor Grammer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stanley Jones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>David Hendricks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Albert Daniels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Morice Johns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mavis Fahrenfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Albert Thomas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rhoda Samuels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Owen Pegram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Asa Galant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rita Oliver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>John Thomas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Naomi Pegram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Eddie Petersen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Olga Rushin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Abe Poole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>John Verhoog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Abe Platjies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chris Williams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>John Hufky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Clifford Ronnie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Maxie Le Fleur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Alice Jacobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mary McGregor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Blossom Pegram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Samuel Rooza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Robert Southgate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Roderick Roman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mervyn Wilcox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Joseph Swain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>James Dyers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Una Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lorraine Roberts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>James Poggenpoel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>John Hufky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Roderick Roman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gwenneth Jacobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Antony George</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Douglas McGregor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lorraine McGregor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>McGregor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Clerence Charles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Leoni Le Fleur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ruth Le Fleur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Laura Le Fleur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Joan Le Fleur</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Production</th>
<th>Director/Producer</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 27, 1953</td>
<td><em>Arms and the Man</em> by Bernard Shaw</td>
<td>Carter Ebrahim</td>
<td>Woodstock Town Hall</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 24, 1954</td>
<td>Three One-Act Plays</td>
<td></td>
<td>Woodstock Town Hall</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Pot Boiler by A. Gerstenberg</td>
<td>The Pot Boiler produced by Albert Thomas</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Earth is Ours by E. St. Vincent Millay</td>
<td>The Earth is Ours Produced by Owen Pegram</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ARIA DA CAPO by Ivan Agherdine</td>
<td>ARIA DA CAPO produced by Ivan Agherdine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Production</th>
<th>Director/Producer</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 2, 1955</td>
<td><strong>The Lower Depths</strong> by Maxim Gorky</td>
<td>Albert Thomas</td>
<td>Woodstock Town Hall</td>
<td>Cast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Raymond Leitch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Edith Sangers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Denis Hendricks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Olga Rushin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ray Ramsdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jasper Walters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Owen Pegram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>John Martin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ronald Marshall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kenneth Thomas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Naomi Pegram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ronald Bartnick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Alma Rich-Moore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Douglas Stoffberg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stanley Corneilse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fred Belelie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 26, 1961</td>
<td><strong>The Maids</strong> by Jean Genet</td>
<td>Eleanor Grammer</td>
<td>Eleanor Grammer</td>
<td>From Scrap book:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>The Exception and Rule</strong> by Bertolt Brecht</td>
<td>and Albert Thomas</td>
<td>and Albert Thomas</td>
<td>The Cape Argus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>July 26, 1961.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Theatre Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>presents meaty and thoughtful plays in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Claremont</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued
Table 1 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Production</th>
<th>Director/Producer</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| August 10–13, 1964 | *Henry V* by William Shakespeare | Carter Ebrahim | Claremont Civic Centre | Note: PDS changed name to The Guild Players.  
Cast  
Owen Pegram  
Richard Manuel  
William van Graan  
Reginald Norris  
Vernon Jansen  
Julian David  
Archie Paulse  
Owen Pegram  
Abe Jacobs  
Edward Classens  
Victor Benjamin  
Eleanor Jacobs  
Eldred Jacobs  
Victor Bogaard  
George Damon  
Edward La Guma  
Gerald Tertiens  
Leon Snyders  
Robert Green  
Leonard Smith  
Denis Hendricks  
David Pratt  
Gerald Tertiens  
Zizi Dollie  
Doreen David  
Robert Green  
Brian Holt  
Peter Williams  
Andrew Schenck  
Robert Jacobs  
Aubrey Foster  
Robert Green  
William van Green  
Owen Pegram  
Elise Barlow  
Allan Overmeyer  
Richard Jacobs  
Osman Khatib  
Thomas Davids  
Alfred Jacobs  
Michael Kiewietz  
Christopher Sampson |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Production</th>
<th>Director/Producer</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Date Given</td>
<td>Macbeth by William Shakespeare</td>
<td>Port Elizabeth</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Note: Only four names were mentioned in the scrap book, but more participated. Actors: William Curry, Richard Rive, Sylvia Titus, Leonard Dixon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Production</th>
<th>Director/Producer</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 28, (no year given)</td>
<td>Round Heads</td>
<td>(none given)</td>
<td>(none given)</td>
<td>Note: PDS had a name change to The Theatre Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peaked Heads by Berlolt Brecht</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Norman Abrahams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Albert Thomas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Archie Jacobus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dennis E. Hendricks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ivan Williams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hildegarde Daniels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Julia Coelzee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jasper Walters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cosmo Pieterse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sybil Sampson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Karl Pekeur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kamaal Kariem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dennis Pritchard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fred Pieterse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Audrey Sholtz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bill Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Frank Collison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>John Thomas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hilmar Pilcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ebrahim Parker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Douglas Stoffberg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ali Mohamed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Howard Powell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Colin Ryan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Miriam Masoet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ebrahim Parker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shirley Jansen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ronald April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Christie Geduldtd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Martin Wyngaard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Colin Ryan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>June Muller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fred Pieterse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Owen Pegram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Norman Abrahams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Miriam Masoet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Christie Geduldtd</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued
Table 1 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Production</th>
<th>Director/Producer</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 30, (no year given)</td>
<td>Deep are The Roots by Arnaud D’usseau and James Gow</td>
<td>Eleanor Grammer</td>
<td>Stellenbosch Town Hall</td>
<td>Presented by: The Stellenbosch T.L.S.A. Branch and the Peninsula Dramatic Society Cast Naomi Pegram Olga Rushin Albert Thomas Venesia Agulhas Kathleen Blakeley Leonard Green Mike Isaacs Owen Pegram Frank Young Ernest Coetzee Basil Smee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 5:
CONCLUSION: IMPACT AND LEGACY

Time passes and vast amounts of South African history are on the verge of being lost. This is particularly true for the coloured theatre movement, a segment most theatre historians have overlooked. Are these oversights reminiscent of a cultural mind-set that once dismissed the intellect and talents of South Africans of non-European descent?

It is tempting to consider this the residue of a system that expired less than two decades ago. This was so recent, that researchers must grapple with its aftermath. Clearly, the power of apartheid, a system that separated people by race, not only physically but socially and psychologically lingers. In this study, at the very least, it still provoked hesitancy among some of those who were ask to recall the past.

This research revealed the complexity of apartheid was far deeper then the author had imagined. The many ways in which individuals, family and communities were effected is fascinating. For example, when initially introduced, apartheid laws threatened to block black and coloured access to all facets of arts and entertainment. Segregation was mandated by law, raising numerous fundamental questions. What venues could be open to audiences of color, coloured or black? Where would people of color be trained to perform are allowed to perform?
Segregated to the homeland territories, talented coloured individuals dared to pursue their art within those microcosms. Venues were established, audiences attended and a forgotten cultural scene emerged. Groups like the Trafalgar Players and the Peninsula Dramatic Society seized this moment to address sociopolitical goals by challenging state propaganda and laws. Not all groups fell in that vein. The EOAN group, for example, afforded coloured performers an array of performance and entertainment options while carrying far less political baggage. Their primary goals were providing coloured artists avenues to express their talents and coloured audiences a menu to choose from.

The EOAN group’s diverse artistic repertoire included drama, contemporary and classical dance. In fact, the clipping bearing Hatfield’s review of *The Blacks* also contains a portion of another article suggesting the EOAN group performed the opera *La Traviata* at another venue the same evening. Because they lacked a political agenda, members of the EAON did not face the scrutiny and risks experienced by PDS members; however, they were not immune to the limitations of apartheid. Gloria Fahrenfort, for example was denied entry into UCT’s dance program because she check the “coloured” box on the application. Able to pass for “white”, she was told if she had left the box blank. When asked why she chose not to do so, she said that would have legally separated her from her family.

To the modern sensibility, especially that of a Western bent, the pain and indignities associated with apartheid is unfathomable. Exile especially, whether government or self imposed, is indescribable and unspeakable. Understandably,
distance in time and proximity will mute the horrors of being separated from family and the soil on which one was born. Tales will become foot notes in time.

Yet, the apartheid era remains one of the most unique periods of world history, one that has had profound and long-reaching effects on generations of South Africans and their families that loved them. For that reason, every effort should be made to document the many details of its rise, effects and demise. To be sure, there have been numerous oral history projects examining apartheid and its impact. Institutions such as Cape Town University’s Oral History Project or the District Six Museum’s efforts to gather information about life and the residents within the area before it was destroyed cannot be minimized. Unfortunately, outreach to the Diaspora has been difficult and in many ways deficient. Consequently, historic accounts too often are relegated to European interpretations of how an oppressed people endured, resisted or escaped apartheid, thus perpetuating further injustice to the people who are sometimes labeled “betwixt or between”.

This study, conducted by the daughter of a “coloured” ex-patriot, reached into that realm, crossing continents and oceans to revive for research purposes the passions that drove the formation and works of groups such as the Peninsula Dramatic Society and the Trafalgar Players. The research began with many exercises in bridging the cultural divides that separate generations in a family and people according to old apartheid labels and categories. It began based on family lore and cautionary tales about what could and could not be shared. As it progressed, a wealth of documentation and irreplaceable
artifacts began to surface and the pieces of a fractured and far away world began to reveal themselves and merge.

In an unimaginable way, the family legends took a new shape and certainly a much deeper meaning when examined against the backdrop of the complex laws and manifestations of apartheid. Stories that had been told as an amusing anecdotes became somber reminders of the dehumanizing impact of racial hatred, class separatism and state oppression. The banal, rather vague notions of the risks, associated with challenging apartheid, became stunningly clear and yet surreal at the same time.

In addition, banishment or exile was no longer just a matter of moving from one’s old home to a better home; it was an excruciating experience of separating from what one had always known, to be cast in the world handicapped with the life lesson that you are “the other” or lesser in every way. Intellectually, you know it is not so, but faced with the challenge of fitting into a new society, where language and customs are so different, how is it possible to ever truly belong? How can one ever be certain one is not being accepted because of some real or imagined difference in race, color or caste? When one has being raised being told that one’s color was all that mattered, how could one ever live like it never matters after all.

Despite the lingering doubts and natural insecurities that still plague some of the respondents, this study demonstrated that as artists PDS and TP far exceeded the expectations of the government intent upon restricting their intellectual growth. Some passionately argued the principal of universal brotherhood as an ideal; others routinely broached state etiquette inviting people of every tone and hue to write, perform and
witness socially relevant theatre. Whatever the method, these troupes enriched the cultural landscape of Cape Town, while erasing the imaginary black white line in the sand. They overcame the barriers imposed on their education and professional growth and the efforts to control their moral compass. Not only did they demonstrate the intellect, ambition and sheer ability to master classical theatre, they possessed the talent to infuse ordinary theatre with the revolutionary spirit and the bravery to attempt the cutting edge theatre of a modern age.

They did so at immense risk to themselves and their families. Could it be that one could be imprisoned for suggesting people from different cultural backgrounds or sporting various skin hues could actually live and work side by side? The participants in this study confirmed that was the case and though amusing anecdotes regarding fooling the authorities and skirting the law were common, respondents made it plain that imprisonment was no casual affair. It included all the restrictions and facets of torture and abuse that we would today associate with a third world regime.
But the world is forgetting this. The surreal nature of apartheid, the integrity PDS and the TP fought for have become distance drums in a bygone era. The atrocities of it all are being “normalized”, diminished and strangely, obscured by vestiges of the old world. Future research would do well to examine the lineage, impact and contemporary manifestations of derogatory race theatre. How have these traditions not only survived, but why have they evolved and thrived? For many of them, past oppressions have retreated into the dark corner of seldom-uttered memories. This study crystallized the significance of those and other experiences that had become family legend over the years.
NOTES


9 Bunting 87.

10 Bunting 104.

11 Allen 156.

12 Dugard 85.

13 Dugard 61.

14 Allen 391.

16 Mermelstein 196.


18 Haywood 206.

19 Omer-Cooper 176.


22 Haywood 386.

23 February 4.

24 February 4.

25 Omer-Cooper 22.

26 February 10.


28 Elphick 83.

29 Elphick 362.

30 Mermelstein 40.


32 Ross 45.

33 Ross 30.

35 Elphick 119.

36 Elphick 119.

37 Elphick 119.

38 Omer-Cooper 22.

39 Elphick 384.

40 Haywood 22.

41 Ross 35.


43 McCormick 134.


46 Wa Thion’o 3.

47 February 8.

48 Omer-Cooper 147.

49 February 10.

50 February 10.

51 February 14.

53 Weider 65.

54 Sean Field, Renate Meyer, and Felicity Swanson Imagining the City: Memories and Cultures in Cape Town (Cape Town: HRSC Press 2007).

55 McCormick 37–38.

56 McCormick 41.


60 Roubaix 15.

61 Mermelstein 190.

62 Roubaix 43.

63 Roubaix 19.

64 Roubaix 42.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A:

IRB PROCESS MATERIALS

Recruiting Scripts

Consent for Participation in Research Verbal Script

Questionnaire
Recruiting Scripts:

Phone Script #1: This script is first contact allowing the potential participant to think about the project and give a considered answer. It also allows for the potential participant to say no on the spot, and no further contact for the dissertation project will occur.

Phone script #1:

Hello my name is Melanie House, and I am calling to find out about the Peninsula Dramatic Society and / or the Trafalgar Players. I am currently working on my dissertation for my PhD, and I was wondering if you had the time to schedule an appointment for me to call you back, if you wish, to discuss the project, and perhaps see if you would like to participate in an Oral History portion of my project on the Theatre companies intended for my dissertation. The Oral History is a gathering of stories you would like to share, if you feel like it, about the times in which the Theatre Companies were active in South Africa. I would greatly appreciate any information you wish to share. Is there a time I could call back?... I want you to have time to think about potentially participating in the project. I want you to know that you can say yes or no at any time. So in order to give you adequate time to think about it, I am asking your permission to make another appointment to call back and talk about the project with you….Thank you so much for your time I will give you a call on __________ at __________ time. Bye…

E-mail / Fax / Mail Script #1:

Hello my name is Melanie House and I am writing to you to find out about the
Peninsula Dramatic Society and / or the Trafalgar Players. I am currently working on my dissertation for my PhD, and I was wondering if you had the time to schedule an appointment for me to call or write you back, if you wish, to discuss the project and perhaps see if you would like to participate in an Oral History portion of my project on the theatre companies intended for my dissertation. The Oral History is a gathering of stories you would like to share, if you feel like it, about the times in which the Theatre Companies were active in South Africa. I would greatly appreciate any information you wish to share. If you would like me to call, or if you would like to just write back and forth, we can do that also. I have included my return information…. (In the case of a letter the sentence will read: I have also included an addressed and stamped envelope as well as my contact information)…, so you can contact me by whichever means you feel comfortable with. I want you to know that you can say yes or no at any time. I hope to hear from you with your response at which time I will use the method of communication you feel most comfortable, and a time of day that you can be reached if you wish for me to call. Thank you so much for your time.

*Phone script #2:*

Hello this is Melanie House, thank you for allowing me to call back. I was wondering what your decision is…

If No:

Thank you for your time, it was a pleasure speaking with you…bye
If Yes:

Thank you for saying yes…I want to tell you that at any time you have the right to say no to anything to do with this project…I just want to reiterate that at the start…There are a couple of things I’d like to set up with you today with your permission, of course… I tend to think better with outlines so here goes…and if you have any questions please feel free to ask them at any time…

We will need to set up a time a to meet or a phone appointment to talk and do the oral history portion of the project.

Based on the appointment time, I will send you an informed consent form and list of questions to look over. So that you have adequate time to think about any questions you may have and your answers.

The questionnaire I will send you is a list of questions for the session. I would like you to look over them so you can know what they are ahead of time. You may decline any question in the session.

The form I will send you will be an informed consent form which will give me permission to sit down with you and record our conversation via a recording device with the intention of using the information for my dissertation work. Please take a look over it and check the appropriate boxes. If there are any questions, we can always go over them at any time.

I would like you to know that any information given to me will be kept secure and you are more then welcome to have a copy of anything we talk about. This information will be kept for the duration of my dissertation work unless you allow me to keep it for
longer than that time period. You can make the decision when you fill out the release form.

If you feel you would still like to participate let’s set the next appointment up, I’ll send you all the information and we can move things along.

Thank you so much for your help. I greatly appreciate it, and I’ll be looking forward to seeing or talking with you on _______ (date) at ___________ (time). I will give you a re-confirmation call the day before to make sure the time remains convenient.

Thank you again and good bye…

E-mail / Fax / Mail Script #2:

If the written answer is no, there will be no more further contact.

If yes, but no correspondence preference has been given in the subsequent e-mail / fax/ or letter the letter will read:

Thank you so much for contacting me again and saying yes to the project. There are several ways to go about this: I can either phone you, come visit you, or we can correspond. To accommodate a choice of correspondence via Fax/ e-mail / or letter, I will send you with this mailing a list of questions for you to consider and send back your answers to me. I will also include an informed consent form which will give me permission to use your written words for the purposes of my dissertation. Any, written correspondence will be kept secure, for the duration of my dissertation process. After the dissertation is completed, I will send the originals back to you or do with them as you specify in your letter. If you wish me to keep the information past my dissertation period,
there is a space to indicate that on the informed consent form I will provide you. Thank you so very much for all of your time.

If yes, and correspondence is the preferred method:

Thank you so much for contacting me again and saying yes to the project. To accommodate your choice of correspondence via Fax/ e-mail / or letter, I will send you with this mailing a list of questions for you to consider and send your answers back to me. I will also include an informed consent form which will give me permission to use your written words for the purposes of my dissertation. I want you to know that you are in charge and have the right to have information excluded. Any information you write that you would like to be excluded you have the right to indicate that in the written correspondence and I will hold to your wishes. Any, written correspondence will be kept under lock and key, for the duration of my dissertation process. After which time I will send the originals back to you or do with them as you specify in your letter. If you wish me to keep the information past my dissertation period there is a place to indicate that on the form I will send you. I wish to accommodate any choice you make. Thank you so much for your time.

If yes and a phone number is given:

I will send an e-mail / fax/ letter….

Thank you for allowing me to phone you I will do so shortly. I just wanted to write you a note to reconfirm your participation. I am sending you some information about my project, a list of questions, and a form that will allow me to use any information you give me for the purposes of my dissertation. Thank you again and I will call at the
time of day you specified. *(If there was no specification I will state the time of day in the written correspondence)*

Then I will call…and use the phone script #2:

**Consent for Participation in Research Verbal Script**

As we have discussed I am doing research on the Peninsula Dramatic Society and the Trafalgar Players. The purpose of this research is to establish a record of the existence and the contributions of the theatre companies. In order to give me verbal consent you can simply say yes or no to a few questions and I will hold to your wishes. I would like to remind you that you can refuse to participate in the study or in any part of it at any time, it’s your choice. It might be easier if I do this in list form so:

Do you consent to be interviewed as part of my (Melanie House’s) research for my PhD Dissertation, entitled: “Their Place on The Stage: The Peninsula Dramatic Society and the Trafalgar Players”, conducted under the supervision of Ohio state University faculty member Dr. Leslie Ferris.

*(If the answer is yes then I will continue if no I will say: Thank you for your time. It was a pleasure talking with you…bye…)*

As a part if the interview process I will also need your consent for a few more things. Would it be ok with you… if I could:

- audio tape our interviews
- do follow up correspondence
- use the information for conference presentations, publications, or other
scholarly activities

• archive the interview along with copies of materials you may give me in the Lawrence & Lee Theatre Research Institute at the Ohio State University.
• make copies of materials lent to me, and, if it is ok for me to use these materials
• in future conference presentations, publications, and other scholarly activities related to the current research

…Or…

• do you only want to participate in the research for the purposes of the current Doctoral PhD project

So now I need to ask you how you would like to be identified. Under what name would you like me to record your interview under and use in my research, it can be your family name, a nickname it’s up to you

…Or…

would you like to remain anonymous

Thank you for your responses. I would like to tell you that if you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the study you can contact Dr. Ferris (614) 292 – 5821. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study related concerns or complaints you can call Ms. Sandra Meadows in the office of Responsible Research Practices: U.S.A number 1-800-678-6251 outside the U.S.A (614) 688 – 4792. I will provide you with a contact card with the names and numbers as well.
Questions

1. Which group was you connected with? The Peninsula Dramatic Society or the Trafalgar Players?
2. How and why did you become involved with the Group?
3. Can you share with me any of the history of the Group?
4. How did the political climate if the times play into the decision to be a part of the group?
5. What motivated the founders? Did this reflect on the constitution that was formulated?
6. Which laws were strong driving forces for definition at that time?
7. If the laws were designed to put people into categories specifically defined by the government in which way were these government groupings fought against?
8. Did the government define who you were?
9. How did the Theater Company fight against definition?
10. How were plays selected?
11. Did you see a purpose in the play selection beyond entertainment?
12. Can you speak about specific productions?
13. What were the most creative venues for the performance?
14. Were performance venues restricted? What solutions were found?
15. What limits on casting were presented apart from casting and the directors normal decisions?
16. Were there limitations on the audience?

17. Were there any incidents with the authorities?

18. When you reflect on the impact the group what stands out?

19. Are there specific people or events to be noted?

20. What place should the Theater group you were affiliated have in the history of South African Theatre?

21. How should the Theater Company be remembered?

22. Did you consider yourself politically motivated?

23. Did you consider yourself apart of Resistance Theater?

24. What do you remember?

25. How was travel arranged? Are there any stories about taking the company outside of Cape Town?

26. Do you have any copies of photos, scripts, playbills, or any other artifacts that you would like to share?

27. If you were not involved with any of the Theatre groups, but are acquainted with activities of such groups within the community, can you tell me about their significance?

28. Do you feel that the political times of Apartheid South Africa was impacted by such theatrical groups?

29. Do you feel that community theatrical groups had any impact on the situation in South Africa during the times? How did they impact?

30. Is there anything that you feel I should be aware of that may help me and other
understand the times and the impact that theatrical groups may have had?

31. What were the times like?

32. Do you feel that there are communities that have had their story ignored?

33. Is there anything you would like to add, including suggestions on questions?
APPENDIX B:

PENINSULA DRAMATIC SOCIETY

1951-1964
Figure 14. PDS Constitution (Owen Pegram Archive)
Figure 15. PDS Ticket/Playbill, cover (Owen Pegram Archive)

Figure 16. PDS Ticket/Playbill, inside spread (Owen Pegram Archive)
Figure 17. The Lower Depths Ticket/Playbill, cover (Owen Pegram Archive)
NOTE ON THE AUTHOR AND PLAY

Maxim ("the bitter") Gorky (1868-1936) lived through the stormiest period of Russia's history—from Czarist Russia to Soviet Russia. His trappings through Russia gave him an insight of life at the lowest.

All of Gorky's works are a protest—a protest against the society in which he found himself—"I have come into this world to disagree." But his protest is equal to the intelligentsia, those who understood the situation yet did nothing but concern themselves with personal satisfaction—the "snug citizens" as he called them in another play. Although he was in conflict with Lenin's violent theories, he finally assimilated his ideas.

"The Lower Depths" was written in 1902. It is set in a Volga Town at the turn of the century. The characters inhabiting this lodging-house represent the type known in Russia as "boyal"—literally "a burro." They formed a motley, shiftless, criminal fringe of Russian society. These outcasts are the lowest of the low—the thieves, prostitutes and murderers. And it is through Sain, the heroic and unwinking realist, who flags out Gorky's passionate convictions:

"What's truth? Man, that's the truth... Certainly he lied, but it was out of pity for you, the devil take you! There are no people who lie out of pity for others—I know it—I've read about it. They lie beautifully, excitingly, with a kind of inspiration. There are lies that soothe, that confuse one to his lot. There are lies that satisfy the load that crushed a worker's arm—and hold a man to blame for dying of starvation—I know. I've seen people walk in spirit, and those living on the sweat of others—the weak find support in them, the exploiters use them as a screen. But a man who is his own master, who is independent and doesn't cower on others—he can get along without lies. Lies are the religion of slaves and bosses. Truth is the god of the free man."

Characters in Order of Appearance

THE BARON, Raymond Leech
KVASHNYA (a drooping and tire peddler), Edith Sangers
ANDREI DMITRICH KLESTOV (a watchman), Denis Hendricks
NASTYA (a prostitute), Olga Rubini
ANNA (Klestov's wife), Ray Hardcastle
IBENGOV (a sawyer), Jasper Walters
BAPAN (a tramp), Owen Pegram
THE ACTOR (a tramp), John Martin
MIKHAIL KOSTYLOV (the lodging-house keeper), Ronald Marshall
VASSILY (VASSYIA) PEPPLE (a thief), Kenneth Thomas
NATASHA (Vassilissa's mother), Naomi Pegram
LUKA (a pilgrim), Ivan Acherine
ALYOSHA (a cobbler), Ronald Bartlett
VASSILISSA KARPOVNA KOSTYLOV (Kostylov's wife), Alma Rich-McClellan
ABRAM IVANYCH MEDVEDEV (a policeman, Vassilisa's and Natasha's uncle), Douglas Stofffard
ASSAN (the Tatar, a stevedore), Stanley Cornelle
GOITER (also a stevedore), Fred Belisle

STAFF
Set constructed by—David Hendricks, Carl Daniels
Scene Artists—Reginald Maurice, Gowan Skirke
Property Master and Prompter—Gladys Adams
Stage Manager—Mike Isaac

SCENES

ACT I
The basement of a lodging-house. Morning—early Spring.

ACT II
The same. Evening.
Interval

ACT III
A vacant plot outside the lodging-house.
Interval

ACT IV
The same as Act I and II. It is right about three weeks later.
Figure 19. Street Scene Ticket/Playbill, cover (Owen Pegram Archive)
STREET SCENE
by
ELMER RICE

This is an age of propaganda. It is an age of hysterical competition for the minds of men and women. The propaganda seeps from the pages of the daily press, from lurid magazines and books, it blares forth from the radio and reverberates its loud vulgar way across the silver screen and the TV set in the garish trappings of a colourful, showy and hypnotic dreamworld, to drug the senses of its audience. In a world where their minds are assailed with impressions of distorted experiences, men and women groping around for security, for understanding to protect their sanity — or they sink beneath the flood of vicious fancy and merge with the milling mass, preserved from the shock of reality by the dream factories of the world — of America too, the land of plenty, freedom and tolerance.

Elmer Rice in his “Street Scene”, wrenches us away from that dreamworld of the “American Century”. He flings open the social barricade on life in an ordinary American town — and the smell is not pleasant. There, mingling in the sweat of this playwright’s art, are the miserable creatures, the helpless puppets in a world of make-believe — pitifully similar to the ones we know — ourselves perhaps? They have the same old fears, hopes and prejudices, and the same tragedies.

*

ACT I
Scene: The exterior of a “walk-up” apartment in a mean quarter of New York.
Time: Night.

ACT II
Scene: Same.
Time: Early morning of the next day.

ACT III
Scene: Same.
Time: Afternoon.

CHARACTERS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

Abraham Kaplan .......................................... Mike Isaac
Greta Fiorantino .......................................... Ayuba Ahmed
Emma Jones ............................................. Eleanor Jacobs
Dmitri Olsen ............................................. Mary Petersen
Mrs. Maurrant ........................................... Eleanor Grimmer
Mr. Buchanan ............................................ Stanley Jones
Mr. Maurrant ............................................ David Hendricks
Mr. Jones .................................................. Albert Daniels
Steve Sankey ............................................. Morice Johns
Agnes Cushing ........................................... Davis Fahrenfort
Carl Olsen ................................................... Albert Thomas
Shirley Kaplan ........................................... Rhoda Samuels
Lippy Florentino .......................................... Owen Pegram
Alice Simpson ........................................... Ada Galant
Laura Hildebrand ....................................... Rita Oliver
Samuel Kapla ............................................. John Thomas
Rose Maurrant ........................................... Naomi Pegram
Harry Easter ............................................ Eddie Petersen
Mae Jones ................................................... Olga Rushin
Dick McGann ............................................ Abe Poole
Vincent Jones ............................................ John Verhoog
Dr. Wilson ................................................... Abe Plooyes
Officer Harry Murphy .................................. Chris Williams
A Milkman .................................................. John Hukey
A Letter Carrier ......................................... Clifford Ronnie
An Ice-man ............................................... Maxie Le Fleur
1st College Girl ......................................... Alice Jacobus
2nd College Girl ......................................... Mary McGregor
Girl Music Student ....................................... Blossom Pegram
Hanball James Henry .................................. Samuel Rosza
Fred Callen ............................................... Robert Southgate
Old Clothes Man ........................................ Roderick Roman
A Hospital Intern ....................................... Mervyn Wilcox
An Ambulance Driver .................................. Joseph Swain
A Furniture Remover ................................... James Dyers
1st Nursemaid ........................................... Una Smith
2nd Nursemaid .......................................... Lorraine Roberts
2nd Policeman .......................................... James Peggenpol
3rd Policeman ........................................... John Hukey
Apartment Huter (Husband) .......................... Roderick Roman
Apartment Hunter (Wife) .............................. Clarence Jacobus
Willie Maurrant .......................................... Antony George
Charlie Hildebrand ..................................... Douglas McGregor
Mary Hildebrand ........................................ Lorraine McGregor
The Grocery Boy ......................................... Clarence Charles
Passers-by ................................................. Abe Poole, Leoni Le Fleur, Rost La Fleur, Laura La Fleur, Jean Le Fleur, Ada Galant, Blossom Pegram

Figure 20. Street Scene Ticket/Playbill, inside spread (Owen Pegram Archive)
SHAKESPEARE
QUATERCENTENARY

"Henry V"

CIVIC CENTRE, CLAREMONT

10th – 13th August, 1964

Produced by
CARTER Ebrahim
GUILD PLAYERS

Figure 21. Henry V. Ticket/Playbill, cover (Owen Pegram Archive)
Figure 22. Henry V. Ticket/Playbill, cast (Owen Pegram Archive)
PRODUCTION STAFF

Director: CARTER EBRABIM
Set Designer: CARTER EBRABIM

Set Constructors:
JEFFREY WILLEMSE and EDGAR RULE

Scenic Painters:
THEO RADEMEYER and CARTER EBRABIM

Costume Designer: THEO RADEMEYER
Stage Manager: EDGAR RULE

Lighting:
ABE POOLE

Costume Seamstresses:
LOUISE HARRIS, OLGA THEBUS, VIVIENNE HENDRICKSE and Y.W.A. MEMBERS

Prompt: SHIRLEY JANSEN
Sound Director: SHIRLEY JANSEN

Make-up: JEAN WILLIAMS
Property Manager: ERNEST HENDRICKSE

Wardrobe Mistress:
VIRGINIA CITZER

Inside of House Manager: SYDNEY JOHNSON
Front of House Manager: CARL CITZER

Catering Supervisor:
VIVIENNE HENDRICKSE

Catering Staff:
MEMBERS OF Y.W.A. (Ottery Road)

Business Manager:
A. J. DOMINGO

Figure 23. Henry V. Ticket/Playbill, production staff (Owen Pegram Archive)
P.D.S. MAKES ITS DEBUT

For two nights in succession (30th and 31st July) the Woodstock Town Hall was packed when the Peninsula Dramatic Society gave its first performance—four one-act plays produced by Miriam Palmer and Andrew Mackrell. The plays were well chosen, and varied sufficiently in character, from farcical comedy to serious tragedy, to give plenty of scope for dramatic talent in production as well as in acting.

"Suppressed Desires" (Susan Glaspell) is a satiric comedy in which the author excites mirth and laughter by holding up to ridicule the quackery to which psychoanalysis has fallen victim. "Escape" is an original composition of this Society, one of those "home-made" in which the Peninsula Non-White playwrights always look not only for dramatic talent but also for any message, direct or indirect, that the play has to offer to the oppressed. Obviously the effort of novices, this play is at the beginning dull both in dialogue and in action. Consequently the opening scene fails to strike the keynote sufficiently to win the sympathy of the audience for the widowed mother of a young working medical student whose family has to work in a hotel in order to pay his way at the University. But the dialogue lives up to the surgery. By this time the sometime factory-worker has become such a successful medical practitioner that he no longer casts a shadow on the ladder which he has climbed lest his eye should fall upon the misery and groveling poverty of the working-class from whom "joins" he came. But his sometime girlfriend holds up the mirror to his face and when the curtains fall he is just beginning to see himself as he is—an escapee no less damnable and despicable than his "play-white" brother who was not only despised by his own people but also rejected by his white "friends" and finally had to go to jail for theft and forgery. The message of this play was brought out very forcefully in the scene at the surgery.

"The Valiant" (Hall and Middleton) is a tragedy of tremendous scope. All the action takes place in the pensioner's dressing room off the quiet of the door leading to the cell where the hero has been sentenced to hang. The play starts quietly, but tension is maintained as it moves rapidly to a climax that left an indelible impression on those who saw this excellently produced drama.

"There is No Glory" is also serious but rather melodramatic. Nevertheless it brings out its timely message that "There is no glory in war".

On the whole all the actors acquitted themselves well, especially on the second night, and there can be no doubt that the playwrights left with the feeling that this venture certainly has possibilities. The leading players in all four plays showed great promise. Eleanor Oramo gave an entertaining performance as a slightly cranky society woman in "Suppressed Desires" and revealed her versatility in the far more serious "There is No Glory" in the role of a peasant wife and mother. Veneta Aguilas delighted the audience as Mabel in "Suppressed Desires" and as Madame in "There is No Glory". Rhoda Samuels has a pleasant voice and her articulation is good, but she is more convincing as the doctor in "Escape", acted the part of Father Daly in "The Valiant" with restraint and dignity. Albert Thomas managed the difficult climax of "There is No Glory" very creditably. John Thomas was most convincing in the role of the vainglorious, bullying Jonathan in the same play. But most people will agree that the finest combination of the whole performance was Kathleen Blakeley and John Thomas in "The Valiant". Kathleen Blakeley has a naturalness of manner and speech that give promise of an actress of the first order. She and John Thomas made a masterly interpretation of Josephine Parks and James Dyke respectively, especially towards the end of the scene when the condemned man has to exercise almost superhuman self-control not to break down and reveal his identity to his sister.

Congratulations to the producers and actors, who are going to strain every nerve to improve their next performance!
Figure 25. *Deep are the Roots* full cast call (Owen Pegram Archive)
Figure 26. Deep are the Roots Act I (Owen Pegram Archive)
APPENDIX C:

OWEN PEGRAM

After getting BA, Owen Pegram started teaching at a school in Simons Town, which was a naval port. He ran into trouble for wanting to start a theatre group, and, according to A.B. Pegram, he was dismissed for teaching the children things beyond which they could obtain due to the Jobs Reservation Act (he taught Shakespeare and Brecht to students).

After this, he attempted to get a passport to leave south Africa and was denied. Finally, after months, his father helped get him out of South Africa. (A.B. Pegram had left in the early 1960s.) He first taught officially outside of London in the East Area,

Before attending to Cambridge University, Owen Pegram did children theatre with underprivileged children. He had them do Shakespeare adaptations of Julius Cesar and Romeo and Juliet where the children did it in iambic pentameter.

He became a professor at Cambridge and worked with the BBC radio (Bush House: Radio programs from the BBC that were broadcast in Africa). He would get scripts on Friday and do productions on Saturday.

After leaving the county, he was not allowed to return and was essentially banned defacto.
Figure 27. Owen Pegram in Cambridge professorial robes (Owen Pegram Archive)
Interview With Owen Pegram

Interviewer: Which groups were you connected with? The Peninsula Dramatic Society or the Trafalgar Players?

Owen Pegram: The Peninsula Dramatic Society, PDS

Interviewer: How and why did you become involved with the Group?

Owen Pegram: There were a number of reasons. The one that would be at the forefront simply is...for the love of theatre, man. The love of the work...Teaching was one thing, doing and being another.

Interviewer: Can you share with me any of the history of the Group?

Owen Pegram: Where to start? PDS was started by teachers with some students to do more...It was a necessity to do the craft beyond what we were told. In fact, I was once reprimanded for teaching Shakespeare to my students since I was teaching them to a level beyond their means...you know...beyond what they could achieve as a black or a coloured person.

Interviewer: How did the political climate if the times play into the decision to be a part of the group?

Owen Pegram: Breathing was political if done in the right place and the right time. Being was political, learning, getting up in the morning according to some. We decided to allow our company to be a part of what the desire of the day as...entertainment wise...and just starting upon endeavors where we could use our skills made the decision very easy. For some it was the thing to do with the tools one had. Others wanted to separate themselves from other groups that did theatre.

133
Interviewer: Are you referring to the EOAN Group?

Owen Pegram: There were a few groups that may have had funding from other sources that were connected to the government, to be diplomatic.

Interviewer: What motivated the founders? Did this reflect on the constitution that was formulated?

Owen Pegram: At the heart of our mission there was the basic tenet of making sure that all South Africans no matter what classified color they were had their dignity upheld.

Interviewer: Which laws were strong driving forces for definition at that time?

Owen Pegram: All of them. Any law that defined who you were was an offense to the sensibilities.

Interviewer: If the laws were designed to put people into categories specifically defined by the government in which way were these government groupings fought against?

Owen Pegram: The movements went far beyond what was talked about. Many things that happened are still coming to light. If you were not able to be a free South African with the universal rights given to any other person you had to struggle.

Interviewer: Did the government define who you were?

Owen Pegram: Only in the idea that we had to carry that damnable pass card. It shaped you we were all touched by the events there was no way you could not be. It is the way you grew in spite of what you were told you must be.

Interviewer: How did the Theatre Company fight against definition?

Owen Pegram: You can look at the charter we made. We were for the advancement of all
people in South African society.

Interviewer: How were plays selected?

Owen Pegram: They were all selected to convey a message. All had a point to make …

We were educated people or we were education ourselves when we were cut off from higher paths. We selected things with the idea that they would create talk...

Interviewer: Did you see a purpose in the play selection beyond entertainment?

Owen Pegram: Yes. Didactic reasons, political reasons, and enjoyment were enveloped together.

Interviewer: Can you speak about specific productions?

Owen Pegram: Let’s come back to that one there is a story involved. The Blacks was interesting the police lined up on stage to prevent the production. Blossom (your mum) can tell you about that one.

Interviewer: What were the most creative venues for the performance?

Owen Pegram: We used venues in creative ways. We had to change dates or times depending so that we could continue doing our productions.

Interviewer: Were performance venues restricted? What solutions were found?

Owen Pegram: Each ticket that was sold was a membership to the club for the night. The ticket was on the edge of program.

Interviewer: What limits on casting were presented apart from casting and the directors normal decisions?

Owen Pegram: The ability for people to travel and to be gathered together if something was deemed banned or done with people from different racial classifications.
Interviewer: Were there limitations on the audience?

Owen Pegram: Travel and the ability to gather in certain places. The Police had the right to take anyone. There was some safety in numbers but not as much as one would think.

Interviewer: Were there any incidents with the authorities?

Owen Pegram: The biggest one had to be with the play The Blacks. The police stormed the stage and lined up along it ready to arrest people.

Interviewer: When you reflect on the impact the group what stands out?

Owen Pegram: That we got away with a great deal. In that we were placing ourselves out in the public in a way that was being political and that was making a stand.

Interviewer: Are there specific people or events to be noted?

Owen Pegram: I will talk about that later.

Interviewer: What place should the Theatre group you were affiliated have in the history of South African Theatre?

Owen Pegram: The idea that we were should be taken note of. We were doing a vital contribution to theatrical life in the Cape. Many look at Johannesburg and other white writers that seem to have taken the honors. More needs to be discussed about all contributions made during that time. It is unfortunate that people still can not put their voice their contribution into the countries history without it being belittled.

Interviewer: How should the Theatre Company be remembered?

Owen Pegram: As a political voice that young people had in the times. We stood up for
Interviewer: Did you consider yourself politically motivated?

Owen Pegram: Yes. This is a silly question. Anything you do was politically motivated.

Interviewer: Did you consider yourself apart of Resistance Theatre?

Owen Pegram: We were about being South Africans. We were resisting we were a political. Many people did it for different reasons. To label it with a broad label would be counter to the intention of being able to self identify.

Interviewer: What do you remember?

No response

Interviewer: How was travel arranged? Are there any stories about taking the company outside of Cape Town?

Owen Pegram: Carefully at times, other times we just went when we could. Of course, we had to use coloured venues.

Interviewer: Do you have any copies of photos, scripts, playbills, or any other artifacts that you would like to share?

Owen Pegram: I lent you my scrap book which I do want back…young lady…

Interviewer: If you were not involved with any of the Theatre groups, but are acquainted with activities of such groups within the community, can you tell me about their significance?

No response

Interviewer: Do you feel that the political times of Apartheid South Africa was impacted by such theatrical groups?
Owen Pegram: Yes. All you have to do is look at other companies that claimed to be the singular voice. You see it brought people together. This is a powerful thing.

Interviewer: Do you feel that community theatrical groups had any impact on the situation in South Africa during the times? How did they impact?

Owen Pegram: Yes. They brought the community together and gave many people an outlet for their talent.

Interviewer: Is there anything that you feel I should be aware of that may help me and other understands the times and the impact that theatrical groups may have had?

Interviewer: What were the times like?

Interviewer: Do you feel that there are communities that have had their story ignored?

Interviewer: Is there anything you would like to add, including suggestions on questions?
Amelia started her working life as a teacher in Cape Town but in order to improve her qualifications she studied for a BA degree in English and History. For political reasons, Amelia left the country of her birth in 1963 to pursue further opportunities, which ultimately led to a change in career in London, England. There, Amelia was fortunate to be granted a place to study acting at the famed Guildhall School of Music and Drama; however, she never left teaching far behind and she juggled while juggling three careers – acting, modeling and teaching. She also found time to compose poetry which she performed with the jazz group “The Blue Notes” in London, Paris and Oslo. Her drama training resulted in several roles on stage, radio and television in the United Kingdom as well as theatre roles in the United States.

This multi-talented lady relocated to the United States in 1972 and here she continued teaching, studying and performing. She also continued to write poetry and her performances of these works included musical and/or dance accompaniment, thrilling audiences on both sides of the Atlantic. Her ever-expanding, and increasingly well-known performances have led to her being invited to present papers, join panel discussions and stage her dramatic works. Such has been her success that her writings have been translated into numerous languages including seven African languages, and even Arabic.

Not only has her poetry been widely published, but also her short stories, dramatic works, critical essays and reviews – many of these have been published in Africa, Europe, New Zealand, Canada and the United States. Her work has been recognized with several awards including the Kwanzaa Honors List, Woman of the Year, the Louisville Board of Alderman Literary Award, inauguration in the Pan African Writers Association and a research grant from the Kentucky Foundation for Women.

This grant was given in order for Amelia to further research and study women in South African slavery.

Whilst based in Kentucky, Amelia became closely involved in the African American Cultural Centre and actively raised funds on their behalf. Her first hand experience of the struggle and pain endured by many in South Africa has been transferred to addressing the issues of social inequity in North America. Amelia uses her considerable writing skills to...
raise awareness of these issues and educate people who may not be aware of the situation in their own countries.
Figure 28. Amelia Blossom Pegram headshot; London, England; late 1960s (Amelia Pegram Archive)
APPENDIX E:

CLAREMONT 1 AND WELLINGTON 1

Claremont 1 and Wellington 1 are a married couple. Both had experiences with the Trafalgar Players the Peninsula Dramatic Society and the EOAN group. They are originally from Claremont and Wellington suburbs outside of Cape Town, South Africa. Both Claremont 1 and Wellington 1 were teachers in South Africa during apartheid. In the 1960s they fled to escape government persecution.
Interview with “Wellington 1”, “Claremont 1” and Amelia Pegram

Claremont 1: The first thing that I mentioned before was the so-called colored people the teachers and the Intel and the intelligentsia or the people that like to call themselves the intelligentsia and never had an opportunity really see the theatre as the whites had all the theatres were run and owned by whites and all the theatres were strictly white it was much later that the theatres like the meat coma line and Ceylon came into being more audiences were mixed but prior to that we were allowed as university students to attend the dress rehearsals of the University Dramatic Society of the English department?

Wellington 1: well they had the little theatre actually had cake had actually had a theatre department on its own that wasn’t connected with the English department and so the little theatre they were training directors actors and doing full productions.

Claremont 1: I remember in particular a director was saying we used to call them producers COSTAS with his name he used to do a lot of the productions so we were allowed to go in the little the play would have been presented on the dresser her so my and that was the only times bees kind of sort of got to see.

Wellington 1: It wasn’t open to the general public students you had to be in the University and it was the but it was the dress rehearsal.

Claremont 1: and you had to pay for the dress reversal and then the other thing is the other occasions were these so-called colored people there wasn’t a large African community it wasn’t my Johannesburg spurred they might of held concerts in the townships but we could even set foot there you take your life into your own hands
Wellington 1: Because the police could stop you if you didn’t have the right pass.

Claremont 1: We weren’t even allowed in the there after a certain time.

Wellington 1: So people like the Jordans and the Konnenieas they sort of lived in long but on the outskirts.

Claremont 1: in long lots of other social end spiritual and so on outlets for the people all kinds of things there was even a Dutch Reformed Church there but as far as cultural aspects that was at the very low-level but of course the colored people those who were not very sophisticated the highlight was the Coon Carnival and there was lots of talent they are there was the string bands and what we what they called the Christmas choirs these were major cultural institutions the Christmas choirs were the same as the roaming gentleman and they would all dress and beautiful suits and uniforms believes her slacks but they all wear the same dress the same each group had its own tailor and its own uniform the musicians they played instruments banjos guitars anything that you could carry not so much drums and such and then behind them you’d have the choir and the choirs would saying they would sing Christmas carols and lychees and lychees were indigenous tunes here come the Alubamma and the current would do that as well but they had their own BT’s two they had choreography.

Wellington 1; The movement was choreographer I remember these bands had a choir I just remember the music and was all Christmas carols and they had the choirs singing behind in the walking.
Claremont 1: The walking stick they came to have and they used to be moving up and down as they walked.

Wellington 1: So the drama of the band became the cane and then the leader of course does that mean no moving arm up and down conducting the bedtime and walking in front of the band the drum major walked with the state.

Claremont 1: The crews again were big tourist attractions.

Wellington 1: Mostly on New Year’s.

Claremont 1: Yeah on New Year’s Day blossom you think those with things would fade away.

Amelia Pegram: John and Melanie saw the King Carnival.

Claremont 1: Yet they both of that special stage for them and they perform mostly singing and things like that and dancing and all various things like that. Another thing that was quite popular also what they called the morfie concerts.

Wellington 1: It’s like the equivalent of a drag show.

Claremont 1: And these have always been non-whites this happen in Cape Town too. He is freer, coming from hermaphrodite.

Claremont 1: they would have their concerts in skits and so on I know it was very popular and a lot of people want to see them and this is the thing that we got you down and then the other thing was when ever this is the entertainment that we got in the other thing that I was saying that whenever companies came from overseas and they were mainly from England and possibly the states all those reviews and even plays like the one play I can remember the drowning version for example
that was put on by members of the old Vic in Cape Town and put on in the posh theatres for the whites but as a condition of the union in England allowing them to come they have to put on special shows for the nonwhites and the special shows were held in separate venues in separate inferior venues not in anywhere the shows would be shown to the whites because a lot of places were set aside for the whites sometimes it was even free for example to college students and high school students do you remember that sometimes the shows are free.

Claremont 1: Ya… who was the actress that came from England and wanted only to go and try to get a win a scholarship to go and then Nola didn’t want him to go I think it was Lenny Dixon in that went instead of Owen I have to find out from Owen who it was.

Claremont 1: if it was a revue like the so-called superior colored venue like the Princess theatre or maybe I know the weeks and was used a lot those were the only occasions that we really got to see theatre live theatre was until the advent of the provisions in the 1950s when a teacher at Livingston formed the pen until a dramatic Society and we were members we were members blossom all in a PDS and they put on place that had a social message and of which I can’t remember they were by very renowned playwright’s like Elmer Rice and he was on the other playwrights we did.

Wellington 1: We did Gorky’s Lower Depths we...

Claremont 1: What was that play that Owen played the G.I. and Catherine was the white plantation lady?
Wellington 1: If we can look at the pictures then we can find out the names… we did deep are the roots, the chalk Circle, the play that had a mixed cast … the blacks.

Claremont 1: I was annoyed in town because you understand I was teaching in the country … some of the plays I don’t even know about.

Claremont 1: and you might not have been there but the production the blacks was very interesting and a nun D. Jordan acted there is to we had a mixed cost and the police came to stop us and they just walked on stage to stop us because they said we were trespassing and blah blah blah and then after that Frank was decided that we would have are her souls and we never had we never had another production of the place over the rest of the run we had rehearsals and the audience would come to the reversals.

Claremont 1: the police they came to all the plays they were dressed in plain clothes but we knew they were by the hats they wore because they’re trying to hide their faces the other group was that her father players was the other high school that was the PDS and in the other group was the Trafalgar Players with the other high school because there was Livingston high school intro filed the end Isaac fast but he but he did a lot of things he wrote himself and they did plays like waiting for good though and of or was it the Trafalgar Players that we do on my cement blossom.

Claremont 1: Yes. Well I don’t know if it was just us… we do a lot of the Shaw plays remember we did a lot of the Bernard Shaw stuff.

Claremont 1: Benjamin.

Claremont 1: What was this e.g. came in with this lovely line make the table but then he
said make the monster.

Claremont 1: we were fairly ambitious you know we had very talented people another
talented director that we had was Carter Ibrahim but he belonged to the EEOAN
wing group and they put on operas actually like try The Vox... was one of the
operas by Gilbert and Sullivan, so they put that type of thing again they did the
musicals in the choirs are a Tory and put on Josephe Mancka was their leader
and as a matter of fact I wonder if Cynthia doesn’t Cynthia know about the
EEOAN group you know it’s amazing how theatre has taken off in Cape Town
and its environment now since the new deal the new South Africa did you know
that Sunset West for example was of little Stratford-upon-Avon Sunset West has
become.

Claremont 1: didn’t PDS going toward that area we did some kind of I remember because
I was in Frank’s class when Frank was our teacher at high school we can’t go and
make political speeches but we can choose our plays carefully so that they have
a political message so people can see street scenes in people living in tenement
houses and lower depths how those people were treated so he was we were doing
people like Shaw or Gorky there is always a choice there was a way some political
but not over but in undercurrent to make people think.

Claremont 1: isn’t it funny in later life I find Shaw a little overboard in social
commentary but in those days it was important for us... and that was important
and that’s why we probably chose it he was important. The young people they
would put on plays in Cape Town every town had its own town hold town hall
church groups in the suburbs would have concerts in the town halls I remember taking parts and plays as a child.

Claremont 1: Sometimes it with pageants like Christmas pageants but sometimes it was plays sometimes they would write a play even.

Claremont 1: sometimes in the churches every church had a sort of a young peoples group association and they were really the ones that get the idea of theatres and plays in that type of thing taking part in that part in these plays which work of course religious plays and so on I can remember sitting in the audience before the play began and they would come to fetch me out of the audience and a boy didn’t show up so they came to fetch me out to play as part was about a half an hour or work order in our it was just a few lines that I had to say I must’ve been about 1213 years old when that happened so the church groups with concerts were popular in alternated with the morphies.

Wellington 1: The more thieves were in the Cape we were more tolerant Wellington was quite a town it was very multicultural.

Claremont 1: Ironella used to do things.

Wellington 1: I sit in church plays, it was really the church ways it was sort of but it was an Afrikaans one it was a Christian play and I play the daughter that went astray it was a morality play and we did it in Wellington quite a few times in the town hall the guys who studied to be the Dutch Reform ministry and the teachers in Wellington I was teaching at the time… it was easier to travel I guess it is one of cars it was held in the church we drove with some of his ministers at the time.. no…
Amelia Pegram: People had a plan he just didn’t go and drive through the white area.

Wellington 1: If it wasn’t as dangerous as it is now.

Claremont 1: when I was in college I belong to the college of Dramatic society and we would do our plays and the principal of the college of course came to see the plays and the next morning he couldn’t wait to tell me you are such an accomplished actor the reason I’m telling you see why I’m telling you this at the end of the college he is to give you a special accommodation and he mentioned this on that accommodation Mr. Plateis.

Wellington 1: You say he’s not a brag or-

Claremont 1: The first thing that we had to do that was to put on a play all because of the accommodation for the further ministers wife and he was a real proper Englishman in a-

Wellington 1: Was Alaine teaching at Livingston?

Claremont 1: I don’t know where she taught.

Wellington 1: V. starring actors of PDS Alan or grammar her husband was the one that started PDS.

Claremont 1: and she was actively actually the one behind it was really like a showcase for her just like SETI’s wife with that her father players one neat Martinez Wanitta. Blossom do you remember her original name though I don’t know she was Martinez man.

Amelia Pegram: I didn’t know many people from Trafalgar.

Claremont 1: Yeah but you’re much younger at that time.
Wellington 1: Do you remember Albert but all that Albert Thomas is Albert Adams was the one that did all the sets he got a call of a scholarship to go study in England.

Amelia Pegram: I’m trying to think of the other guy that I met England.

Claremont 1: I know Albert Thomas Lipton Weinberg To he was married Gladys he became an inspector you know.

Amelia Pegram: Very interesting

Wellington 1: They said that the last time he went to South Africa that the that Cream of the colored people left.

Amelia Pegram: Yes I left in the 60s.

Claremont 1: Then after that there were all these people from the country and they had opportunities and they had to really look for other people.

Amelia Pegram: Who is principal of Harold Kressy High School because his wife didn’t his wife was attracting.

Claremont 1: After Hector Morietz.

Amelia Pegram: I know that there were some doctors that did acting.

Claremont 1: No I don’t…say maniza… in Weinberg of the pharmacist’s daughter I think she’s here.

Amelia Pegram: Melanie bring us back because we’re wandering.

Claremont 1: This girl… she seriously pursued a career in acting to this day she still has a group of leash galleries was also one of the PDS stars she was the secretary of the PDS she still has groups but I don’t know how often she has it they do play readings yes.. the main entertainment it took up every weekend remember we also
had to build the sets and the costumes, and we had to find places to build the sets.

Wellington 1: I went to church.

Amelia Pegram: if you think that we didn’t television and we just were we just had read your to listen to and he didn’t want to go to what was called the by scope because it was so censored what we could see it wasn’t something that was encouraged so we were a end in our household little plays every perform for each other and also part of our English courses was that we had to learn poetry and recite it we had to learn parts out of Shakespeare and that was part of our exams was the cycle of what we have learned.

Claremont 1: For the teachers course we had to I can remember learning pages and pages of Shakespeare out of Hamlet out of Julius Caesar that I can remember to this day.

Amelia Pegram: To be or not to be.

Claremont 1: That is the question… in that sense of theatre was always in that sense with us you really had to go out of your way.

Claremont 1: Black consciousness only really became a concept in the 60s a in the Eastern Cape in Johannesburg. I thought it dawned on me that it must come from somewhere this idea that whites aren’t better than you and you are as good as anybody else. But if it did come from an outside influence I don’t know where it came from it didn’t come from reading the Dutch Reform Church.

Amelia Pegram: The torch was a political paper that we had.

Claremont 1: Black consciousness it was the blacks.

Amelia Pegram: It was more or less saying that you are not inferior.
Claremont 1: It was for the Africans more though... as for the Africans they were talking to... that’s why the ANC is in power today and not movements like the annual M.

Wellington 1: It’s amazing what one on a Johannesburg that went with what we were not aware of politically what went on the air it’s unbelievable.

Amelia Pegram: the government was divided and conquered the vibrant role that’s what really led to their downfall because so many people galvanized the way they had it sort of right along the coast was the white area and we were more colored area inland locations and so forth they wanted to keep people apart they wanted to pick the one group against the other and that worked their downfall in the end so that actually a person like Mandela might not have gotten the stronghold in a mixed area that he could have but he could speak the languages of the people..

Wellington 1: they kept them all together these different groups they could focus their put a bomb there and everything were members sharp fall they were altogether they are so people could just go on in a dissent upon them.

Amelia Pegram: teaching with separate and they had a separate syllabus for collards and then whites had a separate and also different groups with good would start school at a different age white children could don’t go to school and they were five and we had to be seven in order to enter and black I’m just using the term black they were 98 or nine they couldn’t start the same time we were and black is the same as African, yes.

Wellington 1: A black child could not attend the colored school it was against the rules.

Amelia Pegram: Their honor to like Monday was at school with me but these children
also knew that when inspectors came they made themselves scarce and that kind
of thing you know.

Wellington 1: It was such a sad situation.

Interviewer: it shows that South Africa was a much more complex nation and it’s
interesting because I think it reflects on what is being written about now and again
is me a better idea of what is going on and what I’m reading and what I’m reading
now says nothing about this really.

Wellington 1: It doesn’t go in deep.

Interviewer: I have all these articles on theatre and out of 20 articles I have in relation
to put the colored” they have white not in quotes and they have African or black
my question is why are people being shut out of history is this something that
happens.

Amelia Pegram: Bergen has to sit down and talk just talk about the designation of color
colored other colored delay.

Wellington 1: an Indian yeah and the thing that psychologically it did to us what it does
to a child in their childhood they recognize it but they cannot admit it you are
affected psychologically you know by this because your oil is made to feel inferior
equipment go for a walk you couldn’t go to visit the restaurants at the post office
there was another entrance.

Amelia Pegram: You couldn’t go to the library of the museums of the art shows you just
couldn’t go at the same time.

Wellington 1: And the trains you couldn’t sit in the same carriage.
Amelia Pegram: In Weinberg and a policeman beat up all in for caring books you have.

Claremont 1: Adam small don’t you think Adam small the playwright excuse me blossoms but he had a profound influence on colored people at first they discounted him because he wrote in the vernacular and East still his work is still important his work is important here plays yet Wellington Ironella’s cousin and you’ll find a lot about him.

Amelia Pegram: the literature though you know 80 if you think back you only started reading black writers when you came out of the countries because of the bands when you came out you got to nowadays.

Claremont 1: Richard Green.

Amelia Pegram: Oh yes I remember him.

Wellington 1: I have a picture of him this is as small before just before we came to Canada. Sad because he’s now housebound.

Amelia Pegram: So much of this happened our artist because they were very freed in order to do what they wanted look at Gavin Phillips Hope Phillips and Gavin became a priest at St. Marks and he did this wonderful artwork and the restoration of not being able to be artist the frustration that in a the recognition of the people who needed to be.

Wellington 1: He’s kind of getting a lot of recognition now and awards but someone else goes and gets them.
Gloria Fahrenfort was a participant of the EOAN group. A talented dancer in her youth, she was denied entry into the University of Cape Town dance program due to her refusal to fill in the race field on the admittance form.

Gloria, undithered by this rebuke, decided to start her own theatre company. The company was successful during its lifetime. Mrs. Fahrenfort was able to dance as a solo artist at several venues. She also attended teachers’ college and recently retired from teaching.

She has a son who still resides in South Africa.
Figure 29. Gloria Fahrenfort (Gloria Fahrenfort Archive)

Figure 30. Gloria Fahrenfort (Gloria Fahrenfort Archive)
Figure 31. Gloria Fahrenfort dancing The Charleston (Gloria Fahrenfort Archive)

Figure 32. Gloria Fahrenfort jazz routine (Gloria Fahrenfort Archive)
Also in early 1970, Leon and I did our Charleston item for SHAWCO, UCT's Student's Health and Welfare Organisation which raised funds for children. I can't remember why the others did not do this show.
Figure 34. Leggy Lineup, Cape Herald newspaper clipping, August 2, 1969 (Gloria Fahrenfort Archive)