

**'SUMMONING THE HEALING': INTERCULTURAL  
PERFORMANCE, IMMEDIACY, AND HISTORICAL AND  
RITUAL DIALECTICS IN BRETT BAILEY'S *THE PLAYS  
OF MIRACLE & WONDER* (2003)**

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**Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Drama and Performance Studies, University of  
KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, 2006**

## DECLARATION

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I declare that, unless otherwise acknowledged in the text, this dissertation is my own work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other University.



Lloyd Grant O'Connor

15 December 2006



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I wish to express my gratitude to the following individuals and organizations for their assistance and support.

**My supervisor Ms Tamar Meskin for her encouragement, expertise, careful guidance and insight.**

Professor Mervyn McMurtry

My parents Clive and Clarissa O'Connor

My brother Kyle O'Connor

Brett Bailey, for his kind permission to reproduce the images in this dissertation

Rustom Bharucha

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UKZN Drama and Performance Studies Programme

## ABSTRACT

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This dissertation examines three plays by South African theatre practitioner Brett Bailey as published in the collection *The Plays of Miracle & Wonder* (2003). Through an investigation of the performance texts the dissertation interprets Bailey's theatrical praxis as a particular case that is simultaneously intercultural (Jeyifo, 1996; Schechner, 2002) and immediate (Brook, 1968).

I have a deep interest in looking at theatrical work that seeks to transcend boundaries, exploring what it means to be an intercultural theatre practitioner within a twenty-first century South African context, characterized by flux and cultural uncertainty. I want to interrogate how a local theatre artist, working in an intercultural way, makes use of material in order to create theatre that initiates a dialectical relationship between the local / global as well as the past / present.

Bailey suggests that contemporary theatre forms have divorced performance from its ritual significance and transformative potential (Bailey, 2003). Although South Africa did have a strong tradition of protest theatre in the 1970s and 1980s (Hauptfleisch & Steadman, 1991), much white theatre in South Africa over the last forty years was deemed colonial and oppressive (Orkin, 1991). Bailey seeks to address both of these concerns in his intercultural practice.

In his practice, Bailey makes use of ritual and history, both rooted in the South African context. Through ritual he establishes a spatial dialectic, invoking the clash and tensions between the local and global contexts. Through his use of history, he creates a temporal dialectic, with intertextual significance and political resonance for the contemporary South African context. Immediacy is produced by the interaction and intersection between these spatial and temporal dialectics.

The dissertation draws on analysis and interrogation of theories drawn from ritual (Bell, 1992), history (Degenaar, 1995) and Performance studies (Schechner, 2002), as well as anthropology (Turner, 1982), post-colonial studies (Gilbert and Tompkins, 1996) and various dramatic theories of performance (Artaud, 1976; Grotowski, 1991; Brecht, 1964, Brook, 1968), to interrogate Bailey's praxis.

Through Bailey's theatre, South African audiences are forced to confront the paradoxes, schisms and pitfalls of South African life, and are encouraged to participate in processes that encourage the transformation of perceptions around social reality in an attempt figuratively, if not actually, to 'summon a healing'.

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## INTRODUCTION

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This dissertation seeks to interrogate the work of controversial South African theatre practitioner Brett Bailey<sup>1</sup> through conceptualizing of a dialectical relationship between intercultural theatre practice (Schechner, 1990; Pavis, 1992, 1996), Peter Brook's (1968, 1993) notion of 'Immediate Theatre' (Immediacy), and notions of ritual and history in performance practice (Schechner, 1995; Bell, 1992; Turner, 1969, 1982; Degenaar, 1995). This theoretical grid provides a methodology for examining and theorizing Bailey's work within the post-1994 South African context, specifically the plays *iMumbo Jumbo* (1997), *Ipi Zombi?* (1998), and *The Prophet* (1999), published in *The Plays of Miracle & Wonder* (2003). What is central is that the plays take as their starting points, specific South African historical moments.

The investigation of Bailey's theatrical praxis interrogates the use of local historical material and ritual forms, which create an intercultural theatre practice located specifically in the South African context. Both South African political philosopher Johannes J. Degenaar (1995) and Australian post-colonial drama and performance theorists Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins (1996) point to a number of elements that provide a foundation for examining the core issues, debates and concepts that will be interrogated in this dissertation in relation to history and ritual. Degenaar, writing after South Africa entered its new dispensation in 1994, comments on how the arts, specifically theatre, may operate as a constructive cultural process caught in a context of change and cultural tension:

Events in the past have to be interpreted in an imaginative way. Storytelling is the most appropriate way of doing this. Stories about the past enable us to create and share a common future. They contribute to the production and consumption of an informed culture, for it is through the art of storytelling that a culture is enriched with intertextual significance. Stories with an historical resonance are of great importance for they introduce us to that which is unconscious in the South African community. And if it remains unconscious it plays a negative instead of a positive role. (1995: 65)

History, as performed through storytelling, carries with it intertextual significance and political resonance. The act of 'performing' history involves a necessary re-reading of 'official' versions of history and may be considered a strategy for uncovering that which has been elided or ignored, highlighting the ideological implications of using historical material within a theatrical context, as

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to Appendix A for a short biography of Brett Bailey.

Bailey does within the plays under investigation. This historical material includes: the journey of Xhosa Chief Gcaleka to Scotland in search of the skull of King Hintsa (*iMumbo Jumbo*, 1997), the true story of collective hysteria that resulted in a witch hunt in Kokstad (*Ipi Zombi?*, 1998), and the legend of prophetess Nongqawuse and the Xhosa cattle killing of the mid-1850s (*The Prophet*, 1999)<sup>2</sup>. This historical material is staged within the context of ritual.

According to Gilbert and Tompkins (1996: 55), “One of the most enduring – and most appropriated and misunderstood – markers of cultural difference and stability in both Africa and India is ritual.” Given this point, the use of ritual within a theatrical context is made problematic, especially within the context of intercultural theatre practice. A particular critique of these practices is that they are “designed to enumerate the similarities between all cultures without recognizing their highly significant differences” (Gilbert and Tompkins, 1996: 9). A key debate in Interculturalism centres around difference because post-colonial critics of intercultural theatre practice challenge intercultural theatre practitioners who use forms and practices that are sourced outside of the producing organizations’ immediate contexts. By contrast, I would argue, intercultural performance relies on the clash of differences between, among and within cultures to generate meaning.

The importance of context dictates that one defines one’s position in response to the term ‘culture’ and its relationship to Interculturalism specifically. Culture is a complex and contested term, the meaning of which can only ever be defined partially because it denotes and connotes many formations, articulations, practices and processes within a context. In this dissertation, culture is viewed through the lens of performance in that culture and performance involve, what Pavis calls, “human culture [as] a system of significations which allows a society or group to understand itself in its relationship with the world” (1996: 2). Performance as cultural process and social practice is part of the way in which a society articulates and formulates its own cultural identity. However, this formulation usually applies to a single context, and, in extending the debates, one must engage with the clashes, tensions and creative possibilities that occur between contexts. Hence, Interculturalism and intercultural theatre explore these clashes, tensions and

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<sup>2</sup> Since *The Prophet* (1999), Bailey has moved outside of South Africa in seeking source material for his theatre, producing work such as *Big Dada* (2000), based on the Ugandan dictator Idi Amin; however, this play is not included in this dissertation. In addition to this, Bailey has produced a variety of theatrical work both locally and abroad. A discussion of this work, while interesting, is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

creative possibilities, operating as “dynamic systems of knowledge, values, actions, artifacts, and articulations of a community in particular historical contexts” (Degenaar, 1995: 60).

I would argue that Bailey is attempting to establish dialectical relationships in the forms that he employs and the material he makes use of in his theatrical work. Ritual forms and historical material are the basis for Bailey’s intercultural theatre practice<sup>3</sup>, and the Immediacy of his theatre work stems from these dialectics in two ways: firstly, ritual establishes a spatial dialectic around a negotiation between tensions produced between what is considered ‘local’ and ‘global’ as well as ‘foreign’ and ‘indigenous’<sup>4</sup>; secondly, history provides a temporal dialectic in exploring how the past may be used to reflect on the present South African context. Therefore, the re-staging of history within a ritualistic theatrical form becomes a key element in Bailey’s theatrical work.

Coming to terms with the way ritual has been appropriated by theatre practitioners, how such processes have been critiqued by post-colonial theory<sup>5</sup>, and how these notions impact on a reading of Bailey’s work, is problematic. It is problematic because central to the debate are questions around how and why theatre practitioners use culturally specific forms, such as ritual, and engage with processes of history. On the one hand, ritual and history may be considered indicative of social, political, contextual and cultural difference; on the other hand, ritual and history are used in processes of relocating theatrical discourse. Intercultural theatre practitioners use ritual forms to generate ‘new’ meaning in an attempt to transcend boundaries and re-establish a sense of social and spiritual communion. In addition, they attempt to facilitate a dialogue between cultures as, I believe, Bailey attempts to facilitate a dialogue through his theatrical work, making it immediate in and accessible to the contemporary South African context.

The notion of Immediacy is another central point of the core foundation on which this dissertation is based. However, before this can be introduced I must discuss what makes Immediacy an important consideration by clarifying the notion of performance texts.

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<sup>3</sup> Bailey does not make any claim that he is working intercultural; however, the paradigm of Interculturalism is useful in discussing how Bailey explores the clash of cultural difference in his, I believe, intercultural theatrical praxis.

<sup>4</sup> The dissertation recognized that the concepts of ‘third’ and ‘first’ world, ‘foreign’ and ‘indigenous’ culture, are contested terms within academic debates, and these debates will be addressed; however, the terms are utilized in a more general way to indicate often vaguely defined geographical locales.

<sup>5</sup> Post-colonial theory, like intercultural theory, is broad. For my purposes I will appropriate certain ideas from post-colonial theorists such as Bharucha (1993); Jeyifo (1996); Gilbert and Tompkins (1996); and certain key notions from Bhabha (1994) cited in Childs and Williams (1997).



Bailey attempts to relocate theatrical discourse by emphasizing ritual forms and modes of performance as well as through the re-staging of historical events through a hybridization<sup>6</sup> of drama and ritual. In this dissertation, the plays under investigation are treated as performance texts. The idea of a performance text recognizes that more than the lexical meaning of the printed text generates meaning in performance. Therefore, the plays are not being treated solely as literary artifacts. The dissertation seeks to interrogate them in a way that highlights the role of other systems of signification in generating meaning that is directly contemporary, for example: ritual forms, performers as storytellers, and how processes of re-staging history operate within the theatrical context. One methodology of reading the performance text in this way is through the notion of Immediacy.

The notion of 'Immediate Theatre' (Brook, 1968), developed by British director and theatre writer Peter Brook, is distinct from the broader field known as Interculturalism as it denotes a more focused directorial approach than an overarching paradigm<sup>7</sup>. Subsequent to the publication of Brook's *The Empty Space* (1968) and the formation of the International Center for Theatre Research in 1970, the work that he and his group of international actors have been engaged with may be seen as Inter / Trans – cultural. Through their explorations with the different 'languages'<sup>8</sup> of theatre, Brook and his group attempted to discover the particular quality of the theatrical experience that could make it immediate or rather, as Margaret Croyden (1980: 1), citing Brook, suggests, to make theatre a space in which a "search for an expression that is directly concerned with the quality of living", may be conducted.

Brook's impetus in exploring and developing the notion of Immediacy came from a deep-seated need within his directorial practice to explore and investigate those 'other' languages of performance. Immediacy is concerned with how these languages of performance interrelate to generate meaning; hence, the necessity to examine the plays under investigation as performance texts. The meaning generated in Bailey's theatrical work is articulated as the potential for transformation. I would argue that Bailey's performance texts interpret transformation as a mode

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<sup>6</sup> The notion of hybrids, as opposed to fusions, is preferred, and will be discussed further in Chapter Two.

<sup>7</sup> However, Brook's experiments in exploring and furthering the notion of Immediacy (1968), having articulated the theory, for example *Orghast at Persepolis* (1971), *The Conference of the Birds* (1973), *The Ik* (1976) and *Mahabharata* (1985), have been interrogated using intercultural and post-colonial theory.

<sup>8</sup> According to Western Euro-American hegemonic codes, the spoken text was the most important element of the dramatic work. However, in the latter part of the twentieth century this has shifted to emphasize how the body, space, form and image can all be classified as languages that assist in making meaning in the theatre.

of, and for, healing. That is, audiences are asked to engage in processes of healing the political, social and cultural wounds inflicted by our colonial and apartheid past. These wounds, if not actively engaged and negotiated, are exacerbated, in the present, by globalizing processes that attempt to denude context of meaning and to erode indigenous cultural modes of creating meaning. Therefore, the notion of 'transformation' becomes a key aspect of Bailey's intercultural theatre praxis and how he attempts to achieve Immediacy through the spatial and temporal dialectics in his performance texts.

The field of Interculturalism is extremely broad and encompasses a diverse range of practices that are considered, formulated, and theorized differently. In this dissertation, however, the focus is on the use of ritual forms, practices and artifacts, and processes of utilizing history as material for performance, as exemplifiers of the intercultural endeavor. A key aspect of the dissertation is to come to a clearer understanding of how ritual and history act as intercultural signifiers. Richard Schechner, a key theorist of Interculturalism, observes that rituals are not generic sites where accepted ideas can deposit themselves, but rather operate as "dynamic performative systems generating new material and recombining traditional actions in new ways" (1995: 228). It becomes part of this work, therefore, to clarify the connection between Interculturalism, ritual and history – in performance – by (re)considering certain aspects of the performance act: stage design, audience / performer orientation, performance aesthetics, performance and subject material or performance content. It is through these aspects of the performance text that the spatial and temporal dialectics of Bailey's work operate.

The dissertation, therefore, involves a detailed interrogation of what has constituted intercultural theatre practice within the global context, the debates and issues surrounding such practices, the problem of context, and the examination of theatre as a social practice and cultural process. I investigate not only American and European models of intercultural theatre practice, as postulated primarily by Schechner (1991) and Brook (1996), but also examine the work of these key theorists in relation to writers critical of those theorists' work. These theoretical examinations will be interwoven within the fabric of interrogating the work of Brett Bailey, since the dissertation argues that he may be seen as producing intercultural work within the contemporary multicultural<sup>9</sup> South African context. It is not enough, however, to discuss Bailey

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<sup>9</sup> The term 'Multicultural' is itself highly contested. These debates are outside the scope of this dissertation, but for the purposes of this discussion it may be suggested that Multiculturalism views heterogeneous cultural groups and practices as a unified homogenous whole, while Interculturalism challenges

in terms of Interculturalism; we must extend the discussion to writers (Bharucha, 1993; Jeyifo, 1996) whose theoretical trajectories are critical of the intercultural endeavor, and examine Bailey's work in relation to those positions.

Much of what has been written on Interculturalism and intercultural theatre practice by Euro-American performance practitioners and theorists has been challenged on the basis that, while these practitioners seek to highlight the similarities between cultures, they elide the specific differences between them (Gilbert and Tompkins, 1996). It is useful, by way of introduction, to give an example of a Western perspective of intercultural theatre practice and how one might approach interrogating that definition.

According to Schechner, one way of looking at research into or experiments in intercultural theatre is to examine a work of intercultural performance in terms of "Hybrids and fusions that intentionally combine diverse cultural elements. Here the colonial horror of "impurity" or "mixing" is subverted, overturned, and developed" (2002: 226). This may be seen as an ideal framework in which to position Bailey's work within a more general global conception of Interculturalism. In order, however, fully to interrogate this framework, the dissertation will use the questions that Nigerian literary critic Biodun Jeyifo (1996) considers important in considering intercultural work within an African context. The intention here is to come to as full a conceptualization and examination of Bailey's work as possible within the global, African, and South African contexts.

In considering intercultural exchange within African theatre, Jeyifo (1996: 156-157) points out that three questions must be problematized in order fully to consider the social, political and cultural processes involved in such practices. In this dissertation these questions are appropriated and related to specific areas of Bailey's work.

The first question highlights the need to explore those African or European sources and influences we may find operative and combined in any given African theatrical expression (Jeyifo, 1996: 156). Bailey's process involves a conscious interweaving of culturally specific artifacts, practices, and performance modes, sourced in both 'third' and 'first' world contexts, which explore and revel in the clashes and tensions produced through cultural difference.

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multiculturalism by recognizing difference. Post-apartheid South Africa is often referred to as a 'multicultural' context, as articulated by such phrases as the 'Rainbow nation'.

However, what is problematic here is that although the intentions of a piece of work may be politically, socially or philosophically motivated, the actual physical execution of that work, namely the performance, and the way its meaning is read and re-read, are seldom concomitant. This point arises out of the nature of the performance act because the act of interpretation is governed by more than the intentions of the individual author of a theatrical production.

The motivation behind the interaction and combination of the 'foreign' and the 'indigenous' is Jeyifo's (1996: 156-157) second question. The plays, *iMumbo Jumbo* (1997), *Ipi Zombi?* (1998) and *The Prophet* (1999), reflect Bailey's desire to create theatre that is directly contemporary and attempts to articulate "the stories of our times" (Bailey, 2002: 9), that is, a theatre that is "accessible to people across the social spectrum of this country" (Bailey, 1999: *The Prophet* programme note). The meaning Bailey wishes to communicate through his plays motivates his use of foreign (European performance modes) and indigenous (Xhosa cultural practices) forms in his theatrical practice.

Jeyifo's third question calls for an interrogation of what social and ideological uses and functions mediate, legitimize or problematize the intercultural fusion of the 'foreign' and the 'indigenous' (Jeyifo, 1996: 157). This raises two problematic elements to discuss in relation to Bailey's work. First, one needs to recognise that South Africa occupies a multicultural as well as a post-colonial space. Second, one needs to view any cultural process, such as theatre, in relation to contemporary cultural tensions. These two points relate specifically to how and why so-called intercultural fusions take place, taking into consideration not only the relationship *between* the global and local contexts but also *within* the local South African context as an intercultural space. This both informs and impacts on the work of Interculturalists, such as Bailey, working within the South African context.

Schechner has described what he considers the work of Interculturalists and those working in an intercultural way. According to him:

Interculturalists probe the confrontations, ambivalences, disruptions, fears, disturbances and difficulties when and where cultures collide, overlap and pull away from each other . . . These are not seen as disasters but fertile rifts of creative possibilities. (1991: 30)

I have a deep interest in the nature of these 'rifts' and, in particular, in examining theatrical work that seeks to transcend boundaries and in exploring what it means to be an intercultural theatre practitioner within a twenty-first century South African context. It is important to interrogate

how a local theatre artist working in an intercultural way makes use of material in order to create theatre that initiates a dialectical relationship between the local and global, past and present.

Bailey's theatre work is important to me since it confronts the notion of a happily diverse multicultural South Africa as 'rainbow' nation. Through Bailey's theatre, South African audiences are forced to confront the paradoxes, schisms and pitfalls of South African life in two broad ways: first, audiences are encouraged to participate in processes that interrogate such cultural binarised constructions as 'global' / 'local', 'foreign' / 'familiar' and 'universal' / 'particular'; secondly, audiences who encounter Bailey's plays are encouraged to recognize the potential to shatter and/or transcend boundaries of thought and meaning. Ritual forms become a means of achieving this transcendental experience. Therefore, ritual theory and practice, and the re-staging of history, become a means through which Bailey's theatre may be considered simultaneously intercultural and immediate for a contemporary South African audience.

Chapter One of the dissertation will examine the concerns, debates and practices of Interculturalism and intercultural theatre practice. This chapter attempts to chart the varied interactions, connections and conflicts within intercultural theatre practice and to remark upon the patterns these interactions make across the landscape of twenty-first century South African theatre. In the twentieth century, performance practitioners such as Antonin Artaud (1976), Jerzy Grotowski (1968), and Bertolt Brecht (1964)<sup>10</sup> attempting to challenge the hegemony of Western traditional practices of Realism<sup>11</sup>, appropriated and assimilated Eastern traditional performance modes and other ritual forms into their work. As semiologist and theatre historian Erika Fischer-Lichte points out:

The fundamental and far-reaching renewal of European theatre which occurred in the first decades of the twentieth century appears to be not least the consequence of a conscious and productive encounter with theatre traditions of foreign cultures. (1996: 30)

Drama and performance semiologist Susan Bennett (1990: 166) observes 'that the use of ritual in non-Western theatre has had an enormous impact on Western experimental theatre.' Artaud

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<sup>10</sup> The references to Artaud are taken from a collection of his writings on theatre edited by Susan Sontag (1976), those for Brecht are taken from *Brecht on Theatre* (1964) edited and translated by John Willett, and those for Grotowski are taken from two sources: Grotowski's *Towards a Poor Theatre* (1968) and a collection of his writings, *The Grotowski Sourcebook* (2001) edited by Lisa Wolford and Richard Schechner.

<sup>11</sup> The genre of Realism grew out of nineteenth-century paradigm shifts where theatre sought to present observable truth on the stage. Emile Zola (1873) expounded on the theory of Naturalism in *Thérèse Raquin* (Hewitt, 1970: 55) and Realism grew out of the Naturalist 'slice of life' concept.

(1976) and Grotowski (1968), in particular, have influenced much of Schechner and Brook's work in their use of ritual within a theatrical context. Therefore, the discussion requires a focus on how ritual and performance traditions from other cultures are used in contemporary theatre practice. In order fully to interrogate why ritual and other cultural borrowings are seemingly central to the intercultural enterprise, the complex relationship between ritual and performance will be discussed and related to the performance texts under investigation. The use of ritual forms, practices and artifacts is seen as one of the distinctive practices of intercultural theatre practitioners and needs to be examined along with Interculturalism's historical context in order to understand how Interculturalism, ritual, history, and Immediacy relate to the work of Bailey.

Chapter Two locates Bailey's work within the paradigm of Interculturalism, where notions of culture, context, and Brook's notion of Immediacy, are further developed in relation to post-colonial criticism of the intercultural enterprise on stage (Bharucha, 1993; Brown 1998; Jeyifo, 1996)). The chapter further attempts to theorize what constitutes intercultural theatre work within an African context. This examination will, to use Schechner's (2002: 251) terms, determine whether Bailey's work is an example of the 'integrative' (Schechner, 2002) or 'disjunctive' (Schechner, 2002) form of intercultural practice. It will also seek to problematize the assumptions held by these positions in relation to Bailey's theatre work.

Schechner (2002) delineates two kinds of intercultural performance: on the one hand, intercultural performance may be integrative (Schechner, 2002) a position which 'is based on the assumption that people from different cultures can not only work together successfully but can harmonize different aesthetic, social, and belief systems, creating fusions or hybrids that are whole and unified' (2002: 251). On the other hand, intercultural performance may be disjunctive (Schechner, 2002). Here, performance focuses on exposing 'the difficulties and exploring the creative possibilities of playing across national, cultural, artistic, and personal borders. This [practice] refuses utopian schemes, uncloaks and parodies power relations, and promotes a critical ideological perspective' (2002: 257).

Rather than a polarization between two different types of intercultural work this may more usefully be considered as a continuum. This is a more holistic approach to studying intercultural work, where a single intercultural theatre performance may contain 'integrative' (Schechner, 2002) elements, highlighting certain philosophical and/or aesthetic elements, and 'disjunctive' (Schechner, 2002) elements, which seek to explore specific political and social problems.

'Integrative' (Schechner, 2002) and 'disjunctive' (Schechner, 2002) forms of Interculturalism offer a basis from which to explore issues of representation, exchange and difference within a comparative discussion of East / West and North / South relations of exchange.

Chapter Three returns to the underlying claim that the use of ritual elements and historical material in theatre practice facilitates the creation of an intercultural and immediate theatre for a contemporary South African context. This will involve a critical reading of the performance texts connecting the major theoretical issues raised in the previous chapters to Bailey's work and to the problem of producing intercultural work within a multicultural context. In our present context of cultural tensions (Degenaar, 1995), it is important in discussions around cultural processes, such as theatre, that we consider not only *what* meaning is made but also *how* it is made, and how the meaning generated in performance relates to critical issues involved in the politics of culture and performance.

The dissertation is to be read as an open-ended negotiation between theory and practice on three levels: the global; the continental, African context; and the local South African context. The intention is to examine how Bailey's work may be read in such a way as to elucidate the use of ritual in an intercultural theatrical engagement in search of what is 'integrative' (Schechner, 2002) and/or 'disjunctive' (Schechner, 2002) in the cultural relationships on stage between forms, performers, performances and audiences. I would argue that spatial dialectics, established through ritual forms, the temporal negotiations, established through a re-staging, and reinterpretation, of history through performance, are part of the language of Bailey's intercultural theatre work. These two dialectics generate meaning within the context of the performance act that is immediate because it advocates the need for transformation.

Transformation, in Bailey's case, is the need to 'summon a healing' (Bailey, 2003), or at least to recognize that healing is needed in South Africa today. This healing may be interpreted as the reclamation of the past through a ritualized form of theatre that attempts to heighten our awareness of those wounds left in the wake of colonialism and apartheid segregationist policies, which, today, are perpetuated through globalization and neo-imperialism. Bailey's objective to 'summon a healing' (2003), therefore, is imperative if South Africa is to retrieve its cultural

identity, develop strategies with which to cope with, what I would term, cultural erosion<sup>12</sup>, and to escape social degradation and communal disintegration.

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<sup>12</sup> I am using the term cultural erosion to indicate what I consider to be one of the by-products of cultural imperialism. Cultural erosion and cultural retrieval are dynamic processes of negotiation between cultures in terms of identity and representation. This is not to suggest culture as a monolithic, unified entity, but, for the purposes of this dissertation, the terms are used to indicate the erosion of cultural specificity and local indigenous forms of cultural expression in the South African context.



## CHAPTER ONE

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# INTERCULTURAL THEORY / PRACTICE: PATTERNS OF RITUAL / CULTURAL EXCHANGE AND HISTORICAL NEGOTIATIONS

### 1.1 Introduction

The exchange, clash, and hybridization of cultural forms, especially ritual, in the theatrical work of practitioners in both ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ contexts is a contentious area of debate within the politics of performance. The politics of cultural exchange forms one of the key debates in developing movements in current theatrical practice, such as Interculturalism (Pavis, 1996; Schechner, 1991; Bharucha, 1993). The hypothesis of this dissertation is that Immediacy, as outlined in director Peter Brook’s *The Empty Space* (1968), is derived from Interculturalism where Immediacy is generated by the use of ritual and history in creating performance work. Intercultural experiments in the theatre, and their historical context, form the bulk of this chapter.

Intercultural experiments in theatre<sup>13</sup>, as examined in this chapter, specifically involve ritual and history as part of a methodology in creating intercultural theatrical work. Such experiments have been conducted by theatre practitioners as diverse as French theatre writer Antonin Artaud, Polish theatre practitioner Jerzy Grotowski, and German theatre practitioner Bertolt Brecht<sup>14</sup>. Their theatrical experiments have attempted to re-interpret, and thereby re-represent, those works considered part of the Western canon<sup>15</sup>, as well as producing work that is indicative of their own respective intercultural interests. In addition, some intercultural work has re-staged moments in history. The re-staging of historical material may be seen as an attempt to reclaim the past.

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<sup>13</sup> Intercultural experimentation in theatrical practice involves a multitude of approaches and strategies but for this dissertation, I am only selecting areas that relate to ritual and history specifically.

<sup>14</sup> There are many other practitioners who work within the field of intercultural theatre, for example Italian performance practitioner Eugenio Barba (1986), French director Ariane Mnouchkine (1996), Tadashi Suzuki (1986), South African playwright Jane Taylor (1997) and South African theatre director William Kentridge (2004) to name only a few. However, discussions around their work are outside the scope of this dissertation.

<sup>15</sup> Western notions of the canon include amongst other works, the epics of Homer and the plays of William Shakespeare. Both have been used as ideological tools in the course of history (Orkin, 1991). These have been actively dismantled both by academics and theatre practitioners. Those works categorized in *The Great Tradition* (1948) by Frank R. Leavis were considered cultural signifiers of a civilized culture in a Western sense. Also see footnote number 27 of this Chapter.

The chapter attempts to extract, from important commentators in intercultural theory and practice, those central debates, issues and concerns that relate to and interact with concepts associated to the intercultural debate, namely globalization, post-colonialism and postmodernism. This working frame prepares the way for an examination of the patterns of cultural exchange occurring globally within key theatrical practices such as those of Artaud, Grotowski and Brecht. This examination must include an interrogation of Richard Schechner's (2002) notions around Interculturalism. These intercultural theatre practitioners connect to Bailey not so much through their practice, but more in terms of how they conceptualized their performance practices and the possibilities for performance work.

I shall examine particular examples of theatrical exchange as evidenced in the work of these key practitioners to establish the general currents of cultural exchange occurring within a Western context. The examination and problematization of those patterns of cultural exchange requires first an interrogation of context. Context is an important element in the examination of cultural processes / practices, such as theatre, because these activities do not happen within a vacuum. Performance, as a cultural process and social practice, is influenced by global and societal pressures for which there are political implications. When speaking of cultural processes and social practices within a Southern African context, specifically, it is impossible not to engage with post-colonial issues, as well as ideological concerns generated by increased globalization with its insistence on the continued interdependence of all systems, political, economic, social, communicative, historical and cultural.

The discussion of context and performance / theatre as both cultural process and social practice will begin to focus on what may be considered central to the efforts of intercultural theatre practitioners, namely the exchange of cultural forms, specifically, for the purposes of this dissertation, ritual modes, artifacts, and practices. Ritual, therefore, becomes a central concept to the dissertation and, once established, the concept of ritual will be connected to Interculturalism through an examination of another important concept, that of Immediacy, discussed in Chapter Two.

## 1.2 Interculturalism and Theory

### 1.2.1 Negotiating an uneven theoretical terrain

The paradigm of Interculturalism<sup>16</sup> denotes a particularly uneven theoretical terrain. According to theatre semiologist Patrice Pavis, the current and past explorations into intercultural theory and practice have revealed that

. . . not only has intercultural theatre not been constituted as a recognized territory, but we are even unsure as to whether or not its future already lies behind it. Consequently, it might be more productive to speak of intercultural exchanges within theatre practice rather than of the constitution of a new genre emerging from the synthesis of heterogeneous traditions. (1996: 1)

This indicates that Interculturalism is still very much a theory in the process of construction. However, there is a rich resource of texts on Interculturalism and intercultural exchange in theatre practices globally (Schechner and Appel, 1990; Pavis, 1996; Marranca, 1991). From these texts, we may discern aspects of an intercultural theory upon which the discussions in this dissertation can be based. In order to construct a theoretical framework within which the dissertation may be located, writings from a number of performance theorists / practitioners have been appropriated, specifically those of Artaud, Grotowski, Brecht, and Brook.

One of the key questions to pose is why intercultural theatre practice exists at all and what problems arise in relation to its practice, politically, socially and culturally. Asian-American performance writer Daryl Chin observes:

Interculturalism hinges on the question of autonomy and empowerment. To deploy elements from the symbol system of another culture is a very delicate enterprise. In its crudest terms, the question is: when does that usage act as cultural imperialism? Forcing elements from disparate cultures together does not seem to be a solution that makes much sense, aesthetically, ethically, or philosophically. What does that power prove: that the knowledge of other cultures exists? That information about other cultures now is readily available? (1991: 94)

This observation leads to two important areas of examination around Interculturalism and intercultural theatre practice. First, one needs to problematize the motivations and strategies of theatrical practitioners who borrow or appropriate cultural forms from other performance

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<sup>16</sup> Interculturalism is involved in wider complex and diverse debates around Multi / Intra / Trans-culturalism, however, for the purposes of this dissertation, I am specifically interested in Interculturalism. Far more detailed accounts of the debates surrounding Multi / Intra / Trans-culturalism are to be found in: Bharucha (2000); Kelly (2002); and Smiers (2003).

traditions for their own theatre which is essentially what intercultural theatre does. Secondly, one needs to interrogate the manner in which theorists and practitioners, located in different contexts, specifically those from Africa and India, criticize Western intercultural theorists / practitioners. The issues are further complicated because of increasing globalization and an ever widening, uneven field of economic distribution, raising questions around autonomy and power at the level of the individual, the community and global society. According to American performance theorist and practitioner, and one of the key architects of Intercultural theory, Richard Schechner:

Intercultural performance needs to be studied along side (*sic*) with globalization because it arises as responses to and in some cases as protests against an increasingly integrated world. Both globalization and intercultural performance have historical antecedents. Globalization in colonialism and imperialism, intercultural performance as an outcome of “contact” among the world’s peoples. Clearly, these phenomena are linked. (2002: 226)

The observations made by Schechner highlight the importance in considering context, as context gives a society its particular historical and cultural identity. A marker of South Africa’s cultural and historical identity is that it is post-colonial<sup>17</sup>. In discussions around intercultural theatre practice it is, therefore, important to consider it in relation to post-colonial issues of cultural exchange. An examination of cultural exchange in a post-colonial context can expand on the connection between globalization and Interculturalism. Colonialism is based on a one-track mode of exchange. The colonized culture is exploited in terms of both material and cultural resources. Furthermore, the colonizer’s culture is established as dominant and hence, ideologically superior. This ideology infiltrates the colonized culture at the socio-political, economic and cultural levels.<sup>18</sup> This ideological infiltration produces cultural erosion which may lead to social disintegration and communal degradation.

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<sup>17</sup> A post-colonial context refers to countries that were once, or are now, colonies of other countries. In the case of South Africa it has, historically, been both a Dutch and British colony.

<sup>18</sup> Colonization is motivated by several historical factors: economic, seen in the rise of the new merchant class and their desire to find new markets and set up trading posts in the colonized territories; religious, specifically the dissemination of Christianity by means of missionaries throughout the indigenous communities already living in the colonized territories; and political, involving the spread of partial or full control through imperialistic acts (Childs and Williams, 1997). The drive in colonialism and imperialism may be considered as an attempt to bring indigenous people under the control of a dominant culture; in Africa, this dominant culture was mainly British or French. In addition, the underlying motivation for colonial dominance was economically to enrich the dominant culture through the appropriated resources of indigenous cultures (Childs and Williams, 1997). In addition to the appropriation of resources, indigenous performance forms were marginalized and replaced by Western cultural forms of expression. Bailey makes use of, and reclaims, indigenous performance forms for the contemporary South African context.

The politics of cultural exchange is one of the primary issues of concern. Intercultural practitioners, whose theatre practice is dependent on this, have been accused (Bharucha, 1993) of using culturally specific forms and practices for novelty value, with no genuine engagement with the source culture. In addition, there is a danger of making such practices seem merely fashionable, reducing complex cultural forms, practices, artifacts, and their dynamic relationship with history and socio-political processes, to a mere fetish. Cultural exchange in the theatre is a sensitive issue as the material that is appropriated is often linked to the way a culture constructs its identity. It is, therefore, imperative to acknowledge the source from which cultural material is taken in order to interrogate the issues around imperialist / colonialist exploitation and to avoid reproducing exploitative acts of the past.

In response to challenges of colonialist accusations (Bharucha, 1993; Dasgupta, 1991; Brown, 1998), I would argue that intercultural performance attempts to integrate worlds of performance and cultural traditions in a conscious effort to open channels of communication between, and within, cultures. It is for this reason that I agree with what Associate Professor and Chair of the Denver Department of Theatre, Craig Latrell calls 'intercultural transfer' (2000). He states that

Interculturalism is portrayed as something that can only be "explained" by inequities of power between East and West . . . The idea that artists in other societies might be using elements of Western culture for their reasons is rarely entertained. But why should we deny to other cultures the same sophistication and multiplicity of responses to "foreign" influences that we grant ourselves in viewing non-Western works? Why should we assume that intercultural transfer is primarily a politically based, one-way phenomenon? . . . Why not start with the assumption that other cultures are *not* just passive receivers of Western ideas and images, but active manipulators of such influences, and that intercultural borrowing is not simply a one-way process, but something far more interestingly dialogic? (2000: 44-47)

It will be proposed here that Bailey enters into a dialogue with his sources through the use of ritual forms and historical material in order to facilitate processes that are dialogic in terms of South Africa's relationship to the global context and to its past and present cultural situation.

The desire of intercultural performance to create theatre that shows the mixing of cultural performance practices within a unified whole, without negating the specificity of those cultures involved, is an ideal that can only be realized by examining each specific text in action. Equally important is that different theatrical practitioners in different contexts conceptualize and interpret this ideal through both similar and completely divergent methodologies. However, I would argue that intercultural theatre practices do not attempt to unify cultures but rather seek to use cultures' inherent differences to facilitate a dialogue through a performance act.

In order to facilitate cultural dialogue (Latrell, 2000), or exchange, intercultural practitioners adopt and develop certain methodologies. Interculturalism (Schechner, 2002: 226) as a practice deliberately combines cultural forms that create hybrids and thus rejects cultural purity. This is useful as Bailey's theatre practice may be seen as a hybrid form of theatrical expression. This notion clearly rejects intercultural performance as being aligned with the practice of colonialism. It is, however, necessary to acknowledge that wherever attempts at cultural exchange occur, and where the issue of representation is at stake, post-colonial criticism intervenes in what may be considered the often utopian and universalizing tendencies of intercultural theatre practice.

Two central debates arise from this awareness: first, the debate around the equity, or lack thereof, within the practice of cultural exchange and secondly, questioning whether elements of the source culture are respected for their cultural specificity. These debates, and others around the various strategies employed by Western and non-Western theatre practitioners, may be expanded on through an examination of the tenuous relationship between our post-modern context and the theory and practice of Interculturalism.

The relationship between Interculturalism and postmodernism is not only tenuous but also oppositional. It is within this oppositional relationship that a number of tensions are produced, and this has a direct bearing on intercultural performance practices. While postmodernism claims to recognize difference and multiple levels of reality, a myriad of ontological and epistemological systems, it also reflects a fragmented society. This fragmentation, as articulated by such postmodern theorists as Jean Baudrillard (1983) and Jean-François Lyotard (1984), produces a dehumanized society that halts any exchange of meaning at an interpersonal and communal level, and privileges the exchange of meaning at the global level mediated through the language of commerce and technology in the effort to propagate Western capitalism and democracy.

Globalization has developed under these circumstances and this, in turn, has affected intercultural performance in a way that Canadian cultural and performance theorist Mark Fortier describes as the marginalization of theatre in a post-modern world (1997:179-180). However, despite Fortier's view, many performance genres have taken the postmodern concept and utilized it building a performance mode that favours pastiche.

Pastiche attempts to mix performance forms, styles, and genres in an uncritical way so as to produce spectacles that emphasize the visual. Bailey, I would argue, does not employ pastiche.

The cultural forms he uses in his theatrical practice are utilized in order to make a critical comment on South African cultural identity. Interculturalism resists a pastiche of cultural forms, instead creating a practice that attempts to locate how cultures may interact to produce an exchange of meaning.

Interculturalists argue that cultures share common features, characteristics or practices, where the meaning produced by performances in one culture may be concomitant with, although not similar to, the cultural practices of another culture (Schechner and Appel, 1990). The search for these points of interaction between cultures is an active attempt to make communication possible, on the interpersonal and communal level, across political, national, social and cultural boundaries. I would argue that globalization (Mittleman, 2004) attempts to propagate a contemporary – and false – mythology of a unified world culture of equal opportunity. Interculturalism highlights the arbitrary nature of the divisions made within society, and seeks to challenge the myth of globalization. Globalization seeks not only to create interconnected, interdependent social, economic and technological systems, but also cultural systems (Mittleman, 2004). It does this through homogenizing diverse cultures within a ‘global village’, denying specific cultural identities. This may be associated with the way in which multiculturalism, at times, seems to seek to homogenize cultures as discrete groups existing in the same space but separated by difference.

Multiculturalism, as a philosophy, recognizes the multiplicity of cultures within societies and the world in general. However, it attempts to organize different cultures as features of a society where there is no interaction between them<sup>19</sup>. Multiculturalism wears a mask of cultural interaction where the focus is on public display rather than any in-depth engagement with a culture. The work of Interculturalists, by contrast, is to explore, expose, and reveal where those so-called interconnections do not occur between cultures, and other systems of meaning (Schechner, 1991). Interculturalists problematize the clash between and within different cultures and contexts, and examine questions of hybridity and fusion. Through engaging with ritual and history, Interculturalists attempt to problematize cultural interaction. As ritual and history are

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<sup>19</sup> One of the key critics of multiculturalism is Russian-born, American novelist, playwright, and philosopher Ayn Rand. Rand argued that multiculturalism attempted to subsume the individual identity of a person within a kind of cultural collectivism. Although this view has its roots in humanism, the point is that the cultural identity and needs of the individual are negated which makes the question of cultural rights problematic. Other important commentators to refer to are: Spivak (1990) and Bharucha (2000).

contextually defined, intercultural theatre practitioners often use this as a starting point in their performance practice.

With this in mind, therefore, I do not agree with Gilbert and Tompkins' (1996: 27) post-colonial criticism of intercultural theatre practice, when they state that, 'interculturalism and postmodernism intersect at the point of ahistorical, acultural synthesis'. They seem to be taking their cue from Indian post-colonial writer Anuraha Kapur (1990), commenting on what he deems to be the postmodern attempts to evacuate content, and hence context, from form. Kapur states that

In mounting an attack on mimesis, postmodernism claims as its territory non-mimetic forms from all over the world. Thus theatre from the 'Third World' comes to be defined by the needs and uses of postmodernism; forms from different cultural contexts become evacuated of subject matter and are seen as a series of formal options. (1990: 27)

The implication Kapur makes, here, is that culture is reduced to material objects that may be manipulated with a disregard for cultural specificity. The argument, however, is only partial and does not consider fully the variety of intercultural exchanges that take place, and have taken place, back and forth over the often overly polemic axes of East / West and North / South<sup>20</sup>. However, for the purposes of this chapter, where multiculturalism may be seen to negate difference and cultural specificity, intercultural theatre depends on difference, and the juxtaposition and/or clash of difference, for meaning to be communicated to an audience.

Implicit in Kapur's (1990) argument is that form is the only aspect of cultures that has been used in theatre practices. However, to suggest that form alone has been the focus of cultural exchange is reductive. Different practitioners operate, interculturally, in different ways. In addition to the context from within which they are operating, their use of material is influenced by their approach and aesthetic vision, and, in some cases, the political ideologies that inform their theatrical work. Artaud, Grotowski, Brecht and Brook are examples of theatre practitioners who have engaged in intercultural exchange.

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<sup>20</sup> These axes cannot be viewed in a schematized way. Rather, they denote general geographical locales. Connotatively, they express those Western (that is, from a Euro-American context) practitioners borrowing cultural forms from the East and vice versa, and, those practitioners in contexts such as Africa, South America and Australia, who have used Western forms of structure in their theatrical writing while altering the form by hybridizing it with indigenous cultural elements.



Each of the abovementioned practitioners approaches the notion of difference in a particular way, which is reflected in the theatre work they create. However, they may all be considered intercultural theatre practitioners operating in a Western context. Chin (1991) notes that in discussions around cultural difference the Eurocentric tendency is to negate the importance of 'other' cultures based on issues of power and dominance. He goes further, stating:

To put this in the most extreme, stringent terms: the Eurocentric ego declares that, if recognition of the validity of "otherness" must be accorded, then there is total equivalence, and absolute breakdown of distinction. The Eurocentric ego is making a declaration, which is: if it can no longer claim dominance and superiority, if equity must be awarded, if the Eurocentric ego can no longer presume on self-importance, then nothing is important . . . Instead of recognizing the status of "the other" as equal, there is the undermining of "the other" by declared indifference to distinction, while attempting to maintain the same balance of power. In fact, the very designation of "the other" is one such maneuver. (1991: 85)

What Chin (1991) makes apparent is that discussions around the notion of difference are loaded with issues of 'otherness' and processes of 'othering'. Postmodernism recognizes plurality, suggesting not only culture(s), but also history(ies), identity(ies) and knowledge(s). Furthermore, postmodern geography may be seen as post-colonial, which seeks to challenge colonial imperatives of economic, social and political exploitation, and neo-colonial acts of cultural appropriation. It is within this theoretical framework that notions of the 'other' become an important consideration within intercultural theatre practice generally and specifically within a contemporary South African context. Therefore, notions of culture, difference, and the 'other' may be seen to form the point of intersection between interculturalism, postmodernism and post-colonialism.

Built into the notion of the politics of difference are the problematic concerns around cultural representation. Notions of difference and representation are not abstract theoretical concepts, but rather social, as well as cultural, processes that are made visible in the way people relate to their changing contexts. People participating in cultural processes and social practices, such as theatre, engage with culture both locally and globally. It is this living interaction that Interculturalists draw on in their work to produce Immediacy in their theatre practice.

An example of a living interaction that Interculturalists draw on is the focus on individuals and their relationship with others within and across cultures. Intercultural theatre depends for its efficacy on its emphasis on human beings in relationships with each other, their cultural context, and other cultural contexts. As Chin points out:

Interculturalism is one of the ways of bringing previously suppressed material into the artistic arena, by admitting into a general discourse other cultures, cultures which had previously been ignored or suppressed or unknown. (1991: 95)

Through engaging with processes of a staged re-visioning of history by means of ritual-drama, Bailey highlights the cultural fractures that exist in South Africa today. He engages with bringing that which is socially repressed in South African society into the public domain of theatrical performance. Bailey's intercultural practice is informed both by a spatial and a temporal dialectic. That is, he attempts to produce immediate performances that have cultural, social, and spiritual efficacy, by engaging both the past and the present, as well as the local and the global contexts. This is the nature of Bailey's Interculturalism.

There is a danger, however, in using other cultures, their rituals and histories, in processes such as theatre. One has to consider, for example, the problematic notion of patronization. Chin points out that

. . . the general discourse (which we must define in terms of the dominant culture) must not deform other cultures by making them speak in the language of the dominant culture. African masks, for example, have a beauty that comes from the boldness of stylization, which, in turn, derives from the magical connotations of the masks' conception and execution. Cubism, of course, influenced by African art, has helped us to appreciate the specific beauty of African art, but if we only appreciate African art as an influence on Cubism, there's something wrong there. (1991: 95)

This leads to discussions around four broad areas in the debates around intercultural theatre work. First, artists who employ different cultural elements in their work often do so without acknowledging the cultural specificity of the forms they are employing. Secondly, artists may force disparate elements of different cultures together, whereby the meaning within the original elements is depleted. Thirdly, such practices come from, and lead to, the possible evacuation of culturally specific and contextually bound content from form. Chin points toward a fourth area of concern, namely that 'The idea of interculturalism as simply a way of joining disparate cultural artifacts together has a hidden agenda of imperialism' (1991: 87).

These core concerns need to be addressed in relation to the debates of the dissertation around intercultural theatre, as they form the major focus in critiquing intercultural theatre as both a cultural process and social practice.

### 1.2.2 Performance as cultural process and social practice

Two key notions that underpin discussions around theatre as a cultural process and social practice are form and content. The primary link between theatre and the context in which it is constructed is through the forms it employs and the material that it uses. Bailey's intercultural work involves the use of cultural forms and historical material rooted specifically in the South African context. Form and content, therefore, in the three plays under investigation, are both bound up within issues of cultural exchange and representation.

Intercultural work, in the theatre, generally attempts to re-locate theatricality somewhere other than in the spoken word. That is, the emphasis in intercultural theatre practice has largely shifted from a focus on content to one on form. However, this is a generalization, and content, in many examples of intercultural performance, is as important to consider as form.

The meaning generated in any theatrical work comes from the relationship between form and content within performance. This points to two interrelated considerations: first, the necessity of interrogating the ways in which forms are used in a practitioner's work in an attempt to discover the motivations behind their use of those culturally specific forms, and secondly, the fact that form refers to a multitude of elements and cannot be viewed as a singular aspect of performance.

Any theatrical work employs a multitude of physical and visual forms in articulating its meaning. The use of the physical body in performance, the way bodies relate to each other in performance, and any cultural performance traditions that may permeate the performance are all visual aspects of performance that need to be related to the performer. Form also refers to certain structures and / or structural patterns. These structures include the way the stage space is arranged, the way the performance orientates the actor / audience relationship, how performers are arranged in the stage space, where certain events in the performance take place, and the performance of reinterpreted, constructed, or actual rituals in performance that may contain programmatic (Bell, 1992)<sup>21</sup> features and whose enactment in the performance is programmatic in itself.

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<sup>21</sup> The term 'programmatic' (Bell, 1992) refers not only to the ritual itself but also to the ritual within the performance as a whole. Rituals contain certain practices that happen at very particular times within designated places within the ritual space set up in performance. In terms of the performance, the ritual itself happens at a particular time and within a particular place within the stage space of the performance. This has the effect of highlighting the significance of the ritual not only within the performance, but also for the individuals enacting the ritual and those who are spectators to it.

The material used in intercultural theatre practice also carries its own structures of composition, language and purpose. This material is often historical in nature. Historical material is then re-structured in order to serve the intentions of a particular artist or performance group. Performance relies on form and content operating together to generate meaning. Together, therefore, these key notions are central in considering the concept of a performance text.

The notion of a performance 'text' arises out of the development of Performance Studies (Schechner, 2002) and the study of systems of theatrical signification (Bennett, 1990; Counsell, 1996; Esslin, 1987). Generally speaking, what is termed 'performance' can be anything from sport to conventional theatre, a media event, an awards spectacle, a Balinese shadow play, a demonstration of Zulu *ingoma* dancing for a group of European tourists, or a voodoo ritual in a Haitian village. What connects these, and many other examples, is not that they are performances *per se*, but the performative elements that they share which are articulated in different ways.

Performative elements include the following: they each happen at a specific time and within a specific place; there is a distinction between those who are performing and those who are being performed for; and they each arise out of a context from which they draw to generate their meaning.

Arguably these performative elements make the possibilities for performance and performative acts innumerable. The notion of performativity is influenced by diverse factors, which have forced theorists to develop strategies, beyond literary ones, in order to analyse, critique and examine acts of performance. One of the major developments in this area, especially important to theatre studies, has been the recognition that the lexical meaning of a play, as it appears on the printed page, is only one component of the performance 'text'. Theatrical semiologists, such as Susan Bennet (1990), Colin Counsell (1996) and Martin Esslin (1987) highlight the importance of the actor within the performance act, arguing that all other systems of signification centre on the actor. As Esslin observes (1987: 59), 'The actor is . . . the essential ingredient around which all drama revolves . . . there can never be drama without the actor.' This centrality of the performer is significant in terms of the meaning making process and how Bailey's theatre operates through visual modes that incorporate the performer in ritual processes and reinterpretations of historical narratives.

Bennett reveals some useful points of connection with Interculturalism. She considers reception across cultures in relation to the perception that any performance has the seemingly ubiquitous ability to be 'consumed'. Bennett raises the question:

How, in any event, do we 'really consume'? It is that consuming another's 'civilization', whether consciously or not, presents particular and often fraught concerns. The interest in this not-like-us theatre is apparently especially (only?) its otherness, its seeming inability to be understood (and, as such, to be 'really consumed') by conventional receptive processes. (1990: 167)

This is an important consideration in intercultural theatre practice. Intercultural theatre, and theatre in general, generates meaning through its relationship to its extra-theatrical context. The same theatrical work, performed in different contexts, will be received in different ways. It is when this fact is ignored that intercultural practitioners, especially those from a Western context, are critiqued, on the basis that they are eliding cultural specificity (Bharucha, 1996). Bennett goes on to claim:

It is worth remarking that while audiences in the West cannot understand non-Western theatre by the same processes as they would apply to a performance of, say, a Shakespeare play, its Western contextualizing (presentation in a building designated as a theatre space, the spatial boundaries of audience/stage, conventions of lighting, and so on) renders a performance recognizable as theatre. (1990: 167-168)

I would argue that intercultural theatre attempts to re-align our position to another culture through performance. What intercultural theatre practitioners attempt to do through performance is to ask an audience to connect what they see as theatre to the extra-theatrical aspects of context. This in turn generates the social and spiritual implications of intercultural theatre. Thus, attention must be paid to those performative aspects that require what performance theorist Marvin Carlson (1996: 16), observing Richard M. Dorson, calls a 'contextual approach'.

In brief, this approach shifts the emphasis in interpretation from a purely textual analysis of the performance act, to one that considers the particular play's function as a performative and communicative act within a specific cultural situation. Intercultural theatre practices intersect with this conceptualization of the performance text in terms of the importance placed on the performer and the use of culturally defined performance traditions. Therefore, not to take too phenomenological<sup>22</sup> a standpoint, intercultural theatre places emphasis on human experience and

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<sup>22</sup> Phenomenology grew out of the philosophical movement in the early twentieth century developed by German philosopher Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, and the French philosophers, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jean-Paul Sartre. This philosophy later developed into a theory that bases itself in the

human (inter)action within and among different cultures. As German-born multi-media theatre artist and performance theorist Johannes Birringer claims:

In the new age of technological engineering of culture, what “sociological space” would be left for the theatre if it did not concern itself with what is most human and most fragile about it: the human actor? One answer has been given by the new emphasis in the research and pedagogy of theatre anthropology and cross-cultural performance study. Similarly, intercultural performance practices, by multi-ethnic theatre and dance companies that perform internationally, have complicated the whole question of how we understand other performance models, languages, codes of acting, and techniques of the body, and how we distinguish different cultural traditions and their intrinsic qualities from the “perverted pantomimes” of these qualities. (1991: 149)

Implicit in Birringer’s view are two central pressures exerted on intercultural theatre practice as a result of postmodernism. First, one must understand how we may actively engage with the performance forms of another culture. In addition, there needs to be an increased sensitivity in the way we engage with cultures, drawing attention to subject position and context. Secondly, one must challenge the way in which many cultures, African and Indian being two examples, have been pejoratively imaged by some Western practices.

These have been the subject of interrogation, for example, in much of the work of Latin American performance artists Guillermo Gómez-Peña (2000) and Coco Fusco (2004)<sup>23</sup>. Again this type of work seeks, through the clash of cultural context, to shape meaning through intercultural exchange in performance. Intercultural theatre does not only use context to generate meaning but also relates contexts in terms of past and present. This notion may be expanded upon through an examination of intertextual strategies that are employed in intercultural theatre practice.

In keeping with the idea of a performance text is the notion of intertextuality<sup>24</sup>, a postmodern strategy of reading multiple texts with and against each other in order to make alternative meanings that come from the relationship between texts, rather than the texts themselves.

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examination and critique of human action and experience, and how people interact and see their world. It is especially evident in theories of performance such as the phenomenon of acting. As acting and performance theorist John Harrop (1992: 5) states, ‘Only the actor is both present on stage and yet at the same time absent, replaced by the illusion he or she creates.’

<sup>23</sup> Guillermo Gómez-Peña (2000) and Coco Fusco (2004) are Latin-American performance artists who produce politically charged work, for a Western audience, which directly engages with colonial and neo-colonial issues of identity and representation.

<sup>24</sup> The term ‘intertextuality’ was coined by post-structuralist Julia Kristeva (1986) in 1966. The term has been appropriated, amended and developed by many theorists and critics. As far as the term relates to the subject of this dissertation, it is intended to refer to the quoting of past cultural material, especially history, to comment on the present cultural heritage that South Africa has accumulated and specific examples of Bailey’s inscriptions of other texts, for example, *Ipi N’tombi* (1974) a musical by Bertha Egnos Godfrey and Gail Lakier, through *Ipi Zombi*? (1998).

Intertextuality is employed in intercultural theatre where, and when, the desire arises to challenge perceptions of the 'other' and to interrogate further the politics of representation. The critique of this aspect of Interculturalism must be examined at the level of content as well as form and all other aspects of performance that move meaning beyond the written word.

The relationship between form and content in a performance context may be seen as one way to conceptualize a connection between the notion of a performance text and intertextuality. Intertextuality is a strategy employed by Interculturalism to inscribe texts and cultural practices from the past with new meaning in order to reclaim and re-represent previous pejorative cultural representations.

### **1.3 Interculturalism in Practice**

This examination of intercultural theatre practice seeks to appropriate key elements from a number of theories in order to fit the specific needs of this dissertation. I have chosen to focus on specific artists and the contribution they have made to the developing theatrical mode of intercultural expression. What is considered to be intercultural theatre may be loosely defined as involving the conscious mixing of different cultural elements. At the same time, debates occur around whether this cultural mixing is done in the name of theatrical innovation and/or cultural exchange. I am attempting to examine the complexities that arise from the use of culturally specific forms, and contextually bound and defined content, that have been translated from their own contexts to another. Cultural exchange in theatre is largely about translation; however, problems arise when one begins to consider the variety of alternatives that arise from the act of translation.

Translation requires an engagement with discourse and the inherent ideology(ies) of that discourse. When a theatrical practitioner borrows from another culture they are effectively translating that culture's ideology from its own context to another. What is problematic is that ideology in one context may function differently in another, or not function at all. Translation, of a lexical nature, has dominated such cultural borrowing. However, translation in intercultural theatre practice cannot limit itself to language. It must be extended into the translation of forms, mythic or historical material, and cultural performance practices.

The translation of form and myth has dominated the traffic of cultural exchange in theatre between the East and the West. According to semiologist and theatre historian Erika Fischer-Lichte, the 1970s serve as a useful marker from which to begin to observe developments in intercultural theatrical practice. She claims that cultural exchange in theatre practice has also given rise to certain problems, asking:

Did these obvious coincidences happen randomly (made possible because of the speed of the communication flow provided by mass media, international theatre festivals, etc.)? Have the productive associations of the theatre of one culture with elements of foreign theatre traditions fulfilled quite different functions in each respective case, rendering any comparison between them senseless? Or might there be a similar approach employed by all, suggesting an underlying similarity that would make the comparison of the phenomenon of interculturalism not only useful but also fruitful? (1996: 28)

These questions seek to problematize certain assumptions about the motivation behind Western theatre practitioners' engagement with different cultural performance modes. Western theatrical practitioners, especially those of the historical avant-garde (Innes, 1993), have challenged the bourgeois theatre of illusion in the name of creating a 'universal theatre language'<sup>25</sup> by tracing what is common between cultures.

Intercultural theatre practitioners are less concerned with the ideological implications of cultural exchange and more so with the social and spiritual ramifications of the cultural processes involved in creating intercultural work. In the following section of this chapter, I will discuss certain elements within the theory and practice of Artaud, Grotowski and Brecht, as they directly affect my theorizing of Bailey's theatrical practice<sup>26</sup>.

### **1.3.1 Artaud's reintroduction of ritual into theatrical practice**

Arguably one of the first practitioners, or rather theatrical thinkers, to view Eastern cultural traditions as a progressive influence on Western theatrical practices was Artaud. Much of his writing, I would argue, has little to do with the way we *make* theatre and concerns itself more

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<sup>25</sup> The search for universality in theatrical expression is a problematic notion. It has grown largely out of Liberal Humanist notions that attempt to reduce human experience and action to essences or archetypes. However, if one accepts that human experience and action are contextually bound, human experience is necessarily different between and among people, and actions carry culturally specific meaning. This makes it difficult, and dangerous, to assume a kind of universalism in theatrical practice.

<sup>26</sup> My discussion around Artaud (1976), Grotowski (1968), and Brecht (1964) is selective, and therefore, necessarily partial. In the discussion I chart out what can be appropriated from their theories of intercultural practice to further my own conceptualization of Bailey's work. More detailed information about these practitioners respectively may be found in: Sontag (1976); Wolford (2000); Leach (2004).



with the way we *think* about making theatre. Artaud was also one of the first practitioners / theorists of performance to search for a reconstruction of theatre. Artaud reacting specifically to nineteenth-century European genres, such as melodrama, that removed the ritual and transformative potential from performance, envisaged a shift from a theatre seen merely as entertainment to one based on, specifically Eastern, ritual.

Artaud based much of his writing on a metaphysics of theatrical expression which arose out of his attention to spectacle<sup>27</sup>. When considering the influence of Balinese dance-theatre on his own developing aesthetic theories, Artaud claims that

We cannot approach this spectacle head on; it assails us with a superabundance of impressions, each richer than the last, but in a language to which it seems that we no longer possess the key. And this kind of irritation created by the impossibility of finding the thread, tracking down the beast, putting one's ear to the instrument in order to hear better, is only one more of its charms. And by language I do not mean the idiom that cannot be grasped on first hearing, but a kind of theatrical language which is external to all *spoken language* and which seems to contain a vast experience of the stage, an experience in comparison with which our productions, based exclusively on dialogue, seem like mere stammerings. (1976: 218)

The idea of repositioning theatrical spectacle at the centre of the performance experience is an adjustment of dominant Euro-American theatrical conventions that privilege the written and/or spoken word. In the writings of Aristotle (1996: 13), spectacle is described as:

... attractive, but ... very unartistic and ... least germane to the art of poetry. For the effect of tragedy is not dependant on performance and actors; also, the art of property-manager has more relevance to the production of visual effects than does that of the poet.

By contrast, Artaud articulated spectacle as the primary point of interest and vehicle for the creation of meaning. Spectacle, for Artaud, did not only include visual aspects of staging but also the actor's body, and physical forms, such as rituals, used in performance. Many theatre practitioners in the latter half of the twentieth century, like Artaud, sought to challenge Aristotle's theory. This has resulted in studies around how the visual elements of performance, including the performer, create meaning. I would argue that intercultural theatre practitioners have developed

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<sup>27</sup> Artaud was not the first theatrical theorist to acknowledge the element of spectacle in theatrical performance. The ancient Greek writer Aristotle in *The Poetics* (Malcolm Heath trans, 1996) conceived of spectacle as one of the six core components of dramatic art. Spectacle refers to all the visual aspects of performance and the way in which they interact to create meaning. According to Aristotle, all aspects of dramatic art were subordinate to plot; Artaud re-works this to highlight the visual and visceral aspects of the theatrical experience. The visual is important to Bailey as he, too, highlights theatre as a visual experience.

this kind of theatre through their engagement with performance traditions that emphasize the performer's body. Intercultural theatre is concerned with crossing borders raised by language and, therefore, engages the body more strongly as a signifier within the performance act.

Bailey makes use of spectacle in a variety of ways. Through the ritual design of the space, the visual aspects of lighting and costume, the use of stage properties, masks and rituals, the actor becomes the primary vehicle in creating the Immediacy of Bailey's theatre. He claims:

A human being – his body, his voice, his mannerisms, his customs – is a mask for all the flux inside and beyond each of us; the flux which is clenched into a particular individual, tamed and conventionalised early in our lives. I want the relationship between the physical entity and the boundless etheric ocean to be disturbed. I tell my performers that the play itself must be like a dance . . . The role: the emotions, moves, characterization: these are all superficial elements to be learnt and mastered: the mask to be worn in performance. Now the inner energy that presses against this mask must be stirred up. I want it to pulse against the physical body like a hand against the taut skin of a drum. I want human fire on my stage. (2003: 21-22)

The emphasis on the performer's physicality and energy on stage connects to Artaud's notions of the performer after he viewed Balinese dance-theatre. The dance-theatre of Bali signaled to Artaud that a theatre based on gesture, sound, and the use of the actor's body, could give rise to what he terms "pure theatre" (1976: 218). Furthermore, the effect of this kind of theatre, with its interlocking systems of signification of gesture, sound, body and movement,

Gives us a marvelous complex of pure theatrical images for the comprehension of which a whole new language seems to have been invented: the actors with their costumes form true hieroglyphs that live and move around. And these three-dimensional hieroglyphs are in turn embellished with a certain number of gestures – mysterious signs which correspond to some fabulous and obscure reality that we Westerners have definitively repressed. (1976: 221)

However, Artaud does little to demystify the nature and cultural specificity of Eastern performance forms and their influence on his own developing artistic logic. One could, for example, challenge Artaud on the basis that he interprets the Balinese dance-theatre form only in terms of what it can give to Western theatre, thereby making his argument resolutely Eurocentric. There is a danger in Artaud's writing that elides the cultural specificity of the form<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> Balinese dance-theatre uses gestures and dance steps that have been passed from generation to generation, and in that way it is a living and lived art form. The themes of the dance-theatre form draw on religious texts, such as the two Sanskrit epic poems the *Mahabharata* (Murdoch, 1987) and the *Ramayana* (Dharma, 2000), that form the backbone of Hindu principles for living. These two texts also provide the basis for the content of many eastern rituals. Simply to use the forms without negotiating their religious, cultural and social significance is to incur the accusation of cultural imperialism, as articulated by such intercultural critics as Bharucha (1996) and Dasgupta (1987).

What is perhaps more significant for my purposes is that Artaud recognized the importance of ritual and insisted on the necessity of its re-introduction back into theatrical practice in order to re-enliven the theatrical event. Artaud attempts to appeal to the social, spiritual, communal and individual human aspects of society, through sensual experience rather than the intellectualization of the theatrical event. The Polish theatre practitioner and theorist Jerzy Grotowski took this idea further, and developed it in a very different way. Where Artaud saw the reorganization of theatricality in the overall visual spectacle of performance, Grotowski focuses on the changing dynamic between the audience and actor, as well as the nature of performance itself.

### 1.3.2 Grotowski: the actor as theatrical / ritual performer

What can be drawn from Grotowski is the emphasis he places on the development of the actor's technique and the representation of the actor's body in space. Grotowski envisaged a technique, a process of training the actor that would reveal the actor's self through the stripping away of accreted values and ways of behaviour. As he states:

If the actor, by setting himself a challenge publicly challenges others, and through excess, profanation and outrageous sacrilege<sup>29</sup> reveals himself by casting off his everyday mask, he makes it possible for the spectator to undertake a similar process of self-penetration. If he does not exhibit his body, but annihilates it, burns it, frees it from every resistance to any psychic impulse ... he repeats the atonement; he is close to holiness. (1968: 34)

The revealing of oneself so that an audience may recognize the potential to transcend their own limitations involves a confrontation described by Grotowski as a

... **confrontation** (*sic*) with myth rather than identification. In other words, while retaining our private experiences, we can attempt to incarnate myth, putting on its ill-fitting skin to perceive the relativity of our problems, their connection to the "roots," and the relativity of the "roots" in the light of today's experiences. If the situation is brutal, if we strip ourselves and touch an extraordinary intimate layer, exposing it, the life-mask cracks and falls away. (1968: 23)

Grotowski wanted to create a theatre based in the sacred and the holy and he saw this theatre emerging out of the actor. The actor, then, is constructed as the centre of the performance act,

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<sup>29</sup> I would argue that Grotowski means that the actor, by transcending socially and culturally constructed norms around the actor, the body, and how theatre operates in society, challenges ideological constructs and limitations. For example, the way he presents Christopher Marlowe's play *Doctor Faustus* (1604, 1616) in a monastery challenges conventional theatrical space and perceptions around what is and what is not appropriate in theatre practice. Grotowski's version was entitled *Dr Faustus: Textual Montage* (1964).

much like a priest would be in Catholic liturgical practices or a Shaman presiding over an important ritual.

Grotowski's writing and theatrical work have what may be called religious aspects, as observed by Canadian theatrical historian Christopher Innes:

This religious emphasis and the specifically Christian context of Grotowski's stage-work can be traced to his roots in Polish culture, with its strong Roman Catholic tradition, while growing up under Marxist dictatorship gave him a more rigid and philosophically consistent form of materialism to react against than the liberal capitalism experienced by his Western counterparts. (1993: 150)

This clearly reflects the importance of context in Grotowski's work. However, rather than religion for its own sake, Grotowski was primarily interested in the intersection between the sacred and secular aspects of society and how they could then impact on an audience in profound ways. According to Innes:

The terms he uses to describe his work are . . . characteristically religious: transgression, profanation, passion, incarnation, transfiguration, atonement, confession and, above all, communion. But although his productions specifically attacked what is sacred in the form of organized Christianity, his choice of texts has always been within the 'great tradition'<sup>30</sup>. (1993: 150)

Bailey also makes use of what is considered sacred, namely ritual, and secular, namely history, in order to bring about a sense of communion in his theatrical work.

The notion of communion, in a theatrical context, was first proposed by Russian actor, director and acting theorist Constantine Stanislavski (1980). Commenting on Stanislavski's notion of 'communion', British drama and theatre academic Bella Merlin observes:

. . . if drama is about communication between characters, acting must be about genuine communication between actors. Only when actors can convince each other of their objectives through an uninterrupted exchange of thoughts and actions will the spectators be convinced by what they see on stage. So, communication, therefore, operates on two simultaneous levels: directly between the actors and indirectly with the audience, whom Stanislavski describes as the 'spiritual acoustics' (Stanislavski, 1980: 204). (2003: 64-65)

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<sup>30</sup>Frank Raymond Leavis (1895 – 1978) through his work as an English critic and teacher constructed a canon of what he considered worthwhile English literature as published in *The Great Tradition* (1948). This work has been subject to much academic critique. Also see footnote number 12 on notions of the Western canon.

One can see the similarity between Stanislavski's and Grotowski's religious rhetoric. However, in Grotowski's understanding, communion within a theatrical context involves breaking down not only the traditional division that occurs between spectator and actor in the Western theatre; in addition, Grotowski aimed to bring the individuals making up an audience, divided and dislocated from each other in everyday life, into a common and shared experience that transcends their fractured selves and brings them into closer contact with their essential selves<sup>31</sup>. The notion of transcending boundaries and borders of a political, social, communal and/or cultural nature, is in keeping with the philosophy underpinning Interculturalism where a desire to share across cultural boundaries is the focus.

The second important aspect of Grotowski's work for the purposes of this dissertation is the way in which text functioned in his productions. In his textual montage of sixteenth-century British dramatist Christopher Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* (1616), Grotowski attempts to treat the character of Faust as representing the individual within the audience seeking the divine. Grotowski achieves the participatory aspect of communion by having the audience for his production, sit at a table on top of which the actors perform, literally, a 'Last Supper' before Faust is taken to Hell.

Grotowski also attempted to introduce a distance<sup>32</sup> between the actors and what the audience was actually seeing, so that the audience could recognize the part they had to play within the overall performance, as opposed to occupying the role of the traditional passive observer (Innes, 1993). According to Innes, citing Watson (1993):

The 'food' served up to them by Faustus was a montage of the scenes of his life, acted in front of them on the tables . . . However, at the same time as being participants in a metaphoric communion, where they were receiving the sacramental offering of Faustus' sacrificial damnation, the audience also found themselves representing the banality of everyday existence.<sup>33</sup> (1993: 151-152)

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<sup>31</sup> The philosophical notion of essentialism is problematic. It is a notion that posits that there are certain core truths common to all human experience. What makes this notion problematic is that it elides context, as this is the force which shapes experience and is specific to each individual, community and society. While recognizing the problematics of essentialism, I do accept Grotowski's (1968) definition, in so far as it informs the development of an intercultural performance technique.

<sup>32</sup> The notion of distance in Grotowski's performances is best observed in the *Akropolis* (1965), as Innes (1993: 151) comments, 'transferred by Grotowski to Auschwitz from its original setting in Cracow Cathedral on the basis of a description of it as "the cemetery of the tribes" in one of Wyspianski's letters, the fragmentation of the audience was used to isolate the spectators. The actors ignored them while moving through them, so that the physical proximity paradoxically emphasized distance.'

<sup>33</sup> In Christopher Innes' book *Avant Garde Theatre 1892 – 1992* (1993) the quotations comes from Ian Watson's *Towards a Third Theatre: Eugenio Barba and the Odin Teatret* (1993: 84).

Grotowski maintains that this kind of theatre could only be facilitated and created by the 'holy actor' (Grotowski, 1968). The eradication of cultural blocks which manifest physically in the body of the actor is the product of Grotowski's actor training process, namely the notion of *via negativa*, which, according to Grotowski (1968: 17), is not "a collection of skills but an eradication of blocks." In addition, Innes describes Grotowski's methodology as being:

... designed to remove psychological blocks in the actors, to allow them to strip away the 'daily mask of lies' that form their external personae, leading to 'a liberation from complexes in much the same way as psychoanalytic theory'. In theory, this enables the actor to reveal their essential being in performance [where] every production became not only a celebration of the 'holiness' of man, but also simultaneously an existential challenge to the audience. (1993: 152)

This practice of creating theatre and the training of the 'holy' actor is the product of Grotowski's (1968) early work, particularly his notion of Poor Theatre. The development of the actor and the basic principles expounded on in *Towards a Poor Theatre* (1968) are further explored in the most inter / transcultural phase of his work, namely the explorations in his Theatre of Sources (Wolford and Schechner, 2000).

In the Theatre of Sources (2000), Grotowski together with his many collaborators, engaged in theatrical research around other performance traditions. This comprised bringing together masters of particularly formalized performance traditions in order to discover principles that could be shared to create a particular kind of performer. This performer would be capable of transcending cultural boundaries, supporting Schechner's claim that "Grotowski wanted to find specific elements of performance that transcended the particular cultures in which they were embedded" (2002: 244).

During this phase Grotowski examined Eastern performance forms in so far as they could help to develop the individual actor. Through the development of the actor's expressive and communicative skills by training the physical body, the ensemble emerged as a cohesive group based on mutual understanding of the performer's body in performance. The work culminated in the 1983 – 86 period of work known as Objective Drama (Wolford and Schechner, 2000) based at the University of California, Irvine. According to Schechner:

The underlying assumption of Objective Drama and Grotowski's final phase, "Art as Vehicle" (1986 – 99) is that there is an intersection where the most intimate-personal meets the most objective-archetypal. Locating that intersection demanded what Grotowski called "rendering", used both in its sense of an artist's preparatory sketch ... and in the sense of the distillation of substances into their essences. The substances to be rendered were traditional performances yielding "vibratory songs" and

movements and performers yielding their innermost associations. The result was the formation of the Performer performing the Action – an attempt to recreate the “origin” of performance. (2000: 244)

The performance traditions with which Grotowski and his collaborators engage are based in ritual and ceremonial practices. Ritual is a central aspect in both Grotowski’s and Bailey’s notions around the nature of the performance act. That is, notions of sacrifice, transformation, and communion, may be deployed in performance acts that seek to transcend the limitations of a perceived social reality. Another way in which perceptions and experience of social reality may be challenged and altered is through the use of history.

### **1.3.3 Brecht: ‘Historification’ and ‘*Verfremdungseffekt*’: towards altering perceptions of social reality**

History, together with ritual, is an important intercultural signifier within this dissertation. The German theatre practitioner Bertolt Brecht theorized a theatre that would engage an audience actively through the use of history and what he terms as *Verfremdungseffekt* (V-effects). These are two components of Brecht’s overall notion of Epic theatre<sup>34</sup>. Only these two components of Brecht’s theatre are discussed here in terms of how they relate to Interculturalism and Bailey’s appropriation of these components.

Generally, the purpose of exploring history, in Brecht’s terms, is to use the past in order to reflect on the present context. History, in this sense, is set up in a dialectical relationship with contemporary circumstances. This use of history – or historification – is one of the so-called V-effects used to generate Epic form and critical engagement through distance and critical debate. However, before examining the specifics of these two components one must examine them in terms of the context out of which they evolved.

Brecht’s theories of theatre practice arose in reaction to social and political ills facing German society in the early decades of the twentieth-century. The post-World War I environment in the 1920s and 1930s, Brecht’s interest in Marxist theory together with increased industrialization in the nineteenth-century, the development of new technologies ushered in by a new scientific age, and the social problems generated by these developments, created the grounds in which Brecht’s

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<sup>34</sup> This is, necessarily, a fairly broad discussion of Epic theatre; a more specific and detailed account of how Brecht expounded upon his theories of theatrical representation is to be found in John Willett’s translation of Brecht’s writings on theatre in *Brecht on Theatre* (1964).

Marxist principles took root. In addition, the prevailing dominant theatre forms such as Naturalism<sup>35</sup> and Expressionism<sup>36</sup> advocated illusion, mysticism and entertainment for their own sake. As Robert Leach, theatre director, author and currently teacher of drama at the University of Edinburgh, observes:

. . . this scientific age was characterized by fluctuating money markets and wheat distribution, the development of petroleum complexes, and so on, which humanity had to master. Artistically, this provided subject matter not easily comprehended by a form developed to enhance a mythical mystique. (2004: 116)

A connection with Bailey is evidenced by the way he attempts to articulate how some theatre in South Africa has failed to address the dangers of cultural erosion by globalizing processes which may be paralleled to Brecht's reactions to the failure of dominant theatre forms of his time to unmask the power relations implicit in the rise of capitalism and Nazism. This connection also points to the potential efficacy of theatre, namely, the potential for performance to have an effect on the audience who, in turn, would effect change in the world.

The dominant theatre forms of Brecht's time were not concerned with effecting a change in social reality and in some ways had completely cut themselves off from the context in which they were being produced. According to Esslin (1965), Brechtian theatre was specifically reacting to

. . . a theatre in which bombastic productions of the classics alternate with empty photographic replicas of everyday life, whether melodrama or drawing-room comedy, a theatre which oscillates between emotional uplift and after-dinner entertainment. (1965: 107)

However, entertainment as well as instruction were not ignored by Brecht; instead, he envisaged an art form that would reject 'what he called the "culinary theatre", the theatre which merely provides mental food-stuffs, to be gobbled up and then forgotten' (Esslin, 1965: 110) and would instead produce pleasure in the audience by making them 'discover new truths, [and] the exhilaration we experience when we enlarge our understanding' (Esslin, 1965: 112). Brecht

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<sup>35</sup> Naturalism is a theatrical movement emerging in the late nineteenth-century which advocated that character is determined by physical environment and therefore placed an emphasis on reproducing life on stage in as much detail as possible. The key practitioner was Emile Zola (1873) and his theories lead to the development of Realism (Hewitt, 1970).

<sup>36</sup> Expressionism, as a theatrical movement, has its roots in German Fine Art of the early twentieth century. Its development in theatre flourished after World War I and sought to explore, and express, the inner psychology, emotion and mood of the individual and articulate the dehumanization of society through industrialization and urbanization.



attempted to achieve this through a reconfiguration of the relationship between the performance and the audience as well as through maintaining the centrality of the actor in performance.

Brecht's reconfiguration of theatrical discourse involves another re-consideration of the audience's role within the performance act. This reconfiguration involved a critique of conventional theatre's dependence on illusion and character identification. Brecht, writing on the V-effects inherent in Chinese acting, in comparison to the illusionist tendencies of Western actors, 'The Western actor does all he can to bring his spectator into the closest proximity to the events and the character he has to portray' (cited in Willett, 1964: 93). If, in the theatre, an audience identifies with a character, this means that an audience's ability to think, reflect and to alter perceptions is completely subsumed into the point of view of a single individual, usually the protagonist. Such theatre sets up hierarchies within the performance act itself and the audience judges whose story to focus on, instead of focusing on how relationships are influenced by what happens, and how this, in turn, impacts on the audience's perception and experience of social reality.

The role of the audience in Brechtian theatre may be construed as having a specific responsibility in terms of viewing the performance and being able to make informed decisions around it. However, the audience has to be enabled to make those evaluations and, to this end, Brecht applied his notion of V-effects, not only in terms of the stage design and script, but, perhaps more significantly, the actor and the performance. The set designs for his productions refused to disguise the theatre as a constructed space. Auditorium lights were often left on during productions, immediately dispensing with the primary separation between the audience and the performers that had featured in Naturalism. Sets tended to be simple and symbolic, and scene changes happened in full view of the audience. The scripts, influenced by historical narrative, were episodic, which also keys into the notion of history and the overall patterns of Epic theatre. According to Leach:

By studying people and their interrelationships in particular situations, epic [theatre] would enable opinions to be formed, and criticisms, or judgements, to be made . . . This led to an epic form of drama which, in terms of construction, does not lead to an inexorable climax, or revelation, but rather proceeds step by step . . . It is a montage, in which each scene has a self contained life, and, like the segments of a worm, each is capable of life even when cut from its neighbour. It implies, not an ending, but a continuing, for human relations do not just 'end', and opinions and judgements are formed and revised. (2004: 117)

However, it is perhaps primarily through the actor that V-effects reveal to an audience their responsibility in recognizing difference, highlighting observation, and promoting an informed re-determination of perception and experience of social reality and contemporary circumstance, the socio-economic and political reasons for actions and behaviour, rather than the actions and behaviours themselves.

Although Brecht pre-dates the rise of Interculturalism as articulated by Schechner (1991), there is an intercultural influence in the way his theories of the V-effect and the actor are influenced by his observation of Chinese acting practices (Willett, 1964). The V-effect, as expressed through the actor, is achieved in the way the actor demonstrates that s/he is being watched, that is, the separation between the audience and the performer is stripped away through the actor's ability to step out of character and narrate to the audience. As narrators, they are able to give information, describe their thoughts and other characters' thoughts, motives of characters, and the moral, social and spiritual implications of the events of the performance. In addition, the actor is able to operate in a self-referential capacity. As Brecht states:

The artist's object is to appear strange and even surprising to the audience. He achieves this by looking strangely at himself and his work. As a result everything put forward by him has a touch of the amazing. Everyday things are thereby raised above the level of the obvious and automatic. (1964: 92)

The capacity for the actor to be self-referential is articulated though occupying simultaneously the position of a character within the play and of a narrator figure as well as employing the V-effect whereby, for example, a woman might dress up as a man in order to comment on the construction of gender relations within society.

Brecht's notions of historicisation and, by extension, the V-effects he employs in order to achieve in the audience a heightened sense of social reality, may be interpreted as giving rise to the significance of temporal dialectics as an intercultural signifier. History and V-effects (or distancing devices) are a strategy which practitioners, such as Bailey, employ in order to articulate the temporal dialectics between a context's past and present as well as facilitating a dialogue between these two temporal positions in order to effect change, that is, the re-examination and re-visioning of preconceived notions of social reality.

## **1.4 Conclusion**

In terms of the subject of study in this dissertation, the global politics of intercultural exchange and representation influence my reading of Bailey's theatrical practice in the South African context. While form is enriched by ritual, or other codified performance practices, content shifts to focus on historical material. The use of codified cultural forms and historical elements yields different effects, which are combined in different ways to meet different ends across the three performance texts under investigation. In addition, ritual is used in Brook's sense, in that there is a search for Immediacy in the communication of shared meaning. History is used to acknowledge and to expose the difference, and contradictory relationship, between 'official' versions of history and the lived experience of communities and individuals operating within a post-colonial context. The way in which spatial and temporal dialectics operate through ritual and history, respectively, is developed further in Chapter Two, and further observations are made in terms of how ritual and history as intercultural signifiers operate in theatrical practices, specifically Bailey's, to effect change in social reality. Artaud, Grotowski and Brecht each expound a different theory of intercultural theatre. Each of these three practitioners engages notions of human relationships to their contexts and the centrality of the performer within the performance act. These practitioners also form the major European influences in Bailey's work.

## CHAPTER TWO

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### LOCATING BAILEY'S PRAXIS: CULTURAL CLASHES, CONTEXTS AND IMMEDIACY

#### 2.1 Introduction

One of the key questions raised by this dissertation considers how cultural workers, such as theatre practitioners, negotiate their aesthetic and political convictions within an increasingly globalized context, where the politics of difference and exchange, and the ethics of post-colonial representation, are the central issues at stake. Through an examination of intercultural theatre practice, and the philosophy underpinning Interculturalism, this chapter seeks to interrogate the politics of intercultural exchange within a post-colonial context.

There are many aspects that may characterize a theatrical work as intercultural. I have chosen to focus on an examination and interrogation of the use of ritual and history as intercultural signifiers within the theatrical practice of South African theatre practitioner Brett Bailey. 'Ritual' and 'history', however, are problematic terms as they denote a complex theoretical terrain that is contextually bound within a particular socio-political, economic and cultural milieu. Therefore, it is necessary to define how this dissertation conceptualizes ritual and history, and how they relate to performance.

The dialectics involved in history and ritual bring about an immediate and intercultural performance experience for the contemporary South African audience. This chapter contains an examination of how ritual and history create a spatial and temporal dialectic respectively. This entails understanding both ritual and history as intercultural signifiers. In terms of ritual and theatre, a clarification between them is necessary in order to define ritual as performative of cultural experience. While they are not identical, theatre and ritual both may be categorized among the plethora of social and cultural activities that pervade the African and South African contexts.

British theatre practitioner Peter Brook's concept of Immediate Theatre produces a strategy for coming to an understanding of how theatre may be considered ritualistic. However, Brook's

theatrical experiments, and responses to his theatrical work, form a large part of post-colonial critique of intercultural work in terms of Western practitioners in the African context. In the 1970s, Brook and the International Centre for Theatre Research explored performance traditions in North Africa. These explorations culminated in the development and performance of *The Conference of the Birds* (Heilpern, 1977). Nigerian literary critic Biodun Jeyifo (1996) poses questions in response to Brook's theatrical experiments in Africa, and these questions are useful as a framework for examining Bailey's intercultural theatre work within a South African context.

One cannot equate Brook and Bailey completely as they are working from different contexts. However, as European white men, they have both produced intercultural work within an African context. Jeyifo (1996: 156-157) poses three questions to interrogate intercultural work within an African context: firstly, the need to identify European and African sources that impact on and influence the theatrical work; secondly, once these sources have been examined, one must interrogate the apparent motivation behind the use of 'foreign' and 'indigenous' performance forms; thirdly, what ideological implications there are in the intercultural fusion of the 'foreign' and 'indigenous' and how this impacts one's reading of the work in a contemporary post-colonial context such as South Africa occupies. Bailey practises intercultural theatre within this context, where issues of exchange and representation are important considerations.

Bailey may be seen to be subverting the current of exchange by appropriating Western forms of theatre, and hybridizing these forms with ritual forms and historical content rooted in the South African context, in response to larger contextual factors such as globalization. Any discussion, however, of a particularly South African performance form in the post-apartheid context would be severely impoverished if a brief section on the conditions of South African theatre pre-1994 were not considered, as this serves further to contextualize Bailey's motivations for using African, or African influenced, cultural processes in his theatrical praxis. This chapter will end with some provisional conclusions on the nature of the relationship between Interculturalism, ritual and Immediacy.

## **2.2 Ritualized Theatre / Performance: Immediacy, Liminality and Efficacy**

One of the core questions of this dissertation is whether the use of ritual in the theatre practice of Brett Bailey facilitates the creation of an intercultural and immediate theatre for the South African context. Ritual is a problematic term as it references a variety of meanings, practices, beliefs and

knowledge systems. According to Schechner (1995: 229), ritual ‘has been [so] variously defined – as concept, praxis, process, ideology, yearning, experience, function – that it means very little because it means so much.’ Ritual, in this dissertation, is not seen as a singular, unified, cultural phenomenon; rather, the approach to the concept of ritual is interdisciplinary, drawing on post-colonial theory (Bharucha, 1993), Performance theory (Schechner, 2002), and anthropology (Turner, 1982) as well as Brook’s dramatic theory of Immediate theatre, in order to come to a fuller understanding of the dynamic way ritual operates as a signifier of Interculturalism in the work of Bailey.

### **2.2.1 The ritual in theatre, the theatre in ritual?**

Critical writing on the similarities between theatre and ritual, or the way in which theatre grew out of ritual, certainly in the Western sense of Euro-American theatre, is exhaustive and is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, in his book *An anatomy of drama* (1978), British theatre theorist Martin Esslin maintains that the central connection between ritual and theatre is that they both engender a collective experience. Esslin, however, in identifying what he calls the ‘feed-back effect’, overlooks certain elements such as the context of individuals attending any given performance. According to Esslin:

Positive reaction from the audience has a powerful effect on the actors, and so has negative reaction. If the audience fails to laugh at a joke the actors will instinctively play them more broadly, underline them, signal more clearly that what they saying is funny. If the audience responds, the actors will be inspired by the response and this in turn will elicit more and more powerful responses from the audience. This is the famous feed-back effect between the stage and the audience. But there is another equally powerful feed-back: between the individual members of the audience themselves. (1978: 25)

Such an argument, however, essentializes the experience of performance because context is being elided. Without context, audiences are defined as an homogenous group. Ritual elements in theatre may lead an audience to acknowledge the relationship between them, the stage and with each other, that is, ritual in performance may cause an audience to negotiate their own cultural position in relation to other individuals and groups both within and outside of their immediate context. However, these negotiations do not automatically or necessarily happen. Nonetheless, this is a goal of intercultural theatre practice.

Esslin is conceptualizing a particular relationship between the performers and audience members. The notion of the ‘feed-back’ effect is, in part, important in Bailey’s work, especially between

audience members because he emphasizes the communal aspect of performance through ritual. Bailey articulates the notion of community in the way the relationship between the actors and the audience is manipulated through the use of Xhosa ritual practices in performance. As the actors perform actual and reinvented rituals within the context of a play-within-a-play structure, Bailey evokes African meta-theatrical techniques and the re-staging of historical material, which allow the audience to become conscious of their own context. He constructs the audience as active witnesses, the idea being to coax the audience into a more cognitive realization of the relationship<sup>37</sup> between spatial and temporal dialectics within the context of a ritualistic performance. This is the basis of collective experience in Bailey's theatre<sup>38</sup>. According to South African theatre journalist John Matshikiza:

Collective perception is the coin Bailey likes to deal in. *Ipi Zombi?*, Bailey's 1998 offering at Grahamstown, was based on collective hysteria that turned into a lethal witch hunt near Kokstad. *iMumbo Jumbo* [1997] . . . was based on the exploits of trickster Nicholas Gcaleka who took the whole country on a roller-coaster ride to Scotland in search of the head of King Hintsa. This time round [1999] it is the legend of the prophetess Nongqawuse – a tale that is bound to be a tormented presence in the collective memory of South Africa for generations to come. (1999a: 2)

The notion of collectivity informs not only the way Bailey employs ritual in his theatrical work but also the material within which he chooses to engage.

The traditional view, in a Western sense, that drama arose out of ritual cannot be ignored; however, it is easy to speak of the connections between ritual and theatre in generic terms. A common platitude is that both theatre and ritual involve a collective experience that evokes a sense of communion. Collective experience, however, does not arise simply out of bringing together a group of people, made up of disparate individuals, who watch the same production. Collectivity, and by extension a sense of communion, are only assumptions. I would argue that collective experience arises out of the recognition of commonly shared specific needs within a group of specific people. These needs, in turn, arise out of specific circumstances occurring in specific contexts. The same elements inform the creation of rituals in society and give rituals their cultural specificity. Given the necessity of cultural specificity within both ritual and theatre,

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<sup>37</sup> This aspect of Bailey's work will be examined in more detail in Chapter Three. However, it is useful here to include Bailey's motivations for creating his kind of theatre as his theatrical work is informed by the inclusion of ritual elements in the productions under investigation.

<sup>38</sup> Bailey's work has been reviewed both positively and negatively within the print media. While the analysis of this critical response to his work is interesting, it is not included in this dissertation. However, certain articles have been included in Appendix C for reference purposes; for the purposes of this discussion, however, the observations of black South African journalist John Matshikiza (1999a: 2) are noted.

the connection between ritual and theatre, or the use of ritual in theatrical practices, may be seen to be inherently political. Any attempt to create a ritualistic theatre / performance is political in the sense that it is directly connected to, and informed by, what Esslin (1978: 29) calls, the desire in ritual, as in the theatre, for 'a human community directly to experience its own identity and reaffirm it.' Esslin is suggesting the importance of context; if one ignores cultural specificity, one ignores context and this has political ramifications, particularly in post-colonial contexts, in terms of cultural exchange and representation. Hence, when theatre practitioners consciously borrow / appropriate culturally specific forms, practices, and artifacts rooted in the cultural and religious life of a certain community of people, they must be aware of the politics of difference, exchange, and representation.

The observations made by James Ndukaku Amankulor, citing American ethnographer Anthony Graham-White, point to one reason why theatre practitioners need to be politically sensitive when using ritual in performance practice, instead of adopting the term 'ritual' wholesale. Amankulor observes:

In his article, "Ritual in Contemporary Theatre and Criticism", published in the *Educational Theatre Journal* (now *Theatre Journal*), Anthony Graham-White warned critics of the dangers in adopting the term "ritual" as a critical tool for analyzing contemporary American theatrical performances, the norms of which may be quite different from the ritual-based performances of other cultures. Graham-White felt uncomfortable with avant-garde and experimental theatre groups . . . which may find the word ritual an attractive label with which to identify their performances . . . He explains that the difference between ritual and other forms of cultural expression is not the structure but "the attitude held towards it by participants and other members of the community, notably their belief in its efficacy." (1991: 228-229)

In many ways, I share the concerns of Graham-White in terms of the fact that when performance practitioners invoke ritual as a descriptive label for their kind of theatre they often do so in an uncritical way that elides the political implications of using ritual in a theatrical practice. When some critics use the term 'ritual' to describe a piece of theatre, they do so without acknowledging the critical discourse needed to unpack, not only ritual's use in theatre, but also the term itself. This is further complicated by the way in which theatre may be described as a social ritual rather than a religious one. Those practitioners who seek to make theatre more ritualistic usually do so in an attempt to elicit a specific response in the audience rather than mere elation, solidarity and sense of communion. Creating a sense of community is often a motivating factor for the use of ritual in theatre and this is because theatre practitioners are attempting to use the efficacious nature of ritual to ensure that their work has both implicit and explicit consequences beyond the immediate context of its performance. These consequences, or effects, are what is generally



termed performance efficacy. Efficacy is generally connected to altering attitudes, held by an audience, towards a cultural product, such as theatre. The efficacy in Bailey's work is to communicate the potential for transformation, which is interpreted as processes of healing of the cultural wounds inflicted by the past. Bailey's use of ritual attempts to produce efficacy by accessing ritual forms of expression.

Efficacy is a key notion in the interrogation of the relationship between ritual and theatre as kinds of performance and refers to the social, cultural and political implications a performance has beyond the immediate performance context. The creation of a ritualized theatre carries with it political ramifications, especially when one considers the potential for resistance against dominant discourses of cultural expression. The complexities of the relationship between theatre and ritual continue to place pressure on those who would seek comfort only in the similarities between theatre and ritual rather than their differences. Ritual is a part of people's lived religious and social life. Theatre, while it may be like ritual, distances itself from the lived reality of its audience by offering a fictitious world on the stage. Group-theatre<sup>39</sup> movements, I would argue, distinguish themselves from other theatrical practices in that they attempt to engage context as opposed to seeking purely to elicit an emotional and psychological response from an audience. The core difference between group-theatre practices and mainstream Western theatre practices arises out the way in which the West has attempted to distance ritual and theatre from each other. As Amankulor claims:

If the integration of ritual and theatrical conventions is taken for granted in non-Western performance situations, it is highly questioned in contemporary Western theatre. The apparent divestment of theatre from the ritual origin in Western theatre practice is a foregone conclusion. It is taken for granted. Ritual, with its evocation of negative connotations of primitive, superstitious, and unscientific behaviour associated with savage peoples, has no place in the industrialized high-technological Western world of today. In a popular sense, ritual has become what Orrin Klapp describes, in his *Ritual and Cult: A Sociological Interpretation*, as a "bugaboo word" for the modern man. It reminds him of other terms with negative associations such as voodoo, mumbo jumbo, cult, and superstition. Ritual has also to be associated like myth, with something false, and as Ronald L. Grimes observes in his *Beginnings in Ritual Studies*, it is also associated with boring, empty routine. (1991: 228)

It is necessary to examine, however, what resistance is offered, against such negative connotations, by those practitioners who acknowledge not only the similarities, but also the differences, between ritual and theatre, in their efforts to create a ritualized theatre form.

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<sup>39</sup> Group-theatre refers to the way a theatrical company, for example *Third World Bunfight*, creates theatrical productions highlighting the ensemble and collective nature of performance. Other examples of group-theatre are as follows: Ricard Schechner's Performance Group, Elizabeth LeCompte's Wooster Group, Joseph Chaikin's Open Theatre, to name only a few.

Amankulor (1991) does acknowledge that there is a resistance by certain intercultural theatre practitioners to the decontextualization of cultural forms that are borrowed from different contexts.

In order to combat the dangers of decontextualization, one must acknowledge different cultures and the cultural specificity of cultural forms, practices and artifacts while still recognizing the performative power of ritual in a theatrical context. What is problematic is challenging the assumption that ritual fosters something that is false (Amankulor, 1991:228) or something that cannot be trusted. This notion stems from Western colonial notions of indigenous cultures as being culturally stagnant and primitive. Ritual invokes that which is not readily observable or quantifiable. That is, ritual is perceived by some as a hoax, a lie, with no cultural implications for those involved in that ritual. Such assumptions attempt to strip ritual of its purpose as a signifier of cultural meaning. Western neo-liberal assumptions, therefore, are difficult to reconcile with the importance of cultural specificity, especially when so many intercultural practitioners, who make use of ritual in their theatre practice, advocate universal truths of performance.

The notion of 'universal truth' is construed as an attempt to reduce the world's performance traditions to a kind of 'sameness', declared by Western voices and Western views of intercultural practice. However, the exploration of perspectives other than those of the west provides a way of developing the debate in a way that does not attempt to debilitate developments in world theatre or to legislate what one can and cannot engage with in terms of contexts foreign to our own. Bharucha's (1993: 92) notion of understanding what is common between cultures through acknowledging what is different, is central to debates around the politics of difference, exchange and representation.

The need for practitioners to acknowledge the politics of exchange, difference and representation, especially for those intercultural theatre practitioners making use of ritual forms, practices and artifacts, emerges out of their use of ritual itself. Ritual, and its application in the theatre, needs to be interrogated in a more expansive way than the narrowly defined contours drawn by avant-garde artists who tend to fetishize the term ritual. In terms of the African context, the objectification of ritual is a concern, since, as Amankulor (1991:229) observes, there must be an acknowledgment that in many cultural zones like Africa, ritual and theatre coexist in the same space. What Amankulor and other theorists operating from post-colonial contexts share, is the perception that Western intercultural practitioners appropriate foreign cultural sources and display

these as being truisms of that culture, without engaging with the cultural context from which those foreign elements of their productions come.

As ritual and theatre often operate within the same space in the African context (Amunkulor, 1991:229), it is useful to draw on Schechner's (2002) ideas around examining theatre that incorporates ritual through a braid in order to critique its efficacy. Schechner makes the comment that theatre is a "mixture, a braid, of entertainment and ritual" and that they are a twin-system, tumbling over each other and vitally interconnected (Amankulor, citing Schechner, 1991:231). If one ignores this interconnection there is a danger of isolating one from the other and thus, schematizing the relationship between ritual and theatre. As Amankulor states:

Theatre is a form of communication, like other arts, between performers and spectators. Communication is also an essential aspect of ritual because it is inherent in all its symbols which speak to those who know how to listen. "Unfamiliar symbols," according to Klapp, "may well be all that stand in the way of seeing how familiar a practice is to our own." Symbols here include not just the final product, the performance, but the process towards the production of it . . . and which are uncomfortable to [Western audiences] because they do not seem to strengthen their already strongly shared values or accommodate their world view. This view would create a permanent polarization in global theatre culture and prevent the much needed effort towards interculturalism in performance culture. (1991:232)

Three critical aspects may be drawn from the above observation. Firstly, not only is there a need in critical discourse to examine the processual nature of performance but also to acknowledge the fact that the process of performance does not end with the performance itself. Performances continue after the event through audience debate, reception, and media commentary on the production, and, if the production tours to other contexts, how it is received there must necessarily be compared with how it has been received in its original context. Bailey's plays, as an example of intercultural theatre, have toured and have been performed in South Africa, Britain and Denmark. Secondly, practitioners who use ritual in their theatrical practice run the risk of decontextualizing the cultural forms that they borrow. This may have the effect of perpetuating pejorative or negative imaging of the cultural context from which the forms and ideas are borrowed; it may even reinforce, as opposed to challenging, negative stereotypes and result in a mythologizing of culture rather than an actual engagement. Bailey has been criticized, although, I believe, from an overly politically correct standpoint, for perpetuating pejorative images of black African cultural life (Matshikiza, 1999b). Thirdly, it has become increasingly necessary not to analyze performances or play texts as literary artifacts but rather as performance texts. Bailey's use of ritual and history as part of his intercultural theatrical discourse constructs the plays as performance texts. In order to begin examining these three problems one must

interrogate how ritual and theatre may be seen as two different but interrelated kinds of performance.

### **2.3 Ritual and Theatre as kinds of Performance: Postmodern, Post-colonial and Intercultural intersections**

Creating ritualized theatre is a political act that challenges attempts at negating difference and is a response to globalization. The important aspect to discuss here is how postmodernism, post-colonialism, and intercultural theory and practices in theatre, intersect and what impact the clash between these three critical standpoints has on the notion of ritual and theatre as kinds of performance.

Developments in the critical discourse of Performance theory, most noticeably by Schechner (2002, 2003), have produced an interdisciplinary, and a more expansive, strategy for viewing, examining and critiquing cultural processes and products. One of the central tenets of Performance theory is to critique what French social scientist Emile Durkhiem proposed:

Art is not merely an external ornament with which the cult has adorned itself in order to dissimulate certain of its features which may be too austere and too rude; but rather, in itself, the cult is something aesthetic. (1965: 424)

In this construction of art, ritual may be critiqued as an aesthetic product of a culture in much the same way that theatre is an aesthetic product of a social process. They are both cultural products that share similar performative elements. Many theories, however, recognize that although ritual and theatre may share similarities they are not the same. The relationship between them, viewed through the lens of performance, is necessarily patterned in different ways by different theorists, only a few of whom have been drawn on for the purposes of this dissertation. American ritual theorist Catherine Bell reveals that what may bring ritual and theatre into the shared space of performance is that they both reveal thought in / as action (Schechner, 2002: 50) in that

[On one level] ritual is to the symbols it dramatizes as action is to thought; on a second level, ritual integrates thought and action; and on a third level, a focus on ritual performances integrates *our* thought and *their* actions. (Bell, 1992:32)

Bell develops her argument to include the necessary demand for shifting the focus away from an analysis purely of form, in an anthropological sense, to examining the contexts in which rituals

create cultural meaning. Bell, citing Milton Singer (1959), suggests that ritual and theatre reveal their performative nature through the way in which they reveal cultural meaning:

Performance theorists frequently base themselves on two interrelated points originally articulated by Singer. First, as noted previously, people “think of their culture as encapsulated within discrete performances, which they can exhibit to outsiders as well as to themselves.” Second, such performances constitute for the outside observer “the most concrete observable units of the cultural structure” – since each performance “has a definitely limited time span, a beginning and an end, an organized program of activity, a set of performers, an audience, and a place and occasion of performance”. (1992:39)

Schechner observes that rituals are not generic sites where accepted ideas can deposit themselves; rather, they operate as ‘dynamic performative systems generating new material and recombining traditional actions in new ways’ (1995:228).

In a general way, one can begin to understand ritual as performative, or being like performance, by looking at the possible intersections between ritual and theatrical performance. According to Schechner:

To treat any object, work, or product “as” performance ... means to investigate what that object does, how it interacts with other objects or beings and how it relates to other objects or beings. Performances only exist as action, interaction, and relationship. (2002:26)

These three notions form a useful starting point for analysis, and comparison, between ritual and theatre. In any kind of theatre performance, ‘action’, ‘interaction’, and ‘relationship’ (Schechner, 2002) are the primary constitutive elements of the theatrical experience. However, depending on the particular kind of theatre being produced, these three aspects will be manipulated differently in order to fit the specific aesthetic, political, or social needs of that particular work. Action is intended to be a) efficacious and b), at least in theatre, entertaining; however, this is an oversimplification. The nature of performance efficacy depends, first, on the kind of theatre about which one is speaking and, secondly, on the notion that entertainment is present in all theatre practices but may work in conjunction with other agendas<sup>40</sup>. The interaction in ritual may

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<sup>40</sup>The term entertainment tends to be regarded, in academic circles at least, as something which is superficial and unsubstantial in meaning. However, particular examples of theatre practices where entertainment works in conjunction with specific agendas to create the total theatrical experience are to be seen in Bertolt Brecht’s (1964) Epic theatre, Antonin Artaud’s (1976) Theatre of Cruelty, Jerzy Grotowski’s (1975) notion of Poor Theatre and Theatre of Sources, Eugenio Barba’s (Watson, 1993) Third Theatre, and the list goes on. Entertainment cannot be completely denied in any theatrical practice. The term has, in academia, accumulated negative connotations; however, theatre may be seen to use entertainment as a means to make political, social, historical and cultural meaning accessible.

be between a shaman / priest and the participants in the ritual, while in theatre the interaction occurs between actors on the stage; and the relationship in ritual is between and within the community and individual members, whereas in theatre the relationship exists between actor and audience within the immediate context of a particular performance. Given that theatre and ritual share these three tenets of performance, they may be considered different but interrelated within a very open conceptualization of performance.

In terms of performance, ritual in theatrical practice can give concrete form to otherwise abstract cultural meaning/s. A political dimension of ritualized performance is the way in which it attempts to concretize the contradictions of contemporary culture. Bell suggests that

. . . cultural performances are the ways in which the cultural content of a tradition “is organized and transmitted on particular occasions through specific media” [Singer, 1959]. Thus, performances are the specific and particular manifestations (‘instances’) of culture aside from which culture is just an abstract category. (1992:39)

Bell limits herself to discussions around the ways in which ritual theorists have adopted and adapted performance terminology to the study of ritual practices. However, she does point out an important problem facing those who use performance terminology in ritual studies that relates to problems facing intercultural theatre and to the way in which this dissertation sees ritual and theatre as kinds of performance. Bell states:

Performance theorists, of course, argue that what ritual does is communicate (and hence, it does secure the intercession of deities, pacify the dead, or encourage rain, etc.) and it is through this function that ritual indirectly affects social realities and perceptions of those realities. (1992: 43)

Therefore, efficacy, in addition to altering attitudes towards cultural products, also relates to the way in which theatre practitioners attempt to communicate how context affects social realities as well as the perception of those realities.

The efficacy that ritual can bring to theatrical performance, through its operation as a form of cultural communication, has been conceptualized in different ways. British performance theorist Baz Kershaw’s (1992:16) term, ‘ideological transaction’, offers a means to expand on ritual’s relationship to theatrical entertainment. Kershaw (1992:18), writing on twentieth-century British alternative theatre practices, observes that

. . . whilst it is obvious that alternative theatre did not bring about a political revolution, it is by no means certain that it failed to achieve other types of general effect. As Robert Hewison argues, the possibility that it did contribute to the promotion of egalitarian, libertarian and emancipatory ideologies, and thus to some of the more progressive socio-political developments of the last three decades, cannot be justifiably dismissed.

Although I am not proposing that intercultural theatre practices be aligned with those of the alternative British theatre movement (as conceptualized here by Kershaw), I do propose that the way efficacy is being theorized here is important in terms of understanding ritual and its use in intercultural theatrical practice. Efficacy may work either through direct efficacy where theatrical practices attempt to effect social change directly – such as British alternative theatre of the 1970 – 1990s (Kershaw, 1992), which tends to promote activism; or through indirect efficacy where the desire may not be to effect cultural – and socio-political – change, specifically, but where the social and spiritual implications within a work cannot be ignored. Bailey's performance texts advocate an indirect efficacy by emphasizing what is communal through ritual. He combines ritual and historical narrative as a means to achieve a transformation in the audience, that is, a recognition of the need to address the causes of communal degradation and social disintegration.

Efficacy, therefore, is not a singular, unified phenomenon, nor can it be divorced from context. In an African context, efficacy comes about due to the coexistence of ritual and theatre within the same performance space. In this case, direct efficacy comes about through the attempt to comment, not only on the cultural tensions that exist between the local and global contexts, but also, on the relationship between the past and the present. In the case of indirect efficacy, the theatricality of ritual is retained where both ritual and entertainment share the same space. The theatrical aspect of ritual, however, is not an isolated phenomenon – as it is in most Western traditional modes of theatrical performance – but is instead a behaviour nested in supportive actions (Schechner, 2003:113). I would argue that Bailey uses ritual and history within his intercultural performance work as a means of creating an indirect efficacy so as to allow an audience to reflect on their social reality(ies).

Intercultural practitioners using ritual in their work draw on these 'supportive actions' (Schechner, 2003) in order to transform the theatrical experience into one of communion; as Schechner (2003:116) claims, 'what starts as theatre ends as Communion.' Intercultural practitioners use ritual in their performance practices where, to appropriate Schechner's (2003:116) terminology, ritual operates as a pivot in a system, transforming disjunctive parody into integrative communion. What reconciles the differences, and concretizes the similarities,

between ritual and theatre, is that they both attempt, either implicitly or explicitly, a kind of transformation.

### **2.3.1 Transformation as efficacy**

The notion of transformation is an important aspect of performance efficacy. What makes it difficult to theorize is that transformation is seldom made explicit and is difficult to measure; however, its importance in relation to the use of ritual in intercultural performance practices is central to the hypothesis on which this dissertation is built. The more central the ritual aspect is to a performance, the greater its socio-political efficacy, or at least, indirectly, the more there is the potential to push social and political questions into the foreground. To evaluate and quantify efficacy is problematic, as Kershaw suggests:

[How does one] pay more attention to the conditions of performance that are most likely to produce an efficacious result? And what if we broaden the canvas for analysis beyond the individual show or production (but still including it) in order to consider theatrical movements in relation to local and national cultural change? If we consider the potential of performance (both in its specific sense as 'individual show' and in its general sense as 'a collection of practices') to achieve efficacy in a particular historical context, perhaps we can then squash the bugbear of empirical conclusiveness and construct an approach to analysis which will be more theoretically and indeed factually convincing. (1992:3)

The difficulty of measuring efficacy is further made apparent by what Kershaw claims is the connection between ideology and performance efficacy:

Ideology has been described as a kind of cement which binds together the different components of the social order. It has also been likened to plaster, covering up the cracks and contradictions in society (K.T. Thompson 1986: 30) . . . ideology is any system of more or less coherent values which enables people to live together in groups, communities and societies. Thus, to the extent that performance deals in the values of its particular society, it is dealing with ideology. (1992: 18)

Kershaw is the first to admit that this is an over simplification of the way in which performance as a cultural process / product inscribes ideology. It may be that a performance is efficacious only when transformation is made possible within the ideological transaction between the performers and audience. We may begin to draw a connection between performance efficacy, transformation, ideology, and the use of ritual within intercultural performance practices to produce an immediate performance act. It may be said that the ideology of a culture is seated in its history where cultural expressions, such as ritual, become a means by which to communicate history, and hence, ideology.



In society, rituals may be considered a way of performing one's history. Rituals allow a community to respond to its own historical context. Ritual and history are, therefore, the most performative aspects of a culture, as both represent that culture, and both come into play in celebratory acts of a culture's identity, as evidenced in rituals, theatrical performances, and initiation rites. It is in this celebratory aspect of ritual, occurring at the intersection of experience, between those participating, those observing, and the context in which the performance / celebration takes place, where change may be effected - socially, politically or spiritually. Where social, political and/or spiritual transformation occurs in theatrical practice, this may be termed Immediacy. Immediate theatre, therefore, attempts to elicit an indirect efficacy through transformation within the ideological transaction of the performance act.

### **2.3.2 Immediate ritual / Ritual immediacy**

In order to expand on the specific relationship between ritual, history and performance that I am conceptualizing here in Bailey's work, one must interrogate ritual's relationship to a particular conceptualization of theatre that draws on ritual for its impact. In other words, instead of looking at how ritual is theatre-like, rather, we may look at how theatre may be considered ritualistic. This is a key element in Brook's conceptualization of Immediate theatre.

'Immediate Theatre', according to Brook, is a composite of 'Holy' and 'Rough' Theatres. 'Holy Theatre' is informed by a drive to make the invisible visible, through establishing an organic instinctual reciprocity between the performer and other components of the performance text. 'Rough Theatre' is identified by an apparent absence of 'style', emptied of any aesthetic dogged by cultural accretions. Therefore, 'Rough Theatre' takes on a 'socially liberating role' (Brook, 1993:76). Hence, 'Immediate Theatre' is concerned with processes that generate meaning in the moment of performance that has both spiritual and social implications. Brook's notion of an 'empty space' refers to how practitioners inscribe meaning into space in order to transform it into a theatrical space in which cultural meaning can be articulated. Brook's notion of Immediate theatre is the anti-thesis of what he calls Deadly theatre. Immediate theatre combines the aspects of Holy theatre and Rough theatre as a particular methodology to combat Deadly theatre practices to produce theatre that places human beings in relationship to themselves, each other and to their context.

The concept of Immediacy, as it is used in this study, is connected to ritual as they both promote transformation. Transformation is a kind of indirect efficacy. However, Immediacy and transformation are reliant on a confluence of elements within the theatrical experience. Therefore, discussions around Immediacy and transformation require an examination of the play texts not simply as literary artifacts but as performance texts.

The notion that transformation may be elicited by performance is not new. Aristotle drew the conclusion that theatre may bring about a change in the audience through what he termed 'catharsis' (1996)<sup>41</sup>. The most direct link, then, between ritual and theatre, is the notion of transformation. This transformation is made most apparent in Bailey's work through his re-interpretation, hence re-representation, of controversial moments in South African history within a ritualized performance act. Through this kind of intercultural practice, Bailey attempts to hybridize indigenous, specifically Xhosa, rituals with Western forms of entertainment to bring about a dialogue between the global and local contexts that has both postmodern and post-colonial implications<sup>42</sup>.

Our contemporary post-modern, and, by extension, our post-colonial, context exerts many pressures on intercultural theatre practitioners. Arguably, one of the most significant intercultural endeavors attempted by a Western theatre practitioner in an African context is Peter Brook's journey, with the International Centre for Theatre Research, through Algeria, Mali, Nigeria and Niger in 1973 as chronicled in *The Conference of the Birds: The Story of Peter Brook in Africa* (1977) by John Heilpern. As noted previously, Nigerian literary critic Biodun Jeyifo (1996: 149-161) has problematized this controversial moment in intercultural theatre practice. In order to address Jeyifo's concerns of intercultural theatre practice in relation to Bailey's work, one must contextualize it within the pre-colonized sub-Saharan context. The reason for this is because many of the South African ritual forms that Bailey employs in his theatrical work are drawn from ritual cultures whose cultural practices draw their meaning from their pre-colonial historical context.

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<sup>41</sup> Catharsis was a term applied to, and goal of, Greek tragedy. Greek theatre attempted to transform its audiences through the recognition and release of what were considered, in the context of the time, dangerous or immoral thoughts and actions.

<sup>42</sup> The post-modern and post-colonial implications will be discussed generally in this chapter in so far as they relate to Bailey's conceptualization of his theatre practice. Those postmodern and post-colonial aspects of the plays, or whether, indeed, the performance texts resist such theoretical viewpoints, will be discussed in greater detail and specificity in Chapter Three.

## **2.4 Bailey and the Southern African Context: A historical / cultural perspective**

In the Southern African context there are at least three cultural formations to examine that have a direct impact on theatrical development, namely, pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial contemporary, societies. The historical and critical exploration of these three cultural formations is one way of developing a response to Jeyifo's questions in relation to the context out of which Bailey's work arises.

Jeyifo makes the point that there have been at least two kinds of discourse which have dominated interculturalism. Firstly, an Occidental discourse, which attempts to ritualize theatre by appropriating Eastern forms for a Western audience. Secondly, a counter-discourse, which promulgates the notion of breaking with the stifling of local tradition by utilizing Western styles of theatrical representation, for example, twentieth-century realism. Some practitioners, such as Japanese performance practitioner and theorist Tadashi Suzuki (1986), form a syncretic theatre, staging canonical texts such as Shakespeare, Greek tragedy and plays by Anton Chekhov using techniques drawn from Japanese Noh and Kabuki styles of theatre. In terms of Jeyifo's line of questioning, this would be an example of identifying what foreign and indigenous performance forms one finds operative in intercultural performance; however, it still is locked within a binary. Jeyifo, however, proposes a third discourse, which, he insists, must 'push beyond the Africa-Europe binarism' (1996: 157). The questions he poses to advance this third discourse are useful in discussing the work of Bailey as it serves as a corrective to such reductive arguments that attempt to discredit Bailey on the basis that he is a white male who appropriates artifacts, practices and forms from black African religious and historical life and reinforces pejorative imaging of Africans. This particular argument is too limited and exhibits the kind of Afrocentric discourse that attempts to halt exchange.

I would argue that Bailey attempts, in a sense, to de-colonize the stage. In his theatrical work, he exhibits an appropriation and subversion of European modes of theatrical representation not only in form but also in content. In this way, Bailey produces a syncretic form of theatrical representation. According to Jeyifo's (1996) third discourse for interrogating intercultural theatre, Bailey's theatre work may be examined not only in terms of the performative influences present in the work but also the ideological implications implicit in intercultural theatre work in a post-colonial context. Pavis, writing on New Zealand born Christopher Balme, comments that

[Balme] uses this term [syncretic theatre], which should be distinguished from “intercultural theatre”, to designate “the amalgamation of indigenous performance forms with certain conventions and practices of the Euro-American theatrical tradition, to produce new theatrico-aesthetic principles. (1996: 179)

Syncretic theatre should not be divorced from Interculturalism or seen as something completely different. However, it is a useful term to use in further discussing Jeyifo’s (1996) proposal for a third intercultural discourse. It is also useful in considering the context out of which Bailey’s theatre work arises. Jeyifo argues that by reaching beyond an Afrocentric and/or Eurocentric schematization of cultural practices one may begin to

. . . describe this third discourse as a post-Négritude<sup>43</sup>, post-manichean<sup>44</sup> apprehension of interculturalism in the African theatre. In *this* discourse the issue is now problematized beyond the parameters of the two previous sets of discourses since analysis characteristically now turns on questions like: Which African or European sources and influences do we find operative and combined in any given African theatrical expression? What motivates the interaction and combination of the “foreign” and “indigenous”, for instance, an escapist, nostalgic retreat into neo-traditionalism, or a liberating and genuine artistic exploration of the range and diversity of styles, techniques, paradigms and traditions available within both the “foreign” and the “indigenous”? What social and ideological uses and functions mediate, legitimize or problematize the intercultural fusion of the “foreign” and the “indigenous”? And what aspects, within the reinvented “indigenous” forms, appear “foreign” to an indigenous audience and conversely, what absorbed “foreign” elements seem “familiar”? (1996: 157-158)

It is within the framework of these questions that one begins to engage with the intersections and clashes that occur between intercultural theory / practice and post-colonial theory, an important engagement since we are dealing with Bailey’s intercultural theatrical practice within a post-colonial context. For my purposes, I shall draw on those issues of knowledge, power, and discourse, as raised by the Fanon and Foucauldian influenced post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha (1993). Bhabha (1993) provides useful analytical tools with which to explore the motivations behind Bailey’s practice and those contextual aspects which both inform and impact on his work.

\*  
Bailey is a South African white male theatre practitioner, who borrows from the West in an attempt to create theatre that is directly (immediately) communicable to a South African

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<sup>43</sup> According to post-colonial academics Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin: ‘Négritude . . . was the earliest attempt to create a consistent theory of modern African writing. The Francophone writers Aimé Césaire and Leopold Senghor, in particular, asserted a specific black African nature and psychology which was described by this term’ (1989: 123).

<sup>44</sup> According to Ashcroft *et al.*: ‘Fanon was able to characterize the colonial dichotomy (colonizer-colonized) as the product of a “manichaeism delirium” (Fanon 1967), the result of which condition is a radical division into paired oppositions such as good-evil; true-false; white-black” (1989: 124-125).

audience. This may be related to what Mark Fortier, citing Nigerian writer, poet and playwright, Wole Soyinka, writes of such practices:

‘The history of West African theatre in the colonial period’, he writes, is ‘largely a history of cultural resistance and survival’ (Soyinka 1996: 241). He sees the “survival strategies” of theatre mixing traditional, folk and ritual forms with more Westernized practices. (1997: 199-200)

\* In addition to viewing this kind of practice as a subversion<sup>45</sup> of the dominant currents of cultural exchange, Bailey, I would argue, views the South African, as well as African, context, as an intercultural space in itself. Those Western elements he uses within his work are embedded historically and ideologically within the South African context. With these elements he combines indigenous forms, practices and artifacts, drawn from pre-colonial cultural formations. The forms which Bailey employs, and the dialogue his theatrical work elicits between the local and global contexts, is part of the temporal dialectic that makes his work immediate.

#### **2.4.1 Pre-Colonial cultural formations**

A pre-colonial cultural formation may be defined as a culture not yet infiltrated by colonial powers. One of the most important questions one may ask about the performing arts in this context, not only in relation to Africa, but also generally, is what the performing arts, specifically theatre, communicate about the context in which they are constructed. This is an important consideration because, historically, pre-colonial performance, according to South African performance historian and theorist David Kerr (1995: 2), ‘mediated a) indigenous economic and social systems, and b) class formations and historical change’; that is, pre-colonial performance may be seen as an expression, and reinforcement, of cultural identity. Performance practices in a contemporary African context articulate a response to, and/or opposition against, globalization’s attempts to dominate, or eradicate, indigenous forms of cultural expression. In most cases, ritual, or the use of ritual forms, continues to be an important element in African performance practices.

One debate relating to ritual within theatrical practice in the performing arts, in an African context, is the problematic relationship between notions of a sacred presence and secular

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<sup>45</sup> The major route of cultural exchange has been from non-Western contexts into Western contexts. Bailey, however, operates from a non-Western context and combines Western and South African performance modes. The dominant route of exchange in global terms has been from East to West and South to North. Bailey borrows from Northern contexts and uses Western theatrical forms to make a comment about South African society and culture.

representations of spirit, ritual, ceremony or rite in theatre. Ritual in theatrical practice becomes contentious when one begins to unpack representations that attempt to 'act' Africa (Kruger, 1999: 69). This is dangerous because, in many cases, representations of African culture rely on merely the outer form where inner meaning has been stripped away. The debate stems from early research into pre-colonial performance forms by European anthropologists whose views produced a pejorative and jingoistic representation of African people as simple, savage and culturally stagnant. In this respect, Kerr (1995) explains that

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Many of the colonial Africanists shared a view of African pre-colonial culture as almost unchanging for many centuries. This view suited colonial ideology because it made African culture seem outside of the dynamic process of history, thereby rationalizing the increased dependency of African economics on Europe. (1995: 2)

This ahistorical, apolitical view of culture, and the struggle to form 'survival strategies' (Fortier, 1997) that respond to, oppose, or subvert such views, are what is mediated in the African performing arts. Central to these efforts is the hybridization of indigenous ritual forms, practices and artifacts with Western modes of theatrical representation, the products of the colonial heritage. British theorist and practitioner in African drama, Francis Harding, suggests the significance of this hybrid form of theatrical expression in his views of the partnership between ritual and performance. He states:

The evanescent cusp between the imaginary and the real is inherent in performing. In Africa, and throughout the world, performing makes visible the unseen and makes the present that which is in the past or in the future, manipulating space and time and challenging social and natural order. (2002:2)

This refers to the way ritual performance, and, by extension ritual, within theatrical performance, may resist Aristotelian notions of unity, as well as the eighteenth century neo-classical notion of the well-made-play together with its implicit restrictions of a neat chronological narrative structure. The performative strategies that ritual affords theatrical expression may be seen in the interplay between the past and present. This includes the use of meta-theatrical devices such as, for example, the play-within-a-play structure. Harding writes further:

Each form of performance is, for its duration, an interface between a revealed reality and a revealed unreality, for that which may not ordinarily exist. Within a staged context, illusion and reality become equal. (2002: 2)

By using meta-theatricality, intercultural theatre, such as Bailey's, makes a comment on the present by engaging with the past, where, the past forms the basis for the play-within-the-play. The meta-theatrical structure opens up the possibility and opportunity for an audience to become reflective on, and reflexive about, their social reality.

As a result of a tendency to apply traditional scientific methods to cultural observation, early European anthropological studies often appeared to consider ritual societies as culturally fixed and stagnant, not taking into account the cultural specificity of individual practices. Similarly, there appeared to be a lack of recognition that ritual practices do not always conform to Western notions of viewing time, space, or reality. Ritual treats these three aspects, which also are present within theatrical representation, as being lateral rather than linear. To treat time, space, and reality laterally, means to reveal and/or expose certain assumptions about what is seen and what is assumed and taken to be common sense. This point can be more sharply defined through a brief examination of the relationship between pre-colonial indigenous performance forms, colonial activities, and indigenous theatre's reaction to colonialism in Africa.

#### **2.4.2 Indigenous performance, colonialism and hybridity**

One of the central aspects in considering ritual and history in relation to intercultural theatre practice, and its response and / or opposition to the normalization of imperialist ideology, is to understand theoretically the dynamics of a post-colonial context. Historical analyses of colonial efforts, and their effect on indigenous performance forms, such as those by Kerr (1995), Robert Kavanagh (1985) and Michael Etherton (1982), provide useful insights into organizing a response to Jeyifo's (1996) first three questions. However, Etherton (1982) remains literary in his study of African playwrights. Kavanagh's (1985) argument, nuanced by Antonio Gramsci's (1985) notions of hegemony and dominance, articulates the development of theatre in South Africa as one of cultural struggle. Kerr's (1995) writing is more open to post-colonial intersections, and interventions, in intercultural practices that have occurred historically in the African context and I will draw on his observations in order to interrogate the relationship between colonialism and indigenous performances' reaction to colonial dominance.

Colonial discourse, indigenous performance and epistemologies, may be seen to intersect, in terms of cultural criticism, at the level of 'stereotype'. Post-colonial writers Peter Childs and

Patrick Williams (1997), citing Indian post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha (1993), debate the concept of the 'stereotype':

. . . the stereotype is also an ambivalent mode of constructing the Other and . . . it is not a simple assertion of difference but a complex articulation of 'a contradictory belief', not least because, while the colonized are fixed as unchanging, the stereotype they are defined with is often one of disorder, anarchy, and license. (1997: 125-126)

Kerr (1995) provides a historical context to which Bhabha's (1993) terminology may be applied. In terms of indigenous pre-colonial forms, colonial discourse has placed pressure on indigenous performance modes in two ways: firstly, colonial discourse introduced Western conventions and ideologies that were normalized through legislation; secondly, in the reaction of post-colonial performance forms to the imposition of Western ideology, pre-colonial forms become either eroded or re-appropriated as part of growing nationalism leading towards independence. The relationship between indigenous performance modes and Western conventions of theatrical practice is problematic, as Kerr observes:

A widely accepted model of cultural imperialism in Africa is one which suggests that colonialism had a totally deracinating effect on indigenous culture with the result that forms of pre-colonial theatre were suppressed. [However] the danger is that in emphasizing the achievements of pre-colonial theatre it is easy to underestimate the achievements of indigenous African theatre after its 'contamination' by colonialism. (1995: 41; 44)

Kerr (1995) implies that out of processes of social and political liberation during decolonization, post-colonial indigenous performance forms were enriched, rather than suppressed. The potential for cultural commentary and criticism through performance developed a broader scope through what Kerr refers to as 'contamination' (1995: 44).

The progressive forms that emerged in African performance that incorporated both pre-colonial and colonial forms of cultural expression produced hybrids. These hybrid forms of performance were constitutive of a potentially subversive populist theatre movement rather than of a deracinated theatre practice.

The potential agency for African performance to resist neo-imperial dominance is produced by what Bhabha (1993: 75) terms 'an arrested fixated form of representation', which is best expressed through notions of stereotype, mimicry and hybridity. These three aspects of Bhabha's (1993) theorizing of the colonial and post-colonial subject are key notions in understanding



theatrical practice as a form of cultural expression which seeks to respond to, and/or oppose, colonial and neo-imperialist strategies of dominance.

According to Kerr (1995: 49), 'Cultural resistance in drama requires easily identified roles for denunciation, parody or satire.' He further comments on the use of masks to portray and satirize colonialists in that they present an alternative to Fanon's (1986) black skin, white masks:

Fanon talks about the way status-seeking black men and women introject the values of colonialists by adopting a white mask (in the sociological sense of the role). The psychology of the indigenous masquerade theatre is the precise opposite – it is a popular form of 'extrojection' or exorcism of alien roles by means of exaggeration and mockery . . . The juxtaposition of authoritarian white man and religious caricature is an indication of the identification between religious and secular wings of colonialism in popular African iconography. (1995: 54)

The significance of this practice in performance that hybridizes forms from a Western context with indigenous pre-colonial performance forms is that it maps out a strategy for challenging colonial discourse. In performance, hybrids form the basis for the visual representation of the performance act. Therefore, both mimicry and the stereotype are examples of particular kinds of hybrids. Mimicry relies on the imitation of real figures in society, whereas, a stereotype plays on areas of society; for example, a policeman character wearing a red clown nose could represent, for an audience, the justice system's inability to function in society.

The practice of mimicry, in the sense of indigenous performance, may be liberating and, at the same time, may be perceived as a threat by (and to) colonial dominance. Bhabha's (1993) notion of the menacing effect of mimicry is best explained in his example of French officials attempting to unveil an Algerian woman suspected of being a terrorist. He writes:

. . . the colonizer's attempts to unveil the Algerian woman does not simply turn the veil into a symbol of resistance; it becomes a technique of camouflage, a means of struggle – the veil conceals bombs. The veil that once secured the boundary of the home – the limits of woman – now masks the woman in her revolutionary activity ... (1993: 63)

Mimicry, defined in this way, is relevant because many performance practices that integrate local and global performance forms operate by means of symbols to communicate meaning. At first, one may find the passivity of mimicry disturbing; however, I would argue that mimicry makes one aware of certain ideological aspects being mediated through the relationship between the colonizer's actions and the masking action as a survival strategy. Childs and Williams (1997) shift mimicry into a more performative capacity in, and through, imitation. The imitation of the

original will raise particular concerns that force those participating in the performance act to be reflective and reflexive on / about society. They state:

The imitation must always remain distinguishable from the original and so poses two troubling questions. On the one hand, it asks what constitutes the 'original' and preserves its difference from any 'imitation': so for example, what is it to be 'English'. On the other hand, it asks what 'deformation' of the original is visible in the imitation, which is never exactly a copy and therefore something more or less than the 'original'. In other words, the notion of an 'Anglicized' subject problematizes what it means to be 'English' to begin with. (1997: 131)

In effect, the notions of ambivalence inherent in the connection between stereotype and mimicry enable one to problematize notions of authenticity and to critique those processes of authentication, which are seemingly natural and inevitable. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the notion and practice of hybridity as a performance methodology.

The agency of the hybrid lies in its simultaneous establishment and subversion of an expectation. A hybrid form comments on its own physical representation through symbolic meaning; that is, a hybrid presents a readily recognizable outer form but communicates an oppositional cultural meaning through the process of performance. As with mimicry, it calls attention to its own construction. A hybrid form of performance will set up an expectation and subvert that expectation through mimicry and/or imitation. Therefore, hybridity in intercultural theatrical practice in a post-colonial context occurs through the mixing of indigenous ritual forms, practices and artifacts with Western performance modes, and through the use of intertextual strategies that attempt to bring a closer reading between different kinds of representation and identification. Hybridity, therefore, may be seen to diminish colonial authority by challenging notions of universality and authenticity, in that authority is viewed no longer as linear, unified and constant but rather,

. . . is necessarily articulated 'with a range of differentiated knowledges and positionalities that both estrange its "identity" and produce new forms of knowledge, new modes of differentiation, new sites of power' [Bhabha, 1993:120]. (Childs and Williams, 1997: 135)

Hybridity in intercultural theatre practice within a post-colonial context places an emphasis on how performance may intervene in neo-imperialist imperatives of economic domination and cultural erosion. In addition, one has to view hybridity in relation to globalization and its effects, cultural tensions, and the continuing politics of struggle that characterize the South African context. It is within these cultural tensions that Bailey's theatrical practice is located.

## **2.5 Pre-1994 / Bailey and the South Africa context**

### **2.5.1 Intercultural currents against cultural erosion**

Bailey presents an interesting case in terms of the way one orientates his work in relation to the development of South African theatre history. By South African theatre history, I mean those developments in theatre practice, both in terms of content and form, between the rise to power of an Afrikaner Nationalist government to the present new dispensation in a democratic South Africa.

Cultural workers, specifically theatre practitioners, working in this time frame, appropriated approaches to acting, directing and staging, rooted in the experimental avant-garde movement taking place largely in Europe, in order to challenge the apartheid government and its policies, which by 1961 were firmly entrenched in the South African context. In addition to theatrical experimentation, there was a reconsideration of theatre's role, function and position within the South African context during the apartheid era. What is apparent is that anti-apartheid South African practitioners, for example, Athol Fugard, Winston Ntshona, Barney Simon, Mbongeni Ngema, and companies like The Junction Avenue Theatre and Workshop '71, appropriated and interpreted aspects from the work of key European practitioners like Artaud, Brecht, Grotowski and Brook to suit the needs of an evolving resistant form of theatrical practice<sup>46</sup>.

Since the Nationalist government refused to support an art form that sought to critique and challenge its policies and practices in a public way, theatre found alternative methods of communicating its socio-political message to an audience who were increasingly becoming multicultural, at least for those performances seen as part of the anti-apartheid protest movement.

It is important to state here, that I am not attempting to offer a potted history of South African protest theatre. I am interested in how these ideas and practices influence Bailey's work. In terms of South African theatre practice, I am concerned specifically with the notion of group theatre practices, and the influence of Artaud, Brecht, Grotowski and Brook. One of the most

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<sup>46</sup> Many texts on South African theatre history and the protest theatre movement have been written. Some of the more useful and influential ones include: Hauptfleisch and Steadman (Eds.) (1991); Gray (Ed.). (1993); Stephanou and Henriques (2005).

important methodologies employed in producing protest performance texts, was workshopping. Group theatre practices advocate that no single author is responsible for a finished text, but rather a group. Implicit in the term 'group' is the presence of a collective or collaborative emphasis in the dynamics of that group. However, I would associate the 'collective' with a social emphasis, and the 'collaborative' with a political emphasis. The workshop process combines both social and political experience, and the dramatization of personal and political histories. The way this process created performance in apartheid South Africa was influenced largely by European notions such as Brecht's Epic theatre and distancing devices (cited in Willett, 1964), Grotowski's notions around the 'poor actor' and, in conjunction with this, the notion that performance may happen in any space, referring to Brook's notion of 'Immediate theatre' as articulated in *The Empty Space*. Although the discussion that follows may seem overly schematized, these influences seldom came in discrete stages but rather overlapped and, in many instances, may be found co-existing within the same theatrical work.

The first influence may be ascertained in the way in which resistant theatre forms began to adopt the concept of an Epic theatre, as promulgated by Brecht. Brecht's theatre made an audience aware of the contradictions in their society, and allowed an audience to engage with the performance text critically. What drew South African theatre practitioners to this practice was that they were then able to conceptualize and develop a theatre that not only entertained but also allowed the audience to engage with and critique the social reality that they occupied. Epic theatre used the past in order to reflect on the present. Theatre that used this form explored the issue of history, not only political but also personal histories, and the series of elisions that had occurred through colonial, as well as apartheid, discourse. Brecht's particular interest in history evolved into the technique of 'historification'. By extension, 'historification' enabled practitioners to present material that created a dialectical relationship between what was presented on stage as a past event, and the social reality the intended audience now recognized as reflective on present circumstances and, therefore, context became something that could be interrogated<sup>47</sup>.

Grotowski's notion of poor theatre not only satisfied an aesthetic need but also contributed to a growing philosophy underpinning the concepts for theatre practice. When one thinks of aesthetics, it is tempting to think only of the visual aspects of a production; however, it is more

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<sup>47</sup> There are many examples of texts that negotiate history; some examples of which are: Junction Avenue Theatre Company's *The Fantastical History of a Useless Man* (2001), *Tooth and Nail* (2001) and *Sophiatown* (2001), and Jane Taylor's *Ubu and the Truth Commission* (1997), to name a few.

useful to consider a way of thinking about how theatre can be created. In many ways, Grotowski provided the impetus for South African practitioners to re-think theatre in all its processes. In Brook's preface to Grotowski's *Towards a Poor Theatre* he writes:

It gave each actor a series of shocks. The shock of confronting himself in the face of simple irrefutable challenges. The shock of catching sight of his own evasions, tricks and clichés. The shock of sensing something of his own vast and untapped resources. The shock of being forced to question why he is an actor at all. The shock of being forced to recognize that such questions do exist and that – despite a long English tradition of avoiding seriousness in theatrical art – the time comes when they must be faced. And of finding that he wants to face them. (1968: 11)

This notion of 'shocks' applied not only to the work of the actor but also challenged the notion of how theatre was created and performed. Grotowski's notion of poor theatre and the *via negativa* prompted the idea that everything in a theatrical production could be produced and communicated through the actor's voice and body and the relationship to an audience. Grotowski's ideas posited the centrality of the actor in the theatrical event and simultaneously produced an emphasis on human agency in cultural resistance. It is important to note that Grotowski's ideas were also adopted, in part, for economic reasons, in that they made it relatively inexpensive to produce and perform work as a consequence of the principles of poor theatre. The apartheid regime did not sanction resistant forms of theatrical expression and Grotowski's ideas that theatre could occur in any space, not necessarily a theatrical space was a major influence in such exemplary theatre works as *Woza Albert!* (1983) by Percy Mtwa, Mbongeni Ngema and Barney Simon.

Thirdly, Brook's notions of the 'empty space' and immediate theatre have had far-reaching implications on the way theatre in South Africa, and globally, is practised. The notion of Immediacy emphasized that theatre had less to do with aesthetics and more to do with theatre's ability to reveal what is intimately human – Holy theatre (Brook, 1968), or to communicate challenges that would lead to socially liberating thought and action – Rough theatre (Brook, 1968).

The influence that Brecht, Grotowski and Brook exerted on the developing aesthetic of theatrical practice in the South African context are the major intercultural currents that have informed much of the work produced during the apartheid government's dominance in South Africa and continue to form the intercultural link between South African theatre practice and historical developments in alternative European theatre. The importance of these intercultural currents for South African theatre practitioners is that Brecht, Grotowski, and Brook's influence provided a means to

provoke an audience radically to question its own position in relation to both the political and the social reality in which it found itself. This feeds directly into Bailey's notion of the active spectator being forced to engage his or her socio-political and cultural context.

The influence of Artaud, Brecht, Grotowski and Brook informs the theatrical practice of Bailey in different ways. In some ways, he interprets Brecht through Artaud; in others, his rhetoric comes close to Brook's in the way that he advocates a theatre that communicates across social boundaries by appealing to what is ritualistic, social, and spiritual in the experience of theatre. However, one of the most important aspects, especially for this dissertation, is the way in which Bailey uses history in conjunction with ritual and Western performance modes.

South African theatrical practitioners' use of historical material has been motivated by a need to revise 'official' versions of history. These so-called 'official' versions of history were underpinned by an oppressive, largely colonial, and, after 1948, an apartheid, ideology. According to South African academic Martin Orkin, this ideology sought to fix history as an absolute and, as he states, 'censored or cut out of the history books all interpretations of past events that it considered unsuitable so far as its particular version of the history of South Africa was concerned' (2001: 11).

This editing of history also relates to the editing of culture. Cultural editing is a process that exhibits itself in a variety of different ways. Cultural tourism puts cultural editing into practice in many contexts. As the dominant ideology attempted to promulgate a certain kind of history, so, too, did it attempt to establish a hierarchy of culture. Theatre practice, through a reinterpretation of history, has attempted to respond to, oppose, and critique, 'official' versions of history and the dominant culture and those value systems it uses to legitimize its dominance. Orkin continues to comment on the understanding of history. He states:

One way in which we may understand that although history is supposed to be about facts, the way different people interpret or narrate those facts will always differ, is to remember that any attempt to represent history is always also a kind of story. Every story, in turn, assumes or communicates a particular understanding of, belief about or construction of the world. Because different groups of people have different beliefs or ideas about how the world is constructed or organized, just as they have different experiences, so their stories of the past, of themselves in the present or future as they conceive it, will inevitably be constructed or told differently. (2001: 11)

The major activity of theatrical practitioners in South Africa has been to recognize the history of difference, and simultaneously those different histories, which have been subject to processes of

cultural erosion. Therefore, theatrical practice attempts to achieve its agency by remaking, and thereby reclaiming, history.

### **2.5.2 Bailey Rising, 1994 – 2006: Interculturalism, ritual, history and immediacy**

Brett Bailey has been creating theatre since the late 1980s but the works under investigation here are those works he produced together with his company Third World Bunfight (TWB)<sup>48</sup> between 1994 and 2005. TWB is a theatre company, officially established in 1996, whose commitment is to creating a performance culture that makes use of the historical stories of South Africa to develop a theatre that stimulates the performers as well as the audience in a theatrical experience that cuts across social boundaries. The plays in question, published together in the collection *The Plays of Miracle & Wonder* (2003), use, as content, controversial moments in history that are located specifically in a South African context.

Part of what defines Bailey's work as intercultural theatre within a post-colonial, post-apartheid South Africa, is his use of ritual and historical material rooted within the African context. This is the primary impetus for his work; the importations from Western performance modes are secondary and are used to comment on larger issues, for example, Western activities within the African context, including globalization of the media, capital-intensive technology, and neo-liberalism. Facilitating his plays as communicative acts are meta-theatrical techniques that incorporate pre-colonial forms: stereotypes; storytelling and a storyteller figure; ritual acts of sacrifice, cleansing and healing; and a great deal of hybrid iconography, characteristic of the contemporary African experience. An example of hybrid iconography would be the juxtaposition of both Christian and African religious artifacts especially in the set designs which Bailey constantly refers to as being like voodoo<sup>49</sup> temples and altars. It is through hybrid visual forms, ritual and the re-interpretation of historical narrative that Bailey attempts to manipulate spatial and temporal dialectics in order to create an intercultural and immediate theatrical experience.

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<sup>48</sup> The name of Bailey's company Third World Bunfight has deliberately irreverent connotations of 'third world', 'developing' and 'bunfight', suggesting chaos, license and play. The information on the company and the theatrical work they produce can be found at Third World Bunfight's website located at [www.thirdworldbunfight.co.za](http://www.thirdworldbunfight.co.za).

<sup>49</sup> Voodoo is a complex religious practice found in West Africa as well as Central American islands. It is a hybrid religious form combining Catholicism and West African beliefs in spirit and ancestral worship.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has set out to examine both ritual and history and the complex interrelation between them that is operative in the work of Bailey. Ritual engages in tensions between what is considered ‘foreign’ and ‘indigenous’, ‘local’ and ‘global’. History engages one in using the past to reflect on how contemporary experience is shaped. What follows is a detailed examination and critique of the plays in question in relation to these two ideas. In addition, comparative detail will be included in order to attempt to articulate the intercultural through-line in Bailey’s work as far as these three plays are concerned. Bringing together the theoretical concerns of this dissertation to comment on contemporary theatrical practice in the South African context, as evidenced in Bailey’s work, further develops an understanding of what might be called a South African intercultural aesthetic and politics of performance / performance practice.



## CHAPTER THREE

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### **‘SUMMONING THE HEALING’: INTERCULTURAL PERFORMANCE, IMMEDIACY, AND SPATIAL / TEMPORAL DIALECTICS IN THE WORK OF BRETT BAILEY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

*iMumbo Jumbo* (1997), *Ipi Zombi?* (1998) and *The Prophet* (1999) all premiered at the National Grahamstown Arts Festival in the Eastern Cape. In 1997, Bailey researched, rehearsed and produced the play *iMumbo Jumbo* (1997) for the main festival programme involving performers from Cape Town, Rini township and rural Transkei. In the same year, he moved to Johannesburg, with seventeen of the original cast, to stage the play on the main stage of the Market Theatre. The play won a Gauteng Vita award for best play. *Ipi Zombi?* (1998) originated in an earlier project called *Zombie* (1996), which was written and directed for the Grahamstown Fringe Festival. *Zombie* (1996) was reworked and staged as *Ipi Zombi?* (1998) in the main programme at the National Arts Festival. In the same year, the play toured through the urban and rural centers of the Eastern Cape and to the Hilton Festival in KwaZulu-Natal. *Ipi Zombi?* (1998) was awarded a Gauteng Vita award for best new South African script and best costume design. The play was then published in anthology entitled *Drama for a New South Africa* (1999), edited by David Graver and published by Indiana University Press to be prescribed in United States colleges in 1999. *The Prophet* (1999) also appeared on the main programme of the National Arts Festival. Bailey has enjoyed a successful theatrical career within South Africa, and has subsequently gone on to study in Amsterdam, and is currently artistic director at the Barbican Theatre in London. The company Third World Bunfight is currently in residence at Spier Wine Estate situated in the Western Cape.

In the previous chapters, a theoretical framework has emerged that forms my own interpretation of how Bailey's intercultural theatre operates. Through the use of ritual and history, as specific intercultural signifiers, Bailey attempts to establish particular dialectical relationships. Ritual is regarded as a spatial dialectic that juxtaposes the local and global contexts. History is regarded as

a temporal dialectic juxtaposing the past and the present. These dialectical relationships form an intercultural discourse within the performance texts under investigation. Through this intercultural discourse Bailey seeks to effect an indirect efficacy, that is transformation. Transformation is interpreted as a healing. This healing process is necessary, though not automatic, where an audience begins to alter their perception and experience of social reality by engaging with historical narratives staged within a ritual-drama form. This theoretical framework is also influenced by the politics of exchange and representation whereby Bailey may be seen to employ various techniques that have, as their source, the intercultural theatre practices of Artaud, Grotowski, Brecht and Brook. These influences and notions will be discussed in terms of the three performance texts; however, I have first to clarify how my own interpretation connects to Bailey's work through an examination of some general principles inherent in my formulation of the three concepts underpinning this dissertation namely ritual, history and Immediacy.

### **3.2 Ritual, History and Immediacy: general principles**

#### **3.2.1 Space, liminality, meta-theatre, and transformation**

One of the most prominent characteristics of Bailey's theatrical work – influenced by his fine arts training – is his use of design principles and space. The aspects of design are interwoven into the use of ritual and the use of meta-theatricality, which is a dominant characteristic of his theatrical *oeuvre*. However, his design practice works beyond simply creating a space within which the performers can act. It is an integral aspect of the performance text as a whole and helps to facilitate the construction of a context in which dialectical processes may be shaped.

The theatrical space for Bailey, is conceptualized as working on a multiplicity of levels. These levels encompass the individual and the group. Bailey juxtaposes the inner world of psychology, emotion, and of the individual, against the outer worlds, of community and collectivity, that are continuously in crisis. The worlds that the characters of his dramas occupy are undergoing continuing processes of negotiation. Communities negotiate their identities between their local culture and the pressures of global culture. This happens in particular, inscribed spaces and the notion of space, therefore, becomes an important aspect to consider. According to Brook, theatrical events happen when the 'empty space' is transformed into a theatrical space. This is what Bailey does when he takes a found space, like an abandoned power station, situated on the

outskirts of Grahamstown, and transforms it through his ritualistic stage designs. Bailey staged both *Ipi Zombi?* (1998) and *The Prophet* (1999) at this power station in the context of a particularly Eurocentric arts festival. Theatrical space becomes inscribed with the tensions produced by the clash between local and global cultures and contexts. This requires that the plays operate dramatically in the following ways: first, though the context in which the performance takes place, namely, late twenty first century South Africa, which is acknowledged as a site of conflict, tension and creative possibilities; secondly, through the use of the narrator, or storyteller character, and the encouragement of the audience to recognize their role within the performance act and the potential for healing to occur in that performance act; thirdly, through the employment of a play-within-a-play structure which establishes the ritualistic and intertextual significance of the plays so that it becomes a space framed within a space.

The reconfiguration of the actor / audience relationship contributes to spatial dialectics and brings a sharper focus on relationships within the performance act. According to Richard Schechner:

Art specializes in what Victor Turner calls, “liminal” the time/space “in between” categories, states, rooms. A limen is a threshold, a border, a place you cross over to get from one space to another . . . In ordinary life people negotiate limens swiftly and easily . . . But artists intentionally exaggerate extend blow up elaborate make huge the limen (*sic*) . . . (1982: 80)

A limen is conceptualized as a space in between two positions. By passing through the limen, one position to the other, one is transported, both literally and figuratively, from one state to another, that is they have undergone a transformation.

Bailey creates a heightened sense of liminality by positioning a limen within a limen, hence, the meta-theatrical structure of the plays. Therefore, the ritual-dramas occupy a liminal space within the liminality of the performance context. Liminality is heightened by the meta-theatrical technique of a play-within-a-play structure. The concept of liminal space will be discussed further, later in the chapter.

The use of space facilitates the ritualistic performance that Bailey deems necessary in establishing new kinds of theatrical performance that directly challenge and critique processes of globalization by engaging with the past. In his reflections on the direction of and influences on his working methodology Bailey states that

My mission was to fuse ritual and drama in some way, to make drama which would transport performers and spectators the way I myself had been transported by the ceremonies I attended in India. This is not a cerebral journey, nor is it the stirring up of social conscience – so much theatre that rides those wagons has left me cold. Rather this is a trip akin to those we take in dreams that leave us haunted, enchanted, disturbed. (2003: 15)

What is notable is the inference that may be drawn indicating the central relationship Bailey envisages between the performance and the spectator. The underlying motivation for the use of meta-theatrical staging and ritual is rooted in the relationship Bailey envisages between the performance text as a whole, the play-within-a-play, and the spectators. Bailey attempts to transform the passive audience member into an active witness to the events played out. This is not done in a way that appeals to the intellect but rather through more visceral means of representation. These include both visual and aural elements; here, however, we are focused on the visual aspects of space. This is not to suggest that Bailey reduces everything to visual spectacle. It is, however, an important component of the performance act and links to how Artaud saw how meaning was articulated by external aspects of the stage and those aspects such as costumes and masks which can be used to create meaning through visual and aural means, to create, as Bailey does, a rich, visceral, theatrical experience.

Bailey also speaks about transporting an audience, which connects to the notion of transformation. The performance texts make an audience aware of the contradictions which exist between the local and global contexts which we face on a daily basis. The notion of context is again mirrored by the implicit connection between the re-staging of historical narratives and our present moment in time; that is, the past is read against the present, and the resultant reading creates a meaning that transcends history as a closed narrative. This is the connection between ritual and history in my reading of Bailey's theatrical work. This idea will be developed in greater detail when discussing the primary site for this connection, namely, the actor as storyteller. However, considering the design of the plays is a way of introducing how each of the plays uses spatial and temporal dialectics in the way that they operate to bring about transformation.

In order for transformation to occur, I would argue, there must be a heightened sense of the liminal in performance. French ethnographer and folklorist Arnold van Gennep (1960) used the term 'liminal' to describe a moment within the structure of ritual action. He suggested that, "The life of an individual in any society is a series of passages from one age to another and from occupation to another" (1960: 3). Specific rituals mark these so-called 'passages' parenthetically,

where the liminal is the site for a rite of passage that leads to transformation. Van Gennep adds that, 'For every one of these events there are ceremonies whose essential purpose is to enable the individual to pass from these defined positions to another which is equally well defined' (1960: 3). Bailey's objective is for the audience to watch the performance and this rite of passage, and, in so doing, undergo a transformation. Liminal space is located between these defined positions. The ritual-dramas that are performed for the audience mark the end of one passage and the beginning of another. The idea is that the audience receives the performance of the ritual-dramas as a rite of passage and when the audience leaves the performance context they are – through the ritual - themselves transformed. Bailey is articulating, in a similar way in which Grotowski does by establishing the communal in performance, a way in which an audience can transcend their fractured selves. Through communion Bailey poses a challenge to postmodernism's standpoint that culture reflects a fractured and dehumanized society.

American anthropologist and cultural theorist Victor Turner (1969) later developed van Gennep's (1960) term 'liminal' and used it to refer to the performative possibilities of ritual. Ritual practices, through a series of actions, interactions and relationships, established within the practices of specific kinds of rituals (for example, rituals of healing and sacrifice) could affect, and effect, change not only within the audience but also within the community. Schechner, writing on Turner, states:

The key phase is the liminal – a period of time when a person is "betwixt and between" social categories or personal identities (Turner, 1969: 95). During the liminal phase, the actual work of rites of passage take place. At this time, in specially marked spaces, transitions and transformations occur. [Turner] recognized in it a possibility for ritual to be creative, to make way for new situations, identities, and social realities . . . (2002: 57)

Transformation is the key to Bailey's theatrical practice. In the same way that Grotowski used the actor in performance in a precise spatial relationship to the audience to communicate meaning, Bailey communicates, through space and stage design, the ritual and transformative potential of his theatrical work.

Meta-theatricality and enacted rituals are aspects of the plays that are involved in processes of negotiation with notions of transformation and hybridity. The meta-theatrical devices Bailey employs arise primarily out of his own contact with the indigenous ritual practices of *sangomas*.

Bailey draws on these cultural leaders to make ritual a focal point of his theatrical work. Bailey, in an article reflecting on his working methodology and influences, states:

One of the main sources of my inspiration since 1996 has come from African *sangomas* – diviners or traditional healers. These people receive a calling from their ancestors – the moral guardians of their society – that most often manifests itself as a physical or psychological illness. A period of training and healing by a senior *sangoma* leads to the eventual graduation of the initiate, who then serves as a channel for ancestral communication between her society and what Jungians would call the collective unconscious. The ancestors communicate via dreams, and also when the *sangoma* enters a trance after vigorous dancing at ceremonies – *iintlombe*<sup>50</sup> – in which the entire community participates. (2003: 19)

In many respects, Bailey's theatre operates along the same lines; indeed, *sangoma* ritual practices may be seen as the philosophical underpinning to his use of ritual.

Ritual is the point from which all aspects of Bailey's work evolve. *iMumbo Jumbo* (1997) *Ipi Zombi?* (1998), and *The Prophet* (1999) are all staged as an *ntlombe*, which he describes as 'a ritual enclosing a play' (2003: 20). The historical material is re-interpreted in such a way as to reflect on a psychological rift or 'illness', within the South African context. In each of the plays there is either a concrete, physical manifestation of this 'illness' or a conscious effort to purge its presence within the community. Actual *sangomas* participate in the performance of the plays giving Bailey's use of ritual gains its efficacy, as he states: 'A *sangoma* – like many rabbis or priests – is herself often a performer, using performance techniques and her role as initiated authority to inflame the Spirit of her congregation and lead her people into a state of heightened reality' (2003: 20).

This aspect of 'heightened reality' is communicated in the plays through the interconnectedness of ritual forms and historical material where, as Bailey goes further to explain,

Being in the presence of this incarnation of psychic energy has a healing and rejuvenating impact on the community and the individuals which it comprises: largely because its flowering is dependent upon their constant participation . . . The glory and power that the talented *sangoma* articulates at the climax

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<sup>50</sup> A Xhosa word for a divining ceremony, which is intended to re-enact the past through ritual storytelling and ritual sacrifice for the continued prosperity of the community. In the case of this term, it should be noted that there are slight variations in spelling between different writers' works, but all denote a ritual form of storytelling.

of her performance is a manifestation of all the concentrated human energies in the room: her performance is an act of community. (2003: 20)

In addition, the structure of all three of the plays is influenced in some way by *sangoma* modes of performance and the indigenous ritual practices of the Xhosa *intlombe*. As has already been discussed in relation to space and design, the ways in which Bailey manipulates the relationships between the audience with the play and the ritual drama are part of the way in which he attempts to make his plays an 'act of community'. In conjunction with ritual is the use of hybrid forms which he employs to bring about performance efficacy, that is, a transformation in the audience.

### 3.2.2 Space and ritualistic theatre design

The stage design of the plays is directly connected with spatial dialectics and the notion of transformation is a key element in considering how Bailey manipulates the relationship between actor and the audience. The play *iMumbo Jumbo* (1997) is, possibly, the least ritualistic of the three plays but still uses ritual aspects within it. The material Bailey draws on for this play is the legend of Xhosa Chief Nicholas Tilana Gcaleka's journey to Scotland to retrieve the skull of King Hintsa kaPhalo. Using the *ntlombe*, the journey is re-enacted by members of Third World Bunfight (TWB) where the potential for transformation is heightened through the establishment of liminal space.

Liminal spaces in the stage design of *iMumbo Jumbo* (1997) are created by the grass mats on the ground and by the raised platform leading towards what appears to be a religious building, influenced by African and Christian iconography. The set design for *iMumbo Jumbo* (1997) is in three-quarter round where the audience is seated on three sides. Bailey states:

The ritual scenes, GCALEKA's diatribes, and some of the BUNFIGHT scenes are played out in the arena. At the back is a raised platform, about 1.5 m high and 8 m long, also used as an acting space. Central steps lead up to this from the arena. The whole set is dressed as some sort of huge eclectic shrine, quite cluttered with pots, candles, etc. A vast banner bearing a red crucifix on a white background is draped at back-stage, and above it hangs a cow skull. The *SANGOMAS* will sit on mats on stage right, and *BUNFIGHT* on the left. (2003: 106)

The notion of transformation is further suggested by the two sacred symbols, a Christian crucifix and a cow skull representing African cultural beliefs. In juxtaposing these two symbols, Bailey evokes the cultural tensions that exist between such symbols. Symbols arise out of very specific

contexts; to have these two symbols so close to each other is to suggest the tension between the indigenous and the foreign, namely colonial, ontological and epistemological systems.

The notion of liminality is further heightened by the framing of the arena between the *sangomas*, on the right, and those who will enact the drama, on the left. Bailey constructs the performers as individuals in groups situated on the edge of society as they are the bridge between the inner world and the outer worlds of the play as a whole. Liminality is further reinforced by the way in which the audience, in three quarter round, and the actors, form a complete circle, a shape that has ritual associations and significance [refer to Fig. 1 in Appendix B]. The notion of liminality in Bailey's stage design is further developed in *Ipi Zombi?* (1998), and reaches its most sophisticated development in *The Prophet* (1999).

The play *Ipi Zombi?* (1998) takes as its starting point the factual account of witch-hunts that occurred after twelve schoolboys were killed in a bus accident in Kokstad in September 1995. Bailey's play explores the contradictions out of which such events arise. Traditional beliefs in witches, clash with notions of the cultural erosion of indigenous belief systems as a result of increased globalization.

The set design for the play indicates that Bailey extends the notion of liminality through consciously drawing attention to inner and outer worlds, as well as blurring the boundaries between them. This is, Bailey notes:

This is a sort of 'Alice in Wonderland' story. Not really, though I could push it that way. Rather it is the story of a battle between ORDER & DISORDER, an insidious faceless order which laughs all the way through. Mzlaku (*Intombi Nyama*) is the little girl who spurns these two worlds – she dances on the boundary. (2003: 42)

Like *iMumbo Jumbo* (1997) this play, too, is staged in three-quarter round. However, the concentric rings dominating the overall visual aspect of the set design are used to focus the relationship between the play and the audience. The seating area for the audience, and by extension the audience themselves, also occupies a liminal space. This is a space between the performance text and the outside world, beyond the immediate context of the performance. The audience themselves form part of the set, and the space beyond the auditorium is constructed as separate and, potentially, a source of threat. This reinforces the notion in the play of unseen forces impacting on the action, 'faceless', to both actors and audience.



The set design is focused on two areas. Firstly, the main acting area with a small fire representing inner worlds of experience, that is, the spirit, the life of individuals, of communities, of a nation caught in flux. The fire is framed by grass mats. The mats juxtapose two associations: one is a kind of tourist image of African lifestyles, and the other, more significantly, is that grass mats are laid down, often with white sheets, for voodoo priests on their way to the temple. The suggestion is that the entire stage is designed on the basis of a temple.

The other major element of the design is the cupboard on a raised platform that also functions as an altar. This serves the play in a number of ways. It is where the zombies emerge from, a symbol of domesticity warped by evil intent, a voodoo shrine, a doorway to the world of the ancestors, suggestive of a spiritual world beyond the material world. The notion of an altar as the centre point of religious practices in many African and Western belief systems also forms a visual focus in the overall design of *Ipi Zombi?* (1998), indicating the ritual centeredness of the performance text [refer to Fig. 2 in Appendix B].

In *The Prophet* (1999), Bailey employs what may be seen as stock devices in his theatrical work, namely the use of the narrator / storyteller and the construction of the performance as an *ntlombe*. In conjunction with these aspects is the way in which he blurs the liminal spaces, where the audience is seated in and around the performance areas. Again, the design constructs the audience as a part of the play rather than merely as observers. Bailey constructs the audience as bearing witness to the re-enactment of the Nongqawuse legend [refer to Fig 3 in Appendix B.]. Nongqawuse was the daughter of a *sangoma* and was reputed to have caused the cattle killing of 1856/57. Bailey describes the play in his workbook as:

... not a nice rounded story of affirmation. It is a scream of horror at the pillage and destruction of Africa by colonialism, neo-colonialism and greed. A progression of invasion and corruption: a beautiful culture, a bloom of culture invaded, corrupted, torn to pieces by greed, superstition, hysteria and confusion. (2003: 153)

This forms the focus of Bailey's directorial approach to the play and is also the driving force behind the play's design structure. Clearly designated performance spaces dissolve and the play presents the audience with a number of interrelated ritual spaces, the central one being the raised platform for the ritual-drama. *The Prophet* (1999) is more ritual centered than the other two plays

discussed and this ritual centeredness is conveyed to the audience through the visual aspects of the play's design. As Bailey states:

The venue is decked out as a dingy, lofty voodoo temple: candles and altars everywhere, drums of fire in the corners, religious paraphernalia, bones and herbs. The staging is in the round, with a raised platform in the centre, a ring of reed mats around this for the audience to sit on, a ring path on which THE DEAD will dance, and another ring of seats and platforms for the audience. (2003: 169) [refer to Fig. 3 in Appendix A]

The design of the space echoes Artaud's notion that ritual be reincorporated and heightened within the development of performance act, challenging received notions of theatrical construction.

The relationship between the audience and the play, in a Western context, has historically been constructed by the use of the proscenium arch stage configuration creating the notion of the fourth-wall behind which action takes place and on which the audience secretly eavesdrops. This configuration sets up a clear hierarchy of spectatorship within the context of the performance as well as within the audience themselves. Bailey seeks to dismantle this configuration and bring the audience into closer contact with the performance by adopting indigenous ritual practices and forms. This connects to the way in which Artaud, Grotowski, Brecht and Brook influenced theatrical practice by highlighting the centrality of the performer and the importance of the actor / audience relationship to create meaning within the performance act.

### **3.3 *iMumbo Jumbo* (1997): temporal dialectics, ritual context and cultural retrieval**

One dictionary definition of the term 'mumbo jumbo' reads as follows:

**Mumbo-jumbo** . . . 1 meaningless or ignorant ritual. 2 language or action intended to mystify or confuse. 3 an object of senseless veneration. [*Mumbo Jumbo* a supposed African idol] (Thompson, 1995)

Bailey is subverting the term as far as this play is concerned and it is worth taking some time on it in order to establish a framework within which to examine the performance text as an act of cultural retrieval.

The most apparent aspect of the term is that it is associated, by implication, with a particular discourse which is either considered to be too complex to understand, rendering its meaning worthless, or to have no purpose at all. Of course, these are value judgments and it is necessary to consider how much the term attempts to disavow and decontextualize those aspects of culture to which it is applied.

This disavowal brings into focus the issue of difference. Bailey connects this play, which deals with the retrieval of a cultural object (the skull of King Hinsta) to a spiritual and social rejuvenation of the community. Bailey calls into question the bases on which something is perceived to be too difficult to understand, or not within our frame of reference. In addition, the play interrogates our notions of difference and how they operate within our post-colonial context. The play, therefore, makes us question our constructed perceptions of social reality and the way we so easily empty meaning from aspects that seem foreign to our own cultural position. The play, in this way, brings into sharper focus issues around cultural clashes and difference. This is the main source from which the play's Immediacy is derived. Bailey, reflecting on a ceremony he participated in at the home of the Xhosa Chief Nicholas Tilana Gcaleka<sup>51</sup>, comments on the way in which he perceives this cultural clash and the way in which the play articulates it. He states:

. . . a large black billy goat is wrestled in by the horns, and after a brief prayer with everybody chorusing "*amaKhosi!*" ("Chiefs!" – a reference to the ancestors, and the source of Gcaleka's title), it is knocked to the floor and its throat sliced open. Red blood froths onto the electric blue linoleum, and two American soapie stars kiss on screen in the background: the timing is perfect . . . (2003: 94-95)

Bailey attempts to highlight this image of contemporary black South African social and cultural life by the way the journey of Gcaleka is performed and how the west commodifies his story for consumption by a global audience. Bailey further comments:

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<sup>51</sup> All character names will appear in lower case text as opposed to upper case text as they appear in Bailey's published works, except where direct quotations are made, where Bailey's style will be followed.

It's these clashes of cultures, symbols, beliefs, historical eras which you see all over Africa that always delight me: the goats that amble across from the location into town to graze on the marigolds and petunias planted by the municipality on the traffic islands, the women hurrying along the footpaths of rural valleys with newly charged car batteries on their heads to hook up to their portables so they can catch *The Bold and the Beautiful*, the barefoot black Christians dancing around a flaming chicken sacrifice, the squalid shacklands that line the road traversed by tourists in Merces from Cape Town International Airport to the pleasure domes of the city: all this impurity, these minglings, these collisions. This is the Africa of today. Europe's so preppy and up its own arse in comparison, and the "real African experience" contrived for its tourists is just a prissy charade for their romantic fantasies. (2003: 95)

Bailey implies that South African culture is impure, a hybrid, in flux, and that the intrusion of globalizing processes eroding indigenous cultural histories offers creative possibilities in terms of reconstituting history for a contemporary South African audience. It also suggests that homogenizing efforts to remove 'impurities' should be actively discouraged as it is the very complexity of impurity that makes the South African context intercultural.

Globalization produces pressure, both from without and within a community, hence the threat in the play of the Hinsta Hell Spirit. The threat of social degradation is enacted by the performers of the ritual drama as a consequence of not returning the skull of King Hintsu to the Xhosa community. In the play, Gcaleka, addressing the audience, points to these two aspects. He states:

Hey, they worried, man, the Spirits are worried. If this skull not buried soon, not buried together with Hintsu's head, there's going to be a big calamity in this country, I'm telling you . . . I think they gonna sentence whole South Africa to fifteen years for rape, because Hintsu's Spirit is attacking us, he's gonna force us to do it! *Vumani!* [Agree!]. (2003: 121, 123)

Gcaleka articulates the needs of his community, and views the skull as an instrument of cultural rejuvenation. His attitude is juxtaposed with the views of Westerners, articulated through the use of media and technocratic images. When Gcaleka, now joined by the chief Bhalizulu Mhlonthlo, Reverend Nzulwana and the Hurricane Spirit, arrive at Heathrow airport in London, they are thronged by actors wearing camera-masks. The journalists represent a faceless and dehumanized society dependent on the consumption and distribution of images where messages are disrupted, interrupted and denuded of context, as seen in the character / stereotype of the Western journalist who states:

(speaking into a BBC microphone)

South Africa's most famous witchdoctor arrived at Heathrow today claiming to be on a sacred mission to bring peace to his country. He wore a short skirt in an ethnic cotton print, a nylon leopard skin vest, a beaded dreadlock wig, and carried a fashionable wildebeest tail accessory. (2003: 129)

Bailey attempts to articulate something more than just a clash of contexts but also a clash of world views through the representation and rhetoric of the Eurocentric journalist. The journalist links to Bhabha's (1993) notion of the stereotype in the way in which it demonstrates a power relation that has been masked and the rhetoric used by the journalist is patronizing. It juxtaposes the importance of the skull as symbol of Gcaleka's cultural identity and neo-colonial aspirations to strip and erode a symbol of communal significance. Therefore, the skull is important in two ways: first, it is the skull of an ancestral King, and in African religious beliefs, spirits and ancestors maintain very concrete influences on the communities with which they are associated; secondly, it represents not only an instrument of cultural rejuvenation but also potential communal salvation.

Bailey is raising something of the notion of ownership, as those who own also have power. Issues of power and power shifts are at the heart of the notion of cultural retrieval. Cultural retrieval also constitutes a major part of the way Africa's performing arts have responded to and opposed globalizing processes. Acts of cultural retrieval, therefore, gain agency from a community's attempt to re-assemble a fractured and dislocated culture. It is also how a community engages in processes of negotiation between the past and the present.

In the play, these processes of negotiation hinge on the reclamation of the skull where social strife is inextricably intertwined with the belief in disaffected ancestors. Furthermore, the emphasis on reclaiming and reburying the skull brings to mind associations with other terms that are part of African political and social discourse, such as reconciliation, reaffirmation and restoration. These are attempts not only to restore and maintain communal and cultural identity, but also a strategy for self-actualization. In this case, the term 'actualization' is being substituted for the term 'transformation', as both imply a shift from one state, through a process of change, to emerge as something else. These processes of transformation / actualization again depend on the aspect of liminality. Since this is determined by ritual, Bailey stages the play to resemble the celebrations

and ceremonies which he witnessed in the spirit house of the current Xhosa king, Xolilizwe Sigeau, from where the red crucifix banner and cow skull are taken directly. This emphasizes the communal importance of the play. Ritual and anti-aesthetic devices – theatrical devices that are employed to call attention to their own construction – then work to establish, interrupt and reaffirm the act of cultural retrieval enacted by Gcaleka's journey.

The use of storytelling and a narrating figure is the main anti-aesthetic vehicle. Gcaleka performs and addresses the audience about his own journey to Scotland as himself, and this is, in turn, performed in a pantomime version, by a character named Nicolas in the ritual-drama. This caricatured version of Gcaleka, juxtaposed with aspects of the play (such as the so-called history lesson), present strategies for a re-visioning of history. Here, mimicry is employed to make a comment on how Gcaleka actually appears, dressed in traditional *sangoma* costume, and the way in which the West perceive him as a pantomime clown. Gcaleka articulates in the play the history lesson to the audiences in the following extract:

Four children, each one clutching a huge spirit mask, scurry into the arena. Each one of the children represent one of the amaXhosa kings from Gcaleka's history lesson – he makes use of them to animate the lesson.

GCALKA: Wait, now, I give you a history lesson – is very important, you must listen carefully. You see Phalo is the father of the Xhosa nation. In 1991 he come to me over the dream, he say I must go fetch the head of his great-grandson, King Hintsa, which was cut off by the Scottish soldiers in 1836. He say: "If you not fetch that head and bury it together with Hintsa's body, there be no Jesus Christ in South Africa."

This one is the Hurricane Spirit, he's the one who help me brought the skull of King Hintsa back to South Africa; it's a spiritual snake, a black mamba, the twin of King Gcaleka. They the sons of Phalo, you understand? Hey, he's very powerful. He can destroy this country, don't cost him five minutes, very powerful. When that Spirit is angry there can be a big thunderstorm. You can call your bloody scientists, they cannot stop that thunderstorm. You understand? They cannot even see him, only I can see him 'cos I fetched him from the river; his Spirit is with me! This one King Gcaleka: the twin of the Hurricane Spirit, the mamba. He drowned in Nxinxola River in 1778, he want to be with this brother of his, but he take the kingship of the Xhosa nation with him.

Now his son, Khawuta, this one, when his father drowned he never go there to the river to ask the kingship back from the River Spirits, *Abantu Bomlambo*. He think he can just become king like that. Never! You must pay the River Spirits many cattle, you understand? For hundred and sixty years the kingship of the Xhosa Nation been under the water, that's why the Xhosa Nation is like a bastard. (2003: 110)

This lesson precedes the action of the ritual-drama. Gcaleka thus historicizes the action, rooting it within an indigenous knowledge of Xhosa history. By doing so he is reinforcing how the past is mediated through the present and, also, through the use of Brechtian historicization technique. By addressing the audience directly, Gcaleka constructs the participants as interlocutors of meaning, and the performers as characters. This exemplifies what happens in certain post-colonial theatre practices, as discussed by Gilbert and Thompson, when actors become 'aware of the audience and of [their] own position[s] as entertainer[s], [and] the storytellers [revise] history in/through every performance by making the past 'speak' to the present' (1996: 127).

In *iMumbo Jumbo* (1997) notions of temporal dialectics and cultural retrieval are inter-dependent and are necessary for the play to communicate its meaning to a contemporary South African audience. By engaging in this dialectic, an audience is forced to reassess their position with regard to the importance of cultural retrieval as a necessary act for communal reintegration and a rejection of cultural erosion. In *iMumbo Jumbo* (1997) this reassessment of an audience is what is key to transformation and to the healing effect Bailey envisages this play has in relation to the contemporary South African context.

### **3.4 *Ipi Zombi?* (1998): social dramas, social perceptions and schisms**

In Bailey's theatrical work there are three recurrent elements which are integral to an understanding of what he is attempting to articulate in his performance texts. These three elements are (1) the bringing of some kind of physical, social, communal illness to a head, (2) the ever-present threat or danger coming from without, and (3) the purging or healing of an illness that would have deep cultural repercussions for a community if not successfully purged. As has already been explained, Bailey wishes his plays to be an affirmation of community within the South African context. However, he moves beyond the positivism that characterized much protest theatre during the apartheid era in South Africa, choosing rather to address and critique those social processes and cultural practices he sees as responsible for the degradation of community and the erosion of indigenous cultural expression within the South African context. It is for this reason that performance critic and academic David Graver observes:

Brett Bailey is more interested in cultural heritage than in historical narrative. His play, *Ipi Zombi?*, draws upon the power of sacred Xhosa performance forms such as church hymns and the trance chants and dances of sangomas (traditional diviners and healers). He demonstrates both the power of these cultural resources and the stresses placed on them by the modern world. He neither dismisses nor idealizes the past, but, rather, shows how it both haunts the present with atavistic prejudices and offers psychological solace and communal ties to a fragmented, stress-laden society. (1999: 7)

Graver suggests that there are several aspects that are important in considering the play *Ipi Zombi?* (1998). It is difficult to separate cultural heritage from a country's history, especially when considering intercultural work within a post-colonial context. However, Graver's point places specific focus on the way in which history has a layering effect on culture, making it impossible to maintain that culture is a pure, self-contained phenomenon; hence, culture is itself a hybrid. Bailey draws on the multi-layered and multi-vectored nature of South African cultural life in order to articulate the nature of a clash of world views. The clash of world views, epistemologies, and belief systems is often recognizable in what Turner (1982) might term a 'breach' within the social processes which govern a community within a given context. Turner uses the term 'breach' to refer to the first phase within the overall theoretical construct of 'social dramas'. This breach is followed by a crisis, redressive action, and either reintegration or schism. Schechner explains:

A breach is a situation that threatens the stability of a social unit – family, corporation, community, nation, etc. A crisis is a widening of the breach into an open or public display. There may be several successive crises, each more public and threatening than the last. Redressive action is what is done to deal with the crisis, to resolve or heal the breach. Often enough, at this phase of a social drama, each crisis is answered by a redressive action that fails, evoking new, even more explosive crises. Reintegration is the resolution of the original breach in such a way that the social fabric is knit back together. Or a schism occurs. (2002: 66)

The concept of social drama is useful as a means with which to expand the connection between the use of ritual and historical material in Bailey's plays. In *Ipi Zombi?* (1998), the use of African ritual performance forms, and meta-theatrical anti-aesthetic devices serve to heighten the social drama being played out before the audience.

The death of twelve schoolboys in a bus accident in Kokstad and the subsequent accusations of witchcraft as the source of the accident, constitute the breach within the community. Bailey uses the breach within the meta-theatrical construct, that is, the ritual-drama. Even more significant is that the breach is articulated as something that invades from the outside and that manifests at a



physical, social, communal, individual and spiritual level. In addition, it is constructed as something being influenced from outside the immediate context and being perpetuated by individual interests. This is evidenced in the opening monologue of Viva the narrator / storyteller figure of the village drama:

. . . People, *bantu*, tonight we are telling you a terrible story, the most hungry story, a story of something bigger than all of us, a story about something worse than you can imagine, about something that eats people, bones and everything, and what is making it even more terrible is that it is a true story – ja – from Bhongweni Township, not even six hours' drive from where we are tonight, not even three years ago from this night. A taxi crashed and twelve boys were killed, and this hungry thing came out of the forests that night and into the town to eat. For two months it grew fat there, turning the people against each other, making children to kill their own mothers, and eating the people of that town. This is a story of these times, this is a story of this province: IPI ZOMBI? (2003: 44)

It is not the accident itself, therefore, that is important, but rather what happens as a consequence of it, just as the breach initiates a crisis within a community. This could be interpreted as tension produced by a clash of difference. The redressive actions played out in the ritual-drama lead, in this case, not to reintegration but to a schism. The schism is due to the community's inability to reconcile the interests of globalization with indigenous epistemological values. The community becomes fractured and dislocated.

In the play, the notion of the zombie<sup>52</sup> becomes symbolic of a fractured community, a community in crisis. The presence of *sangomas* in the play is significant as they serve to construct a bridge between the action of the play and its meaning and implications for the South African context at large. *Sangomas* function to 'reunite the zomboid spirit with their bodies' (Bailey, 2003: 33). Hence, the play operates as a ritual of communal healing.

Bailey is very articulate about the primary reason as to why he is drawn to this kind of material. Rather than vilifying either position, Bailey attempts to explore the range of contradictions, missed, and mixed messages, which occur within a context that is under external pressure and

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<sup>52</sup> The term 'zombie' refers to a person who has willingly or unwillingly been poisoned by a mixture, whose active ingredient is the flesh of a Puffer fish. This brings them into a near death-like state where the conscious mind is cut off from the victim and they are open to suggestion and to carrying out the commands of a *bacour* (sorcerer). These practices occur where the religion of voodoo is followed, most notably in West African and Central American contexts. The term has also been appropriated into popular culture, for example, countless cult horror films that attempt to demonize an otherwise complex cultural signifier of a particular religious practice (Metrax, 1989).

internal stress brought about by the loss of a sense of community. The loss of community is what Bailey seeks to heal – or attempt to summon a healing for – through his plays. In a society struggling to establish its identity, navigating through the vastness of our dislocated, fractured and fragmented histories, the emphasis on the loss of community, and the play's inherent desire to reconstitute, or at least suggest it, is apparent. Bailey, in a similar way to which Brecht (1964) employs an episodic structure in his plays, focuses our attention on how relationships are influenced by the events that happen. The focus on human relationships to themselves, others and their context is also a priority of Interculturalism.

After Viva has spoken his opening monologue, he reveals Intombi 'Nyama made to mimic the kinds of tourist artifacts sold at flea-market or beach-front stalls. These are the kinds of carvings commonly sold to Western tourists. The result is a romanticized image and conception of African identity as something exotic. The image keys into the notions of cultural erosion and communal disintegration that Bailey attempts to communicate in the performance texts.

In the first episode, *ABAZALI BAM BAYALILA* [My parents are crying], Bailey introduces the audience to motifs that recur throughout the play. One such example is the use of a trinity of actors of some kind. In the play, he uses three schoolboys to represent the twelve that were killed in the accident. The trinity associates the schoolboys with colonial Christian mission education, a type of education that historically – and reflecting a deliberate use of theatrical irony in Bailey's case – wanted to eradicate indigenous beliefs in ancestors and spirits.

The colours used, red and white, are ambivalent, as both have symbolic meaning for Western as well as African culture. Red and white are both used in Christian liturgical practices, as well as by voodoo priests and *sangomas* as symbolic signifiers of their influence and their position as medium between worlds. The colours carry with them symbolic meaning which is associated with the *sangomas*' status in African society as leaders of a community. In part, the use of *sangomas* and *sangoma* ritual practices, highlights the South African context and comments on how we have lost our connection to the communal, demonstrating, in turn, the need for a re-integration of self and community.

Communal disintegration reflects the fragmented nature of experience and also reveals the deep socio-cultural anxieties born out of a clash between rural African concepts of community and the extreme individualism advocated by Western neo-liberal practices. In African belief systems the bearers of misfortune are often assigned the role of “witch” or “sorcerer”. In addition to being the sources of ill will, they are also cultural symbols connected to the belief in ancestral spirits and other beliefs in the spiritual influences of the afterlife on present-day experience.

In order dramatically to represent this pressure on African indigenous cultural beliefs, Bailey seeks to interrogate the context in which cultural erosion takes place. Through a number of presentational and anti-aesthetic devices, Bailey juxtaposes the increasing distortions of the accident with the inability of science (represented through the doctor character, Doctor), justice (represented through the policeman character, Cop), and religion (represented in the priest, Priest), effectively to address the breach in the community. Each of these characters represents stereotypes that parody and satirize power relations as they occur in the context of the play and within the social realities of rural communities.

The entrance of the characters Gogo, Fazi and Mambamba, black men dressed in pantomime drag consisting of calabash breasts, and head-dresses made from maize-meal packets, are an example of an anti-aesthetic device [refer to Fig. 4 in Appendix B.]. The ‘shock’ of their entrance produces a comical reaction in an audience and forces them to recognize that there has been no attempt at realism, suggesting that they should stay aware that what they are watching is a construction. As with Brecht this, creates distance, preventing an audience from identifying with the characters, and is an attempt to enlarge an audience’s understanding of the circumstances of individuals caught between cultural erosion and communal disintegration.

Another way in which this kind of ambivalent and potentially subversive image comes into play is with the appearance of the doctor character [refer to Fig. 4 in Appendix B.]. The doctor character is a stereotype of white, colonial, patriarchal reason, and advocate of Western scientific discourse of rationalization. However, Bailey presents this figure to an audience in a way that suggests that Western epistemologies are facile attempts to reason out the intricate contextual factors, which affect communities under pressure from poverty and disease. The doctor character

embodies Western thought's inability to move beyond its own prejudices while still claiming a position of dominance.

The contradiction occurs when there is an inability for parastatal organisations of a society to cope with or comprehend such breaches in their own communities. Bailey makes this comment through the character Cop. This stereotype is presented as an uncaring and slothful clown figure [refer to Fig. 4 in Appendix B.]. The use of comic, non-recorded sound, and a red telephone receiver, heightens the comic effect. Bailey could be criticized here for presenting an image which African society has tried to correct, namely, the idea of the simple black man incapable of holding a position of authority and, therefore, somehow inferior. I would argue, however, that Bailey is making a comment on the ineffectuality of the black African elitist bureaucracy. After the power vacuum left by first, decolonisation, and later, the abolition of apartheid, black elitists, under the guise of furthering democracy, have chosen to distance themselves from the needs and realities of communities such as Bhongweni.

Bailey draws on African indigenous performance modes in order to critique those in privileged positions. Many African performance practices use the context of ritual-performance to display and perform their views on those in power or those who wish to impose their power. This often takes the form of stereotyping (Bhabha, 1993), enabling the community to critique the ruling class through readily recognizable iconography. What the often grotesque and clown-like presentations signal is their ineffectuality as opposed to their efficacy. Bailey shows that parastatal organizations and institutions are unable to manage, or even attempt to take cognizance of, the many contextual factors that influence incidents such the killing of individuals on the suspicion of witchcraft.

The only solution left for the community seems to be to take matters into its own hands. The significance of the character Senti, who represents the School Representative Council members who eventually carried out the witch killings, is that he clearly shows how the breach in the community has widened and how attempts at redressive action are met with failure and hence, more extreme redressive action is taken in the form of violence.

Most of what has been discussed here covers the expository element of *Ipi Zombi?* (1998). The 'NTLOMBE' (2003: 53), enables Bailey to reveal visually how cultural practices and belief systems would intervene in such breaches within a community. The ceremony is conducted in order to remove, or purge, the unwanted elements, based on practices which affirm a sense of communal solidarity rather than violent action. However, in this case, the ceremony leads to schism rather than reintegration of the community. Bailey juxtaposes this with a monologue from Viva in which he states:

My friends, now of course we cannot say that witches were not involved in this thing – in our communities there are many women using witchcraft: maybe they want power or they have jealousy for your money or your family or your good luck. White people and even many blacks laugh at us, they think we are superstitious, but there are many things they do not know with their science, and also there are many things they do not know that they do not know. (2003: 53)

This is where cultural beliefs clash with notions of superstition. The inability for an urbanized mind to accept such beliefs ultimately results in a rejection of any such beliefs. The inability of the *sangomas* to resolve the breach results in a further distortion of the central narrative. Theatrically, the results of this are played out as a play-within-a play, as Viva further states:

They say that many years ago when when (*sic*) they were chasing witches from that town the witches took things like this [the *sangomas* in the *ntlombe* removed a goat skull pierced with pins from the audience] and buried them there, at the gate of the town, so the community would be cursed forever. And the people are still dying like flies there. But now, the trouble really started one week after the crash when a small girl, only eleven years, told some things to her friends. People, please welcome our special star to act this character ... *INTOMBI 'NYAMA!* (2003: 53)

In general terms, Viva further emphasizes how deeply entrenched the notion of witchcraft is within the psychology of spiritual belief systems of South African Xhosa culture.

The moment that the character of Intombi 'Nyama is invited onto stage, marks a distinct shift within the overall structure of the play. First, in a Brechtian sense, in the way in which it calls attention to the play's construction and places an audience at a distance from the action, it enables the audience to engage actively in what they are witnessing. This is also one of the last times Viva addresses the audience directly until the last scene of the play, save for two very small interjections which serve to reinforce anti-aestheticism.

The second important structural element is that the play is episodic, shifting from scene playing, interspersed with narration, to a mode which is structured along other modes of performance, which may be linked to African performance practices.

Theatrically, Bailey establishes the modes of performance in the way the characters relate to each other and the way in which an audience is made to feel implicated within the performance through their relationship with the characters on stage. This is primarily communicated to audiences through direct address and choric storytelling, as the following demonstrates:

A clatter of drums, marimbas, percussion, and the women bounce into funky West African song and dance around the arena.

WOMEN: If you are afraid of the dark, if you hear a bump in the night,  
You'd better be staying inside if you wanna be staying alive.  
They will catch you in your pyjamas, they will eat you for their supper.  
Zombies looking for food. Ipi zombies up to no good.

INTOMBI 'NYAMA: And then I dreamed of a big mielie field,  
and all those long green leaves waving,  
waving in the wind –

WOMEN: waving in the wind –

INTOMBI 'NYAMA: A strange dream for a small girl, a small girl like me –  
waving in the wind like long green tongues, and whispering –

WOMEN: whispering –

INTOMBI 'NYAMA: words to me –

WOMEN: words to me –

INTOMBI 'NYAMA: telling me secrets,  
calling my name ... mtle mtle mtle, mtle mtle mtle

Together with call-and-response and repetition, which are a part of African performance modes, storytelling relates back to oral traditions and the way storytelling constituted ritual practices within indigenous cultures during pre-colonial times. Bailey is retrieving this practice as part of the dialectical relationships within his intercultural discourse.

As a consequence of the previous failure of redressive actions and the widening breach in the community, the community often demands a sacrifice, usually of a human scapegoat, in order to purge from the community anything which threatens the stability of the communal context. The method by which to regain stability in African communities is through rituals. Bailey draws on these indigenous performance modes to ritualize the killing of Mrs Magudu, Intombi 'Nyama's grandmother. In the episodic scene, Bailey combines elements of Artaud and Brecht. Artaud used ritual in order to 'shock' an audience out of their complacency, and Bailey presents the scene in such a way that forces an audience to question their own context. Reinforcing this is the way in which Mrs. Magudu is both a character and a narrator. This sits uneasily with an audience as this creates a split focus and the character operates on at least two levels; first, Mrs. Magudu is based on a factual person and secondly, the character is portrayed by Noxolo Donyeli, an actor, who comes from the same context on which the play focuses.

The scene involving Mrs. Magudu builds up rhythmic momentum [refer to Fig 5 in Appendix B.], in much the same way as many rituals do, through Zol's interjections into Mrs. Magudu's narration and pleas for mercy, as well as the repetition of the line, '*Ziphi izitshixho? Where are the keys? Ziphi izitshixho? Where are the keys?*' (Bailey, 2003: 68-69). The keys to which they refer are for the cupboard where they believe she is keeping the zomboid remains of the three dead boys. The cupboard, by now a prominent element of the stage design, becomes a perverted form, a domestic, mundane and utilitarian item turned into a symbol of the community's fear and cultural anxieties. Bailey engages Grotowskian (1968) notions, here, of the intersection and contradictions between what is considered sacred and secular. The scene builds up to the ritualized killing of Mrs. Magudu, described by Bailey as follows:

Burst of percussion. MRS MAGUDU launches into a desperate dance of fear, ZOL dancing about her seductively, then FIRE joins, then SENTI with a knife. They dance the dance of her death then drag her to the altar, plunge in and bludgeon her to death. One of the women is screaming as the assailants pull back; she tries to hold MRS MAGUDU, then collapses in tears. MRS MAGUDU crawls forward to centre stage and dies. All the boys except SENTI – with a bloody dagger clenched above his head – slink away. (2003: 69-70)

The ritual killing, characterized as a communal sacrifice on an altar, is part of, and partly results from, increased cultural anxieties. Attempts to suggest that the act of witch killings arises out of mere superstition, do so in order to mask power structures and disavow the context in which such occurrences take place. Bailey's use of the ritual killing provokes audiences to negotiate their own cultural position in relation to other individuals and groups. The intercultural relationships, then, are highlighted further by the way the performance text does not endorse a conclusive ending or resolution.

Viva's closing words speak directly to the contradictions between the lived experiences of communities and the claims, of those in power, of the importance of a so-called African Renaissance<sup>53</sup>. In the closing moments of the play Viva reaffirms that all redressive action has failed. He states:

We build our fences up and up and up, even with thorns and with aloes. In the morning they are broken and the mielies are gone. There is something bigger than all of us – something worse than you can imagine. There, in the river. There, in the veld. We pray to our ancestors and offer them gifts: beer, meat and even money, but this thing is too hungry. You lock your doors at night and close the windows, but it creeps inside, in through the keyhole, and in through the cracks, in while you sleep, in while you breathe. You wake up in the morning and this thing has been inside you and then you are so empty. You wake up too quickly – it is still inside you, and then you are lost ... Good night.

(Exit with maniacal laughter). (2003: 75)

A schism, rather than a reintegration has formed, from which there seems to be no escape.

Despite its dire closing message, the play gives some suggestion that reintegration is possible. What is put forward is that the community in the play, like the South African community it

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<sup>53</sup> In a context that is experiencing the threat of social degradation and communal disintegration such a notion seems wholly naïve and irresponsible. The elision of the contradictions and clashes of difference within a multicultural society, together with the practices of cultural erosion and globalizing processes implicit in the notion of an African Renaissance, further entrench power structures and hierarchies.



represents, has not found a way, as yet, with which to negotiate its post-colonial identity within larger forces such as cultural erosion and globalization. Perhaps it is Bailey's intent to embark on further explorations in order to find strategies with which to cope with such processes of negotiating cultural identity. Bailey also presents a disjunctive (Schechner, 2002) Interculturalism, as expressed through Brechtian devices and Artaudian ritual 'shock'. Bailey makes audiences aware of their own responsibility to engage with the events of the performance text and interrogate them in light of their own perceptions and constructions of the social reality in order to transform, and enlarge their understanding, of the dynamics of the post-colonial, and post-apartheid, context they occupy.

### **3.5 *The Prophet* (1999): memory and re-membering – reclaiming the past for the present**

The last play in the collection, *The Prophet* (1999), creates a ritual centre around which the performance is constructed. It is through this play that one can examine not only the clash of context but also how the past is used to reflect on the present. Bailey poses a series of questions:

Can art/drama really make a difference? Or are we who live along the margins of society just naïve dreamers? Deluded prophets? In line with the sense that through performance spiritual forces might be propitiated, I choose to present the saga as a ceremony of healing for the tens of thousands of unburied Xhosas who died in the scrub of the Eastern Cape. But maybe this is misguided. Perhaps pretentious. Can I, a white African, really construct a ritual for black Africans? (2003: 156)

An important difference between this play and the other two is that it may be seen, in some ways, to lack the theatricality and self-consciousness of *iMumbo Jumbo* (1997) and *Ipi Zombi?* (1998). *The Prophet* (1999) is less episodic and less fragmented, and the ritual-drama is played before an audience in a space that heightens the ritual centeredness of the play. The audience is placed within and around the performers, constructing the spectators not only as witnesses, but also as participants, within the ritual-drama. It is through the blurring of spatial designation, between stage and auditorium, that Bailey primarily creates the ritual centeredness of *The Prophet* (1999). The deconstruction of the traditional division between audience and performers keys into the blurring of contextually defined space. The play operates as an act or ceremony of memory and re-membering of a community's history, which forces an audience to consider the clash between

the past and the present, rather than viewing the play as an act of nostalgia. Bailey presents the performance of the play in this way because he intentionally wants the past to speak to the present.

In order to blur the economic, social and political contextual boundaries, Bailey intentionally sets up different kinds of histories, within the context of the ritual-drama, against each other. The play engages Xhosa histories and settler/colonial histories. History, however, is contextually bound to specific cultures, and therefore, history has both a temporal and spatial aspect to it. The blurring of spatial and temporal dialectics links it to the present post-colonial context, which South Africa occupies. Bailey engages the past so he can critique the present. This is primarily invoked through space and the way the set is designed. Gilbert and Tompkins, commenting on how playwrights in post-colonial contexts tend to articulate context through space, state:

Both settler and indigenous playwrights engage, albeit often in quite different ways, with the spatial aspects of imperialism. In many cases, dramatized images of the landscape reveal how space has been constructed by imperial history and, concomitantly, how it might be deconstructed and reorganized according to the imperatives of various colonized groups. (1996:145)

Gilbert and Tompkins (1996) go on to articulate how space may itself become a discourse. In intercultural theatre practice, space operates as one signifier of context for the audience. Gilbert and Tompkins observe:

Since space is the grammar not only of the landscape but also of the *mise-en-scène*, theatre has the potential to reconstitute the structural basis of historical conception, to make space/place a performer rather than the medium on and through which the pageant of history seems to merely unfold. (1996: 145-146)

Bailey, therefore, is attempting to reorganize our perceptions of the story of Nongqawuse through ritual-drama.

The story of Nongqawuse (Peires, 1989) and the cattle killing of the 1850s which lead to the colonial British power's conquest of the Xhosa nation, is not one which can be easily reconciled with what communities face in terms of cultural erosion in contemporary South Africa. Bailey

heightens this tension between the struggle to maintain cultural identity and cultural erosion in the way he presents the play as a ritual in a community which effectively is unable to devise sufficient redressive action to bring about a reintegration of communal identity. Instead, he presents us with the ambiguities of Nongqawuse's story and the events which lead to the decline of the Xhosa nation as a significant indigenous power in the 1800s. These ambiguities are shared with the contemporary South African context, implicitly, and may be expounded on by adopting what Degenaar (1995) has identified as particular sites of tension in South African culture.

Degenaar (1995: 61-62) writes about South African culture as been situated between two polarities at a time when it had just entered a new democratic dispensation after 1994. Firstly, there is a need to recognize the existence of, at least, two cultural formulations that have, and do, still, play a role in shaping definitions of culture within South Africa. The one is recognizing the plurality of culture and the other is the use of unicultural dogmatism to support universal notions of culture. Secondly, South African cultural identity is seated somewhere between Eurocentric and Afrocentric views of culture and cultural development. Bailey's play *The Prophet* (1999) may be interpreted as one particular cultural expression that articulates these cultural tensions.

*The Prophet* (1999) uses a point in history rooted in the mid-nineteenth century colonization of South Africa. This moment in South Africa's history relates well to the cultural tensions expressed by Degenaar (1995), writing in the late twentieth-century on how South African culture is struggling to accept its own cultural plurality. Bailey, writing and practising theatre at the turn of the century, articulates how the struggle to accept cultural plurality, maintain cultural identity, and develop strategies to cope with cultural erosion, are key debates in theatrical practices in the twenty-first century South African context. Bailey invokes historification in the performance text by constructing the events as a ritual made out of history.

Through making a ritual out of history, Bailey articulates the rifts and schisms that occur, and have occurred historically, in societies and cultures, specifically South African, facing extreme pressure from the outside while undergoing vast internal transition. Bailey articulates his views of society through the intermingling of various historical narratives within the ritual-drama. The importance of history, and the deconstruction and subsequent re-interpretation of historical narrative, is, as Gilbert and Tompkins observe:

... a complex process which requires more than merely filling the gaps with untold stories, or substituting culturally specific narratives for Eurocentric ones. It is inevitable that history will present a productive site for hybridity in post-colonial drama when several narratives coexist in however uneasy a union. Most often, histories *compete* (sic) with each other to form a complex dialectic which is always subject to change as new players enter the field of representation. (1996: 110)

Bailey's play reworks, or re-stages, a specific historical moment – the story of Nongqawuse and the cattle killing of 1856/7. Gilbert and Tompkins, referring to Jamaican poet, playwright and actor Dennis Scott's *An Echo in the Bone* (1974), comment on the use of ritual and of history as subject material within a theatrical context:

The play thus retrieves the past as a function of the contemporary moment and also suggests that re-enactments of history can achieve the necessary release from psychological and spiritual (if not always actually physical) legacies of slavery and racism. (1996: 69)

Through a re-reading of this historical moment, Bailey reclaims it for the contemporary multicultural South African context.

The focus of the play is the historical figure Nongqawuse, a Xhosa girl who prophesied that the Xhosa people were in line for a time of great prosperity and wealth, and that the ancestors would rise up and defeat the colonial British powers. However, in order for this to occur, they had to kill all their cattle, burn their stores of grain and leave their fields untilled. This they did; the consequence, perhaps unsurprisingly, was that the prophecy was not fulfilled, and, consequently, between 60 000 and 100 000 Xhosa people starved to death and the colonial British invaders were able to seize and occupy Xhosa land. This controversial historical moment has been used at various moments in other artistic endeavours: South African dramatist Fatima Dike's play *The Sacrifice of Kreli* (1976), the fictive novel by South African novelist, poet and playwright Zakes Mda, *The Heart of Redness* (2001), a Community Arts Project at the 2003 Cape Town Festival entitled *Nongqawuse: The Truth Commission* (2003), and more recently as the inspiration and subject matter for South African artist Andrew Nhlangwini's *The Prophecy of the Cattle Killing of 1856/7*, known as the *Ibali lika Nongqawuse* exhibition at the National South African Gallery in Durban at the beginning of April 2004. The point is that it is not a new concept to use history, especially this particular dramatic tale, as a source for the creation of art. More important, however, is how this historical event has been re-interpreted in different ways to reflect on South

African society. The use of the Nongqawuse legend keys into Degenaar's (1995) comment about how a particular story from the past may gain intertextual significance and political and social relevance for us today.

In terms of *The Prophet* (1999), there are two specific intertextual elements to discuss: firstly, the use of excerpts from South African writer Herbert Dhlomo's play *The Girl Who Killed to Save: Nongqawuse the Liberator* (1936) and secondly, the significance of the characters named The Dead, who resemble South African resistance artist Jane Alexander's *The Butcher Boys* (1985-6) [refer to Fig 6 and Fig 7 in Appendix B.].

Dhlomo's play was lauded in 1936 as the first play to be published by a black South African in English. However, the play has subsequently been criticized, by literary critics such as Nick Visser and Tim Couzens (1985), because Dhlomo's writing is seen as the product of a Christian mission education. As South African drama and performance practitioner and academic, Ian Steadman, observes:

[Dhlomo's play] has been described by numerous commentators as a play which demonstrates its author's 'assimilation' into middle-class European cultural norms . . . and as a play which exemplifies liberal middle-class black writing under a system of tutelage and co-option, it serves as a good example of the ways in which black middle-class dramatists were frustrated in their attempts to articulate progressive arguments in dramatic form. (1994: 15)

The criticism may have stemmed from Dhlomo's use of received normative Anglo-European conventions, namely, the post-neoclassical (nineteenth century) concept of 'the well made play', where its use in education was inherently ideological and designed to elide indigenous modes of artistic expression. Bailey uses actual excerpts from Dhlomo's text in his play *The Prophet* (1999); however, what is Bailey's and what is Dhlomo's is not readily distinguishable. Thus, it may be argued that, in this instance, intertextuality promotes an integrative (Schechner, 2002) form of intercultural practice, where it is impossible to delineate source text from its reconstruction since a new performance text has been formulated.

The second way Bailey invokes a dialogue with the past is through the use of Alexander's art, specifically *The Butcher Boys* (1985-6) as a reference point for the malevolent characters The

Dead. History is multi-vectored: just as the story of Nongqawuse is one that situates a particular community in South Africa within a context of transition, albeit through poverty and violence, *The Butcher Boys* (1985-6), too, articulates something of the violent transition that South Africa faced in the late 1980s when the apartheid regime's power was beginning to wane and further violence against people was being enforced by the then dominant Afrikaner Nationalist government. South African art critic and journalist Ivor Powell observes:

*The Butcher Boys* are creatures that are not quite human, yet there is a strong implication that once they were human. Their mutation comes, in part at least, through mutilation – the spine show through the flesh, the chests are split open. The heads of the figures have lost their features, begun to transform into heads of animals . . . *The Butcher Boys* are images of brutalisation; they are the loci of malevolent and dehumanising forces. And what those forces are making them is inhumans. Mouthless, they can neither speak nor roar nor eat; they have gouged holes where they once had ears, it is only the searching ambivalent eyes that remain intact . . . The constituent body parts are those of real people, but into this human clay, the artist has worked bones and skulls and whatever animal remains came to hand . . . In their woundedness and their bestiality, they are personifications of appalling spiraling violence, the anarchy, the necklace killings, the civil war, the police brutality, the child detentions, the burnings and lootings of South Africa in the 1980s . . . *The Butcher Boys* become, in a way, harbingers of horror, its genii in mythological terms . . . sometimes singly, sometimes together preside over devastation or brutality. (1995: 15)

Unlike Alexander's expression of apartheid brutality, The Dead in Bailey's text do see and can speak. However, they influence the action of the play only through Nongqawuse [refer to Fig. 8 in Appendix A]. They remain visible only to her and retain their status as unseen perpetrators of violence that threatens to destroy communities and cause schisms from which no redressive action can cause reintegration. The Dead represent that which is present in our communities: the ability for individuals to act simultaneously as victims and perpetrators of our own demise.

The appearance of The Dead forms a caveat within the overall performance of the ritual-drama. Their appearance is constructed as a disturbing ritual of possession. Those individual performers that play The Dead are initially positioned covertly in various places amongst the audience, highlighting, again, the ritual nature of the performance and the implication that we, as individuals, are the unwitting perpetrators of our own destruction. Bailey describes their first appearance thus:

The JUJU have brought the horns to their lips and begin to blow their long sad notes to summon THE DEAD. Five men planted amongst the audience begin to squirm and shudder, eventually going into fits on

the floor, as the demon spirits possess them . . . They are dragged to the ring path by THE MAMAS, stripped, smeared from head to toe in sand-coloured mud, and crowned with cow horns. NONGQAWUSE, kneeling on the platform, slowly parts the folds of her blanket to reveal her shocking white-painted face, hair and body. She wears a dim expression of ecstasy. The PRIEST cracks his whip and THE DEAD stumble through the audience towards the blood offering in the bowl. They submerge their hands in the red. Two of THE DEAD lope towards NONGQAWUSE at the carcass of the ox, braying her name through their cleft palates. (2003: 179) [refer to Fig 8 in Appendix A]

In the same way that *The Butcher Boys* may be seen to symbolize our own participation in processes of violence and victimization, so, too, do The Dead. They become symbolic of instruments of cultural erosion and communal degradation.

There are three aspects that interrelate in the play: a fractured community; individuals, within the community, who are victims and perpetrators of their own fractured identity; and external pressure exerted by colonial forces. At the beginning of the play, Bailey presents us with a reduction of the image of British colonial invasion. Together with the image of The Dead they form a dual focus for the audience. The duality makes an audience aware of the cultural heritage and cultural accretion South African society has accumulated since our colonial occupation and the presence of individuals' perpetuation of self-interest at the expense of community.

As the audience enters, the space is being prepared and the audience, once seated, completes the ritual circle, indicating the ritual-centredness of the performance [refer to Fig. 3 in Appendix B.]. Similarly, the opening words spoken by the Juju, give a heightened sense of specifically African religious belief:

JUJU: You have called us, we have – come  
You have called us, and we have come  
But briefly  
We have come from beneath the waters  
We have come from beyond the stars  
We have come from deep inside  
Ssh ... ooom-uh-uh ... ooom-uh-uh ... ooom-uh-uh-uh-uh ...oom (2003: 170)

Bailey does not call attention to where the ritual-drama begins. There is no single narrator figure for the audience to identify with and, instead, he weaves the ritual-drama into an act of memory and re-membering. This is evidenced in the interchange below, between the Praise poet and the Juju chorus:

PRAISE POET: . . .      Do you remember, *uyakhumbula*, do you remember?  
In the long winters our people ate the delicious mielies  
they had planted.  
Those were times of feasting!  
Do you remember those days? Do you remember?  
When the cows were the pride of the nation, and the fond love  
of everyone. Do you remember?  
Do you remember those golden olden days? Do you remember?  
Where have they gone?

JUJU:                      Things come naturally to an end  
Yet sometimes things are broken, broken like a pot beneath your  
heel. Sometimes things are crushed  
Sometimes the blood is squeezed out like a scream (2003: 172)

The Juju function in a similar way to the chorus of Greek tragedy<sup>54</sup>. Bailey is engaging the ritual origins of Western theatrical practice, through African iconography, to make a comment, interculturally, on the relationship between the local and global context. This is another example of integrative (Schechner, 2002) intercultural practice.

Disjunctive (Schechner, 2002) intercultural theatre forms are also present in the performance text. An indicator of fragmented and dislocated communities is the erosion of cultural values and the distortion of important figures within the community. In terms of Xhosa culture, *sangomas* hold a high status as a result of their ability to heal through traditional medicine and their belief in the community's spirits and ancestors. It is ironic, then, that the *sangoma* character in this text,

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<sup>54</sup> The chorus in ancient Greek theatre contributed to the unity of action in the tragedies, interacting with both the audience and the actors on stage. The chorus functioned in such a way as to provide information to the audience about characters and events that could not otherwise be shown on stage, to comment on the action and offer suggestions, and, at times, to communicate the opinions of the playwright.



Mhlakaza, Nongqawuse's uncle, delivers the message to Sarili, the king, that ultimately leads to the destruction of the community. The *sangoma* Mhlakaza is significant because – unlike in the other two plays where the *sangoma* is presented as an agent of cultural retrieval – here, the *sangoma* has been perverted to become an unwitting agent of cultural erosion.

The initial breach or threat at the beginning of the play, established as a community facing poverty, starvation and eventual defeat by the colonial invaders, is made even worse by the failed redressive action, that is, the failure of the prophecy. Bailey presents an ever disintegrating community where individual interests and the selfish pursuit of personal gain begin to outweigh the needs of the community as a whole.

Communal degradation can be observed in two instances. In the first instance, Bailey writes:

MHLAKAZA: [clutching a Bible] *Abantu*, truly these great things will happen as my niece, Nongqawuse, has prophesied!  
Listen to the good news! When the commands of our forefathers have been obeyed, these things will happen!  
On that day the sun will rise blood red.  
When it gets to the middle of the sky, it will stop!  
It will stop, turn and then go back to where it came from!  
Then the sky will darken, the ground will shake and open like a mouth. Then our forefathers will come out bringing cattle that will never die.  
All these things Nongqawuse has shown me!  
The Great Day is coming! Obey our fathers! Obey our chiefs! (2003: 181)

Again, the cultural and ritual centre of the Xhosa community – the *sangoma* – demonstrates cultural erosion and the infiltration of Judeo-Christian ideology by adopting a foreign symbol, in this case a Bible. The Bible operates as signifier of how colonial powers used Christian missionary education to re-educate colonized black South Africans in terms of Western religious doctrines and to elide indigenous belief systems.

In the second instance, Bailey writes:

The PRIEST and PRIESTESS have come together at the platform where they kneel to continue their ceremony. After placing a lighted candle in the centre of the dais, they blow kudu horns together and then begin their solemn incantation with the JUJU.

PRIESTS: We are standing at the end of the world

JUJU: Looking out looking in

PRIESTS: Darkness all around

JUJU: Looking out looking in

PRIESTS: Who will show us the way?

JUJU: Looking out looking in (2003: 188)

Bailey is pointing to the way in which societies become fractured and lose a sense of their own cultural identity; hence, the above imaging of a society in darkness functioning without direction.

One way in which post-colonial cultures attempt to re-claim a sense of their own cultural identity is through storytelling. The play uses a choric form of storytelling, heightening the sense that the play is a ritual of memory and re-membering. In this way, Bailey's play becomes a 'way of "possessing" the past, of finding a home within the fractures of a history marked by dislocation and slavery and a present complicated by continued race / class inequities' (Gilbert and Tompkins, 1996: 71).

In order to place this academic interpretation of the play into perspective, Bailey describes the intentions behind his writing of *The Prophet* (1999) in his programme note to the play's premiere at the 1999 Standard Bank National Arts Festival held in Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape:

A HEALTH WARNING TO THE UPTIGHT AND POLITICALLY CORRECT: My imagination will not follow neat and narrow ideological tracks – fortunately! This drama has grown out of reflections upon and meanderings among a myriad accounts of the saga: those of feminist sociologists and Xhosa grannies, sangomas and nineteenth century colonial commissioners and pastors, reactionary post-apartheid historians, and the musing of my cast and friends. More than just a documentation of the 'Cattle Killing',

it is an astonishing gasp at the proportions which collective tumours can grow. A perfect play for the millerian<sup>55</sup> madness which possesses us right now. (1999: 82)

Ritual and history are performative elements in the play and this places an emphasis on the performer rather than the actual content of the text. Historian Greg Denning (1993: 170) claims that to use historical material in a theatrical context is to cause the “consciousness of the past [to be] used for present purposes”. The use of ritual encircling a play is a strategy for allowing ritual and theatre to share a space within *The Prophet* (1999). The role of the actor as storyteller may be considered the site where ritual and history intersect. It is also a way that Bailey reclaims pre-colonial oral tradition, a cultural expression elided during the colonial and apartheid eras. The significance of this for intercultural theatrical work in a post-colonial context is suggested by Gilbert and Tompkins:

One of the most significant manipulators of historical narrative in colonized societies is the story-teller . . . In most non-literate communities, history was preserved by the story-teller who held a privileged place central to the maintenance and sustenance of the group’s culture. The story-teller relayed the community’s history, often in verse form, as an entertainment and an educational device. (1996: 126)

In a similar way, Bailey fuses together the role of the actor as storyteller with the ritual form he employs to express the historical content of the play. Gilbert and Tompkins observe: ‘The figure of the story-teller lends cultural weight to the histories presented and foregrounds the ways in which such narratives are (re) constructed: they are learned and retold, given added inflections, altered slightly, and packaged in a way that pleases and instructs the listeners’ (1996: 129).

Bailey’s work may be considered to reflect Degenaar’s (1995) concerns that in order for a work to have political, cultural and social significance, and to resonate with its context fully, the form and content should take as their starting point stories and storytelling. *The Prophet* (1999) does this. Its intertextual significance and political resonance come not from the kind of history it takes as its subject matter, but from the way in which it re-constructs, or re-stages, different histories within the ritualistic form employed by Bailey.

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<sup>55</sup> I would argue that Bailey’s neologism is formed from the combination of the words ‘millennium’ and ‘malaria’ and expresses his attitude to the present context and the relationship the play has with this context, namely notions of expectation, fear and excitement, associated with the approaching millennium in 1999/2000, and notions of a fever-inducing disease, connotatively associated with Africa, that needs healing.

### 3.6 Conclusion

The idea of incorporating ritual and history into theatre practices is not a new one. However, Bailey's theatre working process is very conscious of the performative possibilities of both ritual and history, and the richness of meaning that comes from using ritual forms and modes of presentation in the re-working of controversial historical moments. Art must take history seriously, Degenaar (1995) insists; there is a need to appreciate that nothing is without a context, and to appreciate, as Gilbert and Tompkins (1996) state, that those practices, such as ritual, are those very aspects of cultural expression that have been appropriated, misunderstood and denuded of context. These are important considerations.

In concluding, I would like to refer back to a question, articulated by Bailey while working on *The Prophet* (1999): 'Can art/drama really make a difference? Or are we who live along the margins of society just naïve dreamers? Deluded prophets?' (1999: 156) This question should not be viewed pessimistically but rather as a challenge to theatre practitioners working within the South African context. Our context offers a dynamic and diverse source for theatre makers who choose to participate in intercultural exchange and negotiation. Moreover, the contemporary twenty-first century South African context presents us with the challenge of creating theatre that not only revels in the clashes of cultural difference but also recognizes the possibility of fair and equal exchange. If we engage these processes and use them in challenging constructed perceptions of social reality, it is possible to locate Immediacy and effect transformation or, in Bailey's phraseology, to 'summon a healing' (2003: 9) so as to confront South Africa's often fragmented and mercurial cultural identity.

## CONCLUSION

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This dissertation has established ritual and history as intercultural signifiers in Brett Bailey's theatrical praxis. Ritual establishes a spatial dialectic that engages an audience in a negotiation between, and interrogation of, what is considered 'local' and/or 'global', 'foreign' and/or 'familiar'. History establishes a temporal dialectic that engages an audience in a reflective and reflexive way around how the past may be used to critique and understand the present. The intersection of these two dialectics within the context of Bailey's ritual-dramas creates an immediate communicative performance act for the contemporary South African context. Through notions of ritual, Bailey demonstrates South African culture as having lost a sense of collective, communal and cultural identity; through history, Bailey attempts to reveal what has been collectively suppressed, elided and distorted by processes of domination, exploitation and cultural erosion. As a communicative act, within this specific multicultural, post-colonial, post-apartheid and globalized context, Bailey's intercultural theatre work articulates the need for transformation in a collective capacity. Transformation here is interpreted as a 'healing' or, at least the attempt to 'summon a healing' (Bailey, 2003: 9).

Within the dialectics of ritual, history and Immediacy, a number of factors inform and influence debates in intercultural performance work. This dissertation has come to define these factors in terms of relationships. The relationship between ritual, history and performance is both a social practice and cultural process. The practices and processes we find operative in Bailey's work are informed by larger contextual factors; that is, his performance work engages ritual and history, within an intercultural and post-colonial context, problematizing the politics involved in issues of exchange, representation and difference. The concept of ritual is further complicated by questions of agency and efficacy. The notion of history is further complicated by attempts to challenge history as a 'closed' narrative, questioning whose history is being told at any particular moment in time.

In the context of analyzing Bailey's work as intercultural practice, it is more constructive to view the plays as performance texts, where meaning is made in and through performance, not only through the lexical content of the plays. The plays may be seen as a response to historically / culturally accreted values that have been adopted by the South African context. Bailey views this

cultural heritage as something that has given rise not only to political correctness, but also to creative possibilities in terms of how performance work may impact on our experience of social reality and how it may alter and/or inform our perceptions of that social reality.

Bailey is operating at a time when South Africa is re-defining its own cultural identity and negotiating its position within the global context. Through the plays, he represents to audiences deep cultural anxieties that stem from our colonial and apartheid past. These are fears of cultural erosion, communal degradation, and social disintegration, and the performance texts may be viewed as attempts to heighten the sense of these fears and purge them.

This connects implicitly to the notion of ‘summoning a healing’ (Bailey, 2003: 9) where a necessity for a reintegration of community is communicated by the performance texts. Bailey has been reviewed, and often criticized, in the print media and it is important to acknowledge these in the context of his intercultural theatrical praxis. Indian journalist Zaheda Mohamed critiquing *Ipi Zombi?* (1998) writes:

... another Bunfight saga told by real life blacks to real life whites ... Black people who are essentially portrayed as morons. The deeper part of their story obliterated for crude sensationalism in order to achieve maximum shock effect. (1998: 3)

Mohamed reflects post-colonial criticism of intercultural practices; however, I believe I have established that Bailey refutes such criticism because his theatrical work depends on the clash of difference where he articulates the dangers implicit in cultural exchange and representation. By contrast, South African theatre, film, television and print media journalist, John Matshikiza, in the foreword to *The Plays of Miracle & Wonder* (2003), makes the statement:

The three plays ... have that common thread of collective possession ... opening the door to a kind of collective catharsis – elusive as that state may be. But they collectively reach for a catharsis [to repeat Bailey’s words, 2003: 9] “to restore health and harmony to communities invaded, assaulted, diseased – playing out in the arenas of a sickened country to summon a healing.” In other words, they are about South Africa today. (2003: 7)

This more accurately reflects my opinions on Bailey’s intercultural work and the way in which I have formulated how spatial and temporal dialectics operate in his theatrical praxis.

These are only two of many views to Bailey's work<sup>56</sup>; however, in the light of them, one must consider how Bailey, through an intercultural negotiation, is navigating between Eurocentric and Afrocentric world views and the clash between them. Brook, writing on Immediate theatre practice states, 'The theatre . . . always asserts itself in the present. This is what can make it more real than the normal stream of consciousness. This is also what can make it so disturbing' (1968: 111). Bailey seeks deliberately to disturb, making us more conscious of tensions between the individual and the communal, of differences that exist in South African culture, and the clashes and rifts that occur between different cultural, epistemological and ontological systems of making meaning in a context negotiating its position between its own past and present social realities. Bailey states:

I continue to look for stories here [South Africa] that encapsulate the spirit of these luminous and uncertain times we are living through in South Africa. The quest continues for talented new performers to work with, more African performance forms to incorporate and deeper levels of expression to comprehend. (2003: 199)

This is a clear reflection of how Bailey articulates the direction his theatrical practice will take in the future.

Intercultural theatre practices are constantly evolving and cannot be said to represent a cohesive theory, namely, a singular version of Interculturalism, as intercultural theatre is influenced and informed by more than one context or culture. There is a need, however, to view the South African context as an intercultural space without eliding its post-colonial and post-apartheid status. The key notion to consider for intercultural theatre practitioners working in a South African context would be to recognize and acknowledge cultural specificity and allow the clash between these cultural specificities to reveal something about the nature of context. Bailey's work reveals the tensions that exist within and between communities in South Africa, and within larger processes of globalization and neo-imperialism. His theatrical practice comes at a time when South Africa seems less concerned with history and cultural heritage and more concerned with its status in a globalized society. The intertextual significance of using historical material, rooted in Xhosa culture, staged using African as well as Western performance forms, is a reaction to the ambivalence of the South African context.

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<sup>56</sup> A range of criticism on Bailey's work can be referred to in Appendix B.

The level of theatre Bailey produces, therefore, is directly concerned with investigating the processes of generating cultural meaning in the moment of performance that has both social and spiritual implications. The motivation behind his work stems from the need to confront the notion of a happily diverse and stable multicultural South Africa. Ritual and history are engaged and operative in all three of the plays so as to transcend political and social boundaries and to facilitate a dialogue, not only between cultures, but also within specific cultures. Grotowski, writing on the centrality of the actor in theatre, makes the comment:

Theatre – through the actor's technique, in which the living organism strives for higher motives – provides an opportunity for what could be called integration, the discarding of masks, the revealing of real substance: a totality of physical and mental reactions. (1968: 211)

This certainly reflects Bailey's position around creating a total theatre experience where the performer – narrator, storyteller, cultural leader, *sangoma*, spiritual healer and/or orator of cultural identity – leads the audience towards healing.

One of the core criticisms of intercultural theatre practice is that while it highlights the similarities between cultures, it downplays or elides cultural difference and specificity (Gilbert and Tompkins, 1996). Bailey's work refutes this claim. His work relies, rather, on the recognition and clash of cultural difference in order for audiences, to be encouraged to participate in processes that interrogate such cultural and binarized constructions around what is considered 'foreign' and 'familiar', 'local' and 'global', and 'past' and 'present'. In addition, it signals to an audience the potential to dismantle and transcend boundaries of thought and meaning. This, I would argue, is the intercultural theatre work being conducted – and needed – in South Africa, and it is an intercultural theatre practice that can be defined as both integrative (Schechner, 2002) and disjunctive (Schechner, 2002).

Bailey's theatrical praxis is integrative (Schechner, 2002) in the sense that he produces a hybrid form of theatrical expression by drawing on Xhosa histories, *sangoma* cultural beliefs and practices, Xhosa rituals, modes of storytelling, and Western forms of theatrical expression, some rooted in mainstream theatre and others in avant-garde theatre practices. His work is also disjunctive (Schechner, 2002), however, in the sense that he exposes the contradictions and tensions which exist within a fluctuating cultural milieu, consisting of opposing world views, miscommunications, misrepresentations, and misunderstandings between cultural processes and social practices around making meaning of social reality.



The possibilities for defining the professional identity of intercultural theatre practitioners in South Africa have broadened since the turn of the century. However, I would agree with Pavis who states:

Intercultural theatre is at its most transportable and experimental when it focuses on the actor and performance, on training of whatever duration conducted on the “others” (*sic*) homeground, or on an experiment with new body techniques. Microscopic work of this kind concerns the body, then by extension the personality and culture of the participants. It is only ever accepted as *inter-corporeal* work, in which an actor confronts his/her technique and professional identity with those of the others. (1996: 15)

Intercultural theatre practices are about the exchange of cultural meaning, and, by extension, facilitating a cultural dialogue, through the lens of performance. This is an open dialogue between, within, and among cultures, involving individuals and groups, from diverse backgrounds and contexts, sharing in an evolving theory of Interculturalism and a growing body of intercultural theatre work.

One could envisage a future theatre movement in South Africa that is intercultural and hybrid where the need to take history seriously, as Degenaar (1995: 65) insists, is accepted as an important obligation for theatre practitioners working in South Africa today. We cannot allow our artistic endeavors to crumble under the weight of our colonial and apartheid past. However, stories from the past, which include myths, fairytales, personal and public histories, from diverse cultures, cannot be ignored, as it is through these stories, historical or otherwise, that we may find the potential to expose and heal the cultural wounds that have festered within the collective unconscious of a culture’s histories. It is through engaging in intercultural theatre practices that one may be able to develop a future theatre movement that revels in cultural differences while finding what is common between our culture and others. The dialogic relationship between cultures attempts to seal – heal – the rifts and schisms that exist between, within, among cultures. I would argue this is what Artaud, suggests, in that theatre should imitate the plague where society is interpreted as an abscess, filled with ethical and social poisoning, and the theatre is collectively constructed to lance this abscess and thus release the poison from society.

As with diseases, like the plague, it is necessary to remove the some of the infection in order for healing to occur. This is what Bailey means when he suggests that theatre can be used to diagnose, treat and heal the disease – or breach (Turner, 1982) – afflicting our social, political,

historical and cultural context. Intercultural performance praxis can thus – in Bailey’s terms – ‘summon a healing’ (2003: 9). This collective healing is meant to lead South African culture into – as prophesized, intertextually speaking, by Paul Simon in his collaboration with Ladysmith Black Mambazo on the album *Graceland* (1986) – the days of miracle and wonder (Simon, 1986).

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## APPENDIX A

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Brett Bailey's theatrical praxis is informed and influenced by Artaud, Brecht, Grotowski and Brook; his knowledge and understanding of these practitioners, their work, and theories is derived from the Drama courses he studied at the University of Cape Town in the early 1990s. His work has also been influenced by his visits to India, West Africa (where he studied Voodoo shrines), the study he made of traditional *sangoma* practices, and the symbolic areas within rural homesteads have influenced his design aesthetic. After graduating from the University of Cape Town, Bailey formed Third World Bunfight (TWB). The following is a brief chronology of his work with the company. More detailed information about the company may be obtained from the website located at [www.thirdworldbunfight.co.za](http://www.thirdworldbunfight.co.za) :

- 1996: *ZOMBIE*, including 60 people from Rini Township, performed on the fringe at the Grahamstown National Arts Festival.
- 1997: *ZOMBIE*, with 30 performers from townships of Cape Town, performed at the Nico Arena, Cape Town. *iMUMBO JUMBO*, performed as part of the main programme of the Grahamstown National Arts Festival. *iMUMBO JUMBO*, with a cast from Cape Town, Johannesburg and the Eastern Cape, played for eight weeks on the main stage at the Market Theatre, Johannesburg.
- 1998: Third World Bunfight is established as a community drama training initiative in Rini Township, Grahamstown. *IPI ZOMBI?* performed as part of the main programme of the Grahamstown National Arts Festival.
- 1999: *IPI ZOMBI?* plays for two weeks at Spier Amphitheatre, Cape Town and tours Zimbabwe. Third World Bunfight headquarters are relocated to Port Saint Johns, Transkei. *THE PROPHET* performed as part of the main program of the Grahamstown National Arts Festival.
- 2000: *BIG DADA*, with funding from the National Arts Council, is workshopped in Umtata with five TWB member and five actors from the Umtata Community Arts Project. Performed in several venues in and around Umtata.
- 2001: TWB moves to Cape Town and rehearses *BIG DADA* for the Roots Festival in Amsterdam in June. Performed as part of the main programme at the Grahamstown National Arts Festival as well as at the Baxter Theatre, Cape Town, and at the Barbican Pit Theatre in London as part of the *BITE '01* season.
- 2002: *SAFARI*, commissioned by the World Music Festival from the Netherlands, is made in Kampala, Uganda with the Ndere Troupe and tours thirteen Dutch cities in March.
- 2003: *iMUMBO JUMBO* reworked under commission from the Barbican Theatre, London for a two week run. The same version was performed at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown and at the Baxter Theatre, Cape Town.
- 2004: TWB takes up residence on Spier Estate, Stellenbosch. TWB contracted as entertainment group at Moyo Restaurant, Spier Estate. *HOUSE OF THE HOLY AFRO* commissioned for Sharp Sharp Festival, Bern, Switzerland.
- 2005: *BIG DADA* performed at Spier Summer Arts Season, Stellenbosch. Oscar van Woensel's *medEia* performed by TWB on an abandoned film set at Spier. *BIG DADA* and *HOUSE OF THE HOLY AFRO* tour Brussels, Vienna and Berlin. *BIG DADA* plays on the main stage of the Market Theatre, Johannesburg.
- 2006: Brett Bailey's site specific play *ORFEUS* performed for two weeks at the Spier Summer Arts Season. TWB performed two productions at the Commonwealth Games in

Melbourne, Australia: *HOUSE OF THE HOLY AFRO* and *HEARTSTOPPING*, an outdoor performance installation.

## APPENDIX B

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These pictures, from the publication *The Plays of Miracle & Wonder* (2003), are reproduced with the kind permission of Brett Bailey and Double Storey Books.



THE PROPHET takes the form of a ceremony conducted by a PRIESTESS and a PRIEST in their temple to heal the wound opened some hundred and fifty years ago, when the Xhosa Nation was finally dismembered after the Cattle Killing – the still-festering wound which Chief Gcaleka rails against in iMUMBO JUMBO. These priests awake the nine deities (the JUJU), who project their healing powers onto the central altar upon which the saga is enacted by a troupe of children. The JUJU in turn summon the wild and sickened spirits of THE DEAD, who invade and possess five members of the audience to play out the ritual-drama, to bring the infection to a head so it may be purged.

The venue is decked out as a dingy, lofty voodoo temple: candles and altars everywhere, drums of fire in the corners, religious paraphernalia, bones and herbs. The staging is in the round, with a raised platform in the centre, a ring of reed mats around this for the audience to sit on, a ring path on which THE DEAD will dance, and another outer ring of seats and platforms for the audience.

The JUJU are ornately painted and ornamented as huge human icons standing on their elevated shrines (oil drums). The nine of them are evenly spaced in a ring amongst the outer ring of the audience. Once awakened they speak and sing in harmonious chorus. Their arms and hands perform *mudras* in slow synchronisation.

The PRIESTESS wears light, bright cloth. The dark PRIEST wears black cloth and a skirt of monkey tails.

A group of traditional Xhosa singing women – THE MAMAS – is seated in one corner, in front of a platform of drums played by the percussionists. The village drama is enacted by eleven black primary school children, smeared with ochre and dressed in beads and simple skirts; and three little white boys wearing red colonial army jackets and carrying wooden muskets.

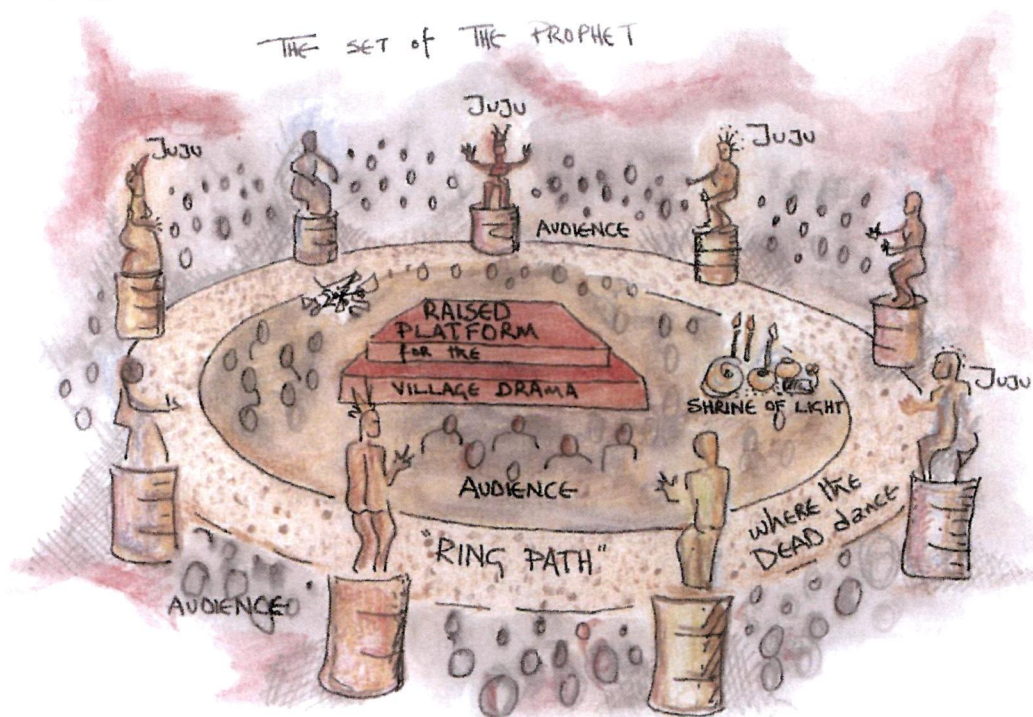


Figure 3: (Bailey, 2003: 169)





### iMUMBO JUMBO stage design



*Well, I've got my Bunfight troupe together: very strong, beautiful, alive people. Makes me terrified and amazed; terrified because so much of what I've designed must be taken beyond itself by these people. I have to play with them to uncover their talents. Amazed because of the rich jewel potential this play has with such a team.*

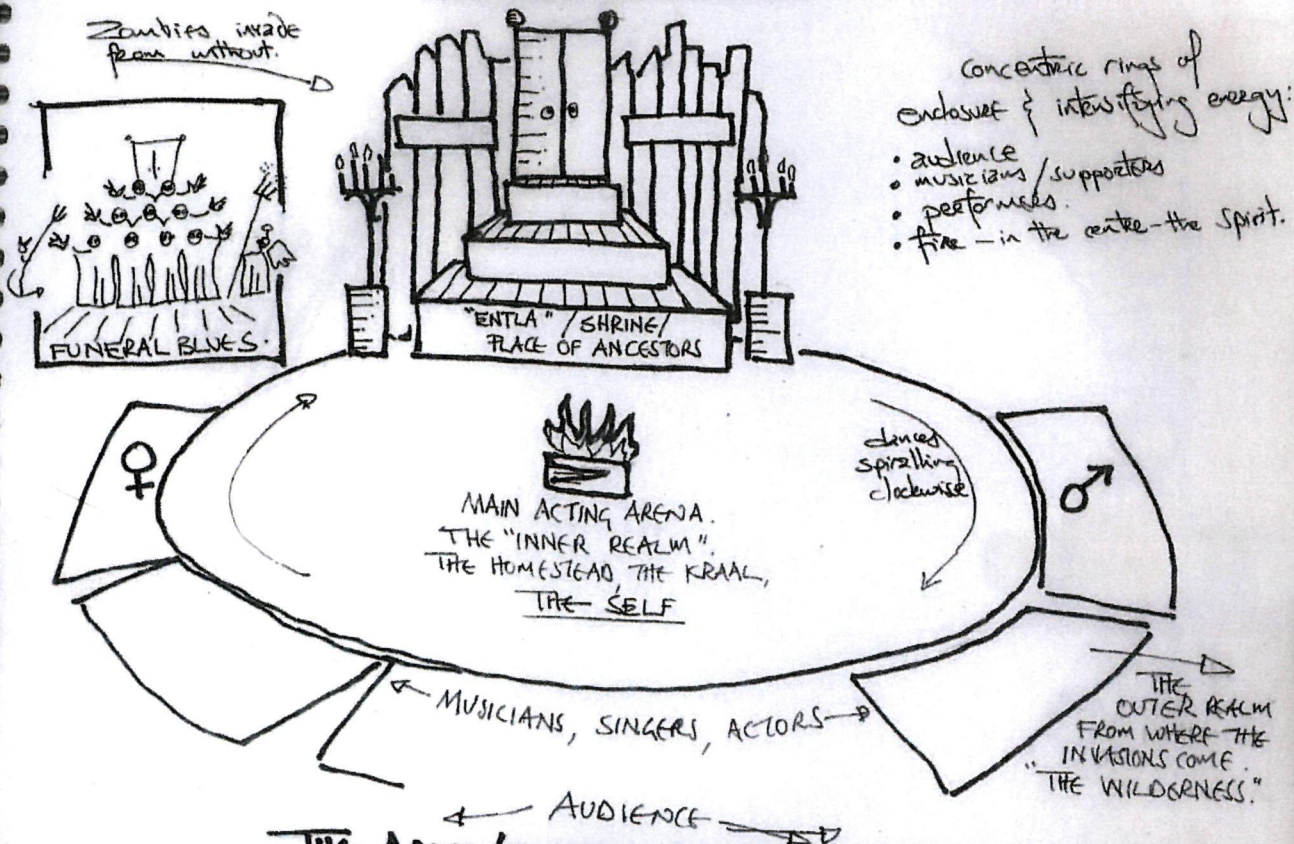
*iMUMBO JUMBO workbook, May '97*



Figure 1: (Bailey, 2003: 107)



## SET OF IPI ZOMBI?



THEY ACT LIKE PUPPETS! AND WHEN NOT, THEY ARE ENTRANCED, BEWITCHED, ZOMBIES!

THE ARENA/HOMESTEAD/KRAAL AS SYMBOL OF PSYCHE.  
THE 'ENACTMENT' OF THE CENTRE. FINDING THE CHILD WITHIN.  
THE HOLY GRAIL. BRINGING THE UNCONSCIOUS MATTER TO LIGHT. RECONSTITUTING THE SELF WHICH HAS BEEN INVADDED BY THE FORCES OF THE OUTSIDE.

USE REPETITION & ACCUMULATION.  
Play with these patterns, set them up, break them. They must run throughout the work.  
Songs, images, chants, words which recode & bind all together. Which  
ENTRANCE.

Is this a sort of 'Alice in Wonderland' story? Not really, though I could push it that way. Rather it is the story of a battle between ORDER & DISORDER an insidious faceless order which lurches all the way through.  
Malaku (Mwambi Nyame) is the little girl who spans these two worlds - she dances on the boundary.

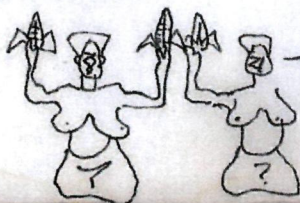


Figure 2: (Bailey, 2003: 42)



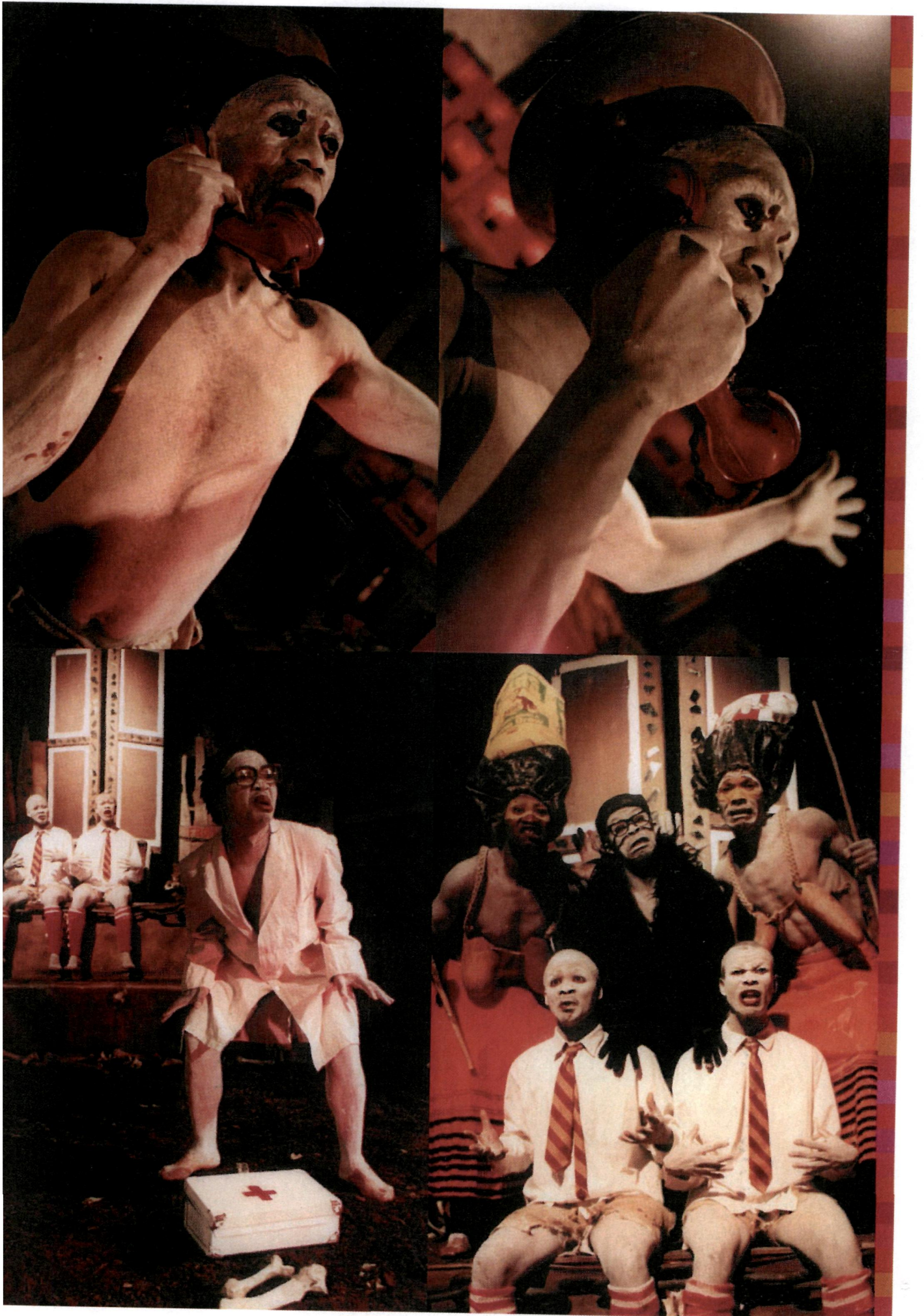


Figure 4: (Bailey 2003: 51)





Figure 5: (Bailey, 2003: 71)





Figure 6: Jane Alexander's *The Butcher Boys* (1985-6)





The place where the bushes were being burnt, where the potent fumes made the forest itself fall into dreaming ... in the bright white smoke I saw spirits turning into air.  
Ben Okri, *The Famished Road*

Figure 7: (Bailey, 2003: 161)





Figure 8: (Bailey, 2003: 178)



## **APPENDIX C**

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The attached print reviews are reprinted here for reference purposes.

# iMumbo Jumbo

## THE DAYS OF MIRACLE AND WONDER

DEvised AND DIRECTED BY  
**BRETT BAILEY**

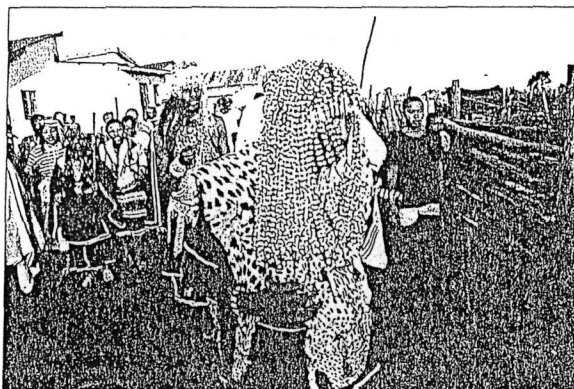
MANAGED BY MIRANDA WILLIAMS

*Performed by sangomas, ancestors,  
prophets, musicians, hill tribes, media  
hounds and other animals*

THIRD WORLD BUNFIGHT presents  
*Abanyabantu* in a dramatic ritual  
recounting the quixotic, sacred and true  
Scottish quest of Chief Nicholas Tilana  
Gcaleka (b1949) to restore the stolen skull of his  
great-great-uncle King Hintsu of the Amakhosa  
(treacherously beheaded while attempting to escape  
an imperial posse in 1836), to the Xhosa nation in  
1996, thereby ushering in an era of new South  
African fertility and peace.

Third World Bunfight has a mission to boost indigenous  
South African theatre into the next millenium fuelled by the  
fireworks of our colliding cultures. The cast of *iMumbo  
Jumbo* is drawn from the townships of Grahamstown and  
Cape Town and the far-flung hills of rural Transkei.

On May 12, 1836, during the sixth frontier war in what is  
now the Eastern Cape, King Hintsu Kaphalo was shot dead  
while trying to escape colonial troops who were holding him  
to ransom for vast herds of cattle. According to reports, his  
ears were cut off as souvenirs by one George Southey; there  
is no record of his having been decapitated, though the  
practice was not unusual among English warriors.

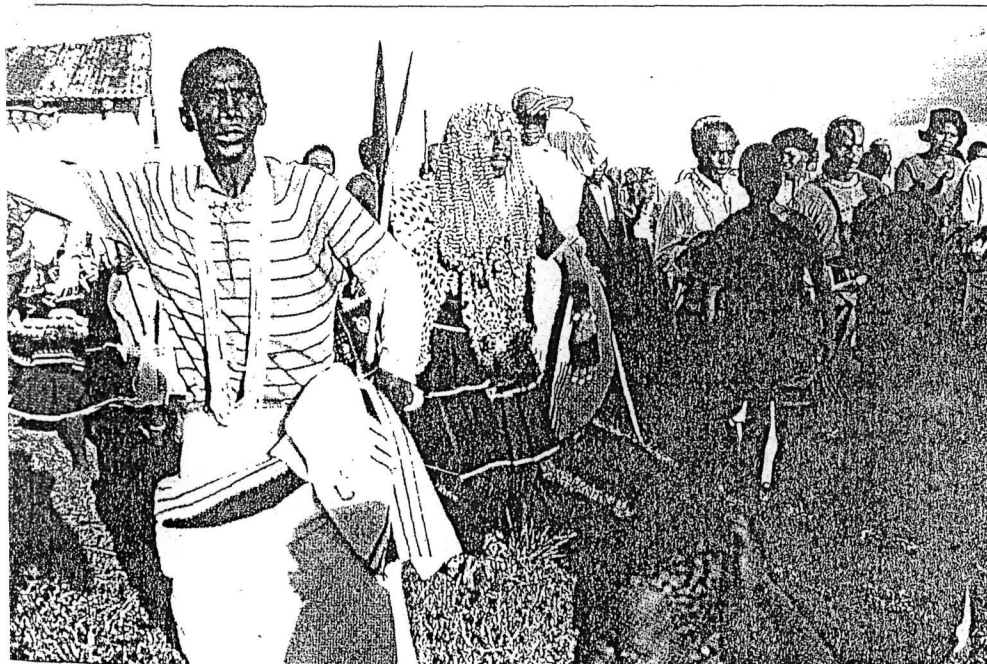


African lore tells a different version. In the mid-18th  
century King Phalo, great-grandfather of Hintsu, sired twins:  
Gcaleka, who would become king in turn, and Namba, a  
black mamba who slipped from his mother's womb into the  
depths of the Ningxolo river, there to take up residence  
with the ancestral River People. Gcaleka, longing for his  
brother, eventually joined him beneath the waters, and his  
son, Kawuta assumed leadership, but without paying the  
obligatory tribute of cattle to the River People. Enraged at  
this transgression, the powerful trinity of Phalo, Namba and  
Gcaleka avenged themselves on Kawuta's son, King Hintsu,  
allowing the British to kill and behead him. The headless  
hell spirit of Hintsu, unable to rest, has lumbered across the  
country ever since, possessing his people with evil and  
gradually rendering South Africa ungovernable.

In an effort to rein him in and restore peace to the  
nation, the ancestral kings approached Sangoma Nicholas  
Gcaleka in visions and ordered him to seek and return the  
head to its homeland so that Hintsu might ascend to the  
realm of light.

On February 24, 1996,  
after a 10-day search,  
Gcaleka found a skull on a  
farm near Inverness,  
Scotland, having been guided  
by dreams. Dismissive and  
sceptical Xhosa traditional  
leaders sent the skull to  
Cape Town University's  
forensic medicine squad for  
DNA testing. The team  
claimed that the cranium  
was that of "an adult female  
of European descent".

Gcaleka dismisses science  
with a pinch of muti. The  
ancestors do not lie. But, he  
warns, unless the skull is  
buried very soon, "a great  
calamity will befall this  
country ..."



### DRAMA

The Studio  
Recreation  
Centre

Thursday July 3

19:00

Friday July 4

19:00

Saturday July 5

12:00

Sunday July 6

19:00

Tuesday July 8

14:00

Thursday July 10

19:00

No Interval

Duration

1 hour 30 minutes



OpStage  
Anton Krueger

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## More than mere mumbo jumbo

Vicky Davis reviewed a performance of *iMumbo Jumbo* at Grahamstown. For a foreigner's view we append the review of Jason Best, published in the London theatre weekly *The Stage*, of a performance of the same show as part of the Barbican International Theatre Events (BITE: 03) season, writes **Jean Meiring**.

## Bailey gives us a true African theatrical experience

Vicky Davis

***iMumbo Jumbo: The Days of Miracle and Wonder*  
Written and directed by Brett Bailey  
Performed by The Third World Bunfight.**

In his book *The Plays of Miracle and Wonder* writer and director Brett Bailey describes *iMumbo Jumbo* as

a dramatization of the intrepid, sacred and quixotic 1996 quest of Chief Nicholas Tilana Gcaleka (sangoma, priest, liquor salesman, guru) to retrieve the head of his ancestor, King Hintsa kaPhalo — Paramount Chief of the amaXhosa nation, killed by a colonial posse in 1836 — and thereby to restore peace to his country which Hintsa's Hell Spirit is ravaging. Performed by sangomas, hill tribes, clergy, choirs, media hounds and other animals.

Recently staged at the Grahamstown National Arts Festival and at the Barbican Theatre in London and moving to the Baxter in Cape Town, *iMumbo Jumbo* is an experience.

✓	Spesiale projekte / Special projects
✓	Opvoedkunde / Education
✓	Kos en Wyn / Food and Wine
✓	Artikels / Features
✓	Visueel / Visual
✓	Expatliteratuur / Expat literature
✓	Reis / Travel
✓	Geestelike literatuur / Religious literature
✓	IsiXhosa
✓	IsiZulu
✓	Nederlands / Dutch
✓	Gayliteratuur / Gay literature
✓	Hygliteratuur / Erotic literature
✓	Bieg / Confess
✓	Sport
✓	In Memoriam
✓	Wie is ons? / More on LitNet
	LitNet is 'n onafhanklike joernaal op die Internet, en word as gesamentlike onderneming deur Ligitprops 3042 BK en Media24 bedryf.

It is a play about the explosion that occurs when traditionalism meets Westernisation in a multi-cultural society — in true Brett Bailey style. Bailey, who wrote and directed the show, is backed by his non-profit organisation, The Third World Bunfight, a theatre company consisting of a troupe of actors from the townships and rural areas of South Africa. In 2001 he won the Standard Bank Young Artist of the Year Award for drama and is renowned for successful plays such as *Big Dada*, *iPi Zombie* and *The Prophet*.

*iMumbo Jumbo* is an embodiment of the recipe for his work:

take township traditions and styles, throw them in the blender with rural performance and ceremony, black evangelism, a handful of Western avant-garde and a dash of showbiz, and flick the switch.

It is the strange tale of a Xhosa chief travelling all the way to Scotland to retrieve the skull of his ancestor in order to satisfy the Hurricane Spirit that is causing crime and murder among the Xhosa people. But when forensic specialists investigate the skull, they find it actually belonged to a Caucasian woman. The Xhosa royalty dismissed him as a fraud.

The script is created from interviews Bailey recorded with Gcaleka at his home in the Cape Town township of Nyanga East. It is a ritualistic pantomime with a rich performance quality that hovers between reality and dream, the unconscious and rational thought.

The actors maintain an extremely high level of energy: they dance, sing, fall in and out of trance and interact directly with the audience; they are greeted and individually blessed by the Rev Mzwandile Nzulwana.

The set is true African theatre, with actors remaining on stage throughout and performing in the round, enticing and involving the audience. It is humorous entertainment free of the inhibitions of Western theatre: there are even two live chickens to add to the local feel of the performance.

*iMumbo Jumbo* addresses the growing problem of what happens when our materialistic reality is confronted with traditional spiritualism. Bailey explains:

It's these clashes of culture, symbols, beliefs, historical eras which you see all over Africa that always delight me: the goats that amble across from the location into town to graze on the marigolds planted by the municipality on the traffic islands, the women hurrying along the footpaths of rural valleys with newly charged car batteries on their heads to hook up to their portables so that they can catch *The Bold and the Beautiful*, the

barefoot black Christians dancing around a flaming chicken sacrifice, the squalid shacklands that line the road traversed by tourists in Mercs from Cape Town International Airport to the pleasure domes of the city: all this impurity, these minglings, these collisions. This is the Africa of today. Europe's so preppy and up its own arse in comparison, and the "real African experience" contrived for its tourism is just a prissy charade for their romantic fantasies.

For a true African experience, devoid of Struggle sentiment or thoughts of the TRC, do not miss *iMumbo Jumbo*.

*iMumbo Jumbo* plays at the Baxter Theatre from 23 July to 9 August 2003.

Book at Computicket.

### **A London view**

Jason Best, in *The Stage*, 17 July 2003

"You think you are watching a drama show," declares a member of South African theatrical troupe Third World Bunfight at the start of their vibrant production *iMumbo Jumbo*. Then he enlightens the Barbican audience. "We are doing much bigger work here."

Written and directed by Brett Bailey, *iMumbo Jumbo* is a riot of singing, dancing and colourful spectacle. But the 21-strong company is not simply putting on a show; its members are enacting a dramatic ritual with a deep spiritual purpose.

In song, dance and knockabout pantomime, they tell the true story of a quest undertaken in 1996 by Chief Nicholas Tilana Gcaleka, a Xhosa tribal healer or sangoma, to retrieve the skull of an ancestor killed by British troops in 1836.

Visited in a dream by the Hurricane Spirit, a spiritual black mamba, Gcaleka discovers that the dead chief's angry spirit must be placated if the violent ills of post-apartheid South Africa are to be cured. Gcaleka's mission takes him to Scotland, where he is trailed by a Sky TV crew — comically represented on stage by performers wearing head-dresses in the form of TV cameras. Prompted by another dream, he finds a skull in a forest near Inverness and returns home in triumph, only for scientists to declare that the head in question belonged to a Caucasian woman.

By the lights of Western rationalism, Gcaleka's quest was a failure, but Bailey and his company are interested in exploring symbolic, mythic and spiritual truths rather than reductionist logic.

And their show acts out its own thesis — *iMumbo Jumbo* may lack dramatic coherence, but even within the confines of the Barbican Theatre, it offers an intense and uplifting communal experience.

Visit BITE: 03 at <http://www.barbican.org.uk/bite/>

### **A footnote ...**

### **... from the Oxford English Dictionary**

#### **mumbo-jumbo, n.**

##### **I. Simple uses.**

**1. a.** A god or spirit said to have been worshipped by certain West African peoples; a representation of this; an idol. Now hist.

1738 F. MOORE *Trav. Inland Parts Afr.* 40 A dreadful Bugbear to the Women, call'd Mumbo-Jumbo, which is what keeps the Women in awe. 1738 F. MOORE *Trav. Inland Parts Afr.* 116 At Night, I was visited by a Mumbo Jumbo, an Idol, which is among the Mundingoes a kind of cunning Mystery... This is a Thing invented by the Men to keep their Wives in awe. 1799 M. PARK *Trav. Afr.* (ed. 2) iv. 39 A sort of masquerade habit..which I was told..belonged to Mumbo Jumbo. This is a strange bugbear..much employed by the Pagan natives in keeping their women in subjection. 1837 T. HOOD *Ode R. Wilson* xxiv, You might have been High Priest to Mumbo-Jumbo. 1873 C. G. LELAND *Egyptian Sketch-bk.* 83 The Savage, suggestive of wild African Mumbo-Jumbo,..will have vanished. 1925 G. K. CHESTERTON *Everlasting Man* I. iii. 69 Was a totem a thing like the British lion or a thing like the British bulldog? Was the worship of a totem like the feeling of niggers about Mumbo Jumbo, or of children about Jumbo? 1992 F. MCLYNN *Hearts of Darkness* III. xi. 227 The name of the most powerful one worshipped in West Africa was Mumbo Jumbo.

**b.** In extended use: an object of superstitious awe or blind veneration. *Obs.*

1773 J. ROBERTSON *Poems* 130 Knaves and fools paint the Almighty A Mumbo Jumbo, to affright ye. 1850 R. W. EMERSON *Representative Men* vii. 261 The ambitious and mercenary bring their last new mumbo-jumbo, whether tariff, Texas, railroad, Romanism, mesmerism, or California. 1876 'G. ELIOT' *Daniel Deronda* II. IV. xxviii. 195 The name of Mompert had become a sort of Mumbo-jumbo. 1892 *Atlantic Monthly* Feb. 260/2 He does not undervalue the use of party, but he refuses to surrender his principles to party, or to make a Mumbo Jumbo of it.



2. *colloq.* Obscure or meaningless language or ritual; jargon intended to impress or mystify; nonsense.

1738 F. MOORE *Trav. Inland Parts Afr.* 40 A cant language ... call'd *Mumbo-Jumbo*. 1858 *Sat. Rev.* 31 July 103 The old Mumbo Jumbo of 'unchristianizing the Legislature' must not be consigned to the eternal limbo..without a parting exsufflation. 1870 L. M. ALCOTT *Let.* 29 June in E. D. Cheney *L. M. Alcott* (1889) ix. 238 We..went to vespers in the old church, where we saw a good deal of mumbo-jumbo by red, purple, and yellow priests. 1930 V. SACKVILLE-WEST *Edwardians* vii. 328 Sebastian ... swore loudly that nothing would induce him to take part in the mumbo-jumbo of the imminent Coronation. 1952 A. GRIMBLE *Pattern of Islands* viii. 165 The moon was above all constraint of sorcery's mumbo-jumbo. 1964 E. BAKER *Fine Madness* x. 97 Never mind the technical mumbo-jumbo. All we want is a simple yes or no. 1999 J. M. COETZEE *Disgrace* (2000) x. 84 Bev Shaw, not a veterinarian but a priestess, full of New Age mumbo jumbo.

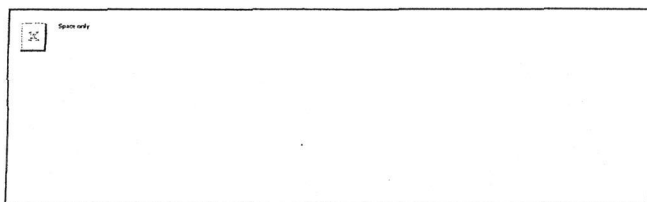
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Electronic Mail & Guardian,  
October 23, 1997



## Playing with the energy

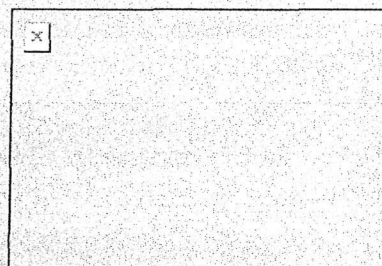
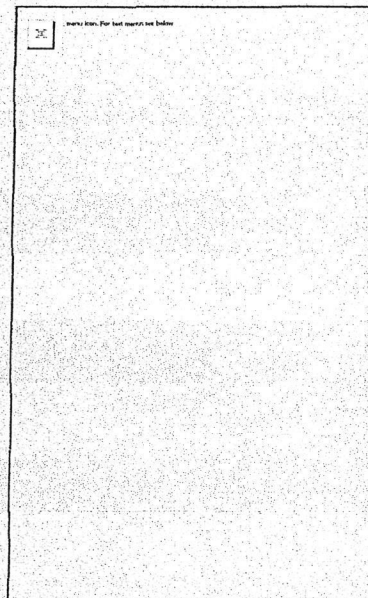
Brett Bailey's play, *iMumbo Jumbo*, is putting a new slant on South African theatre.

JANET SMITH

**E**VERYTHING about Brett Bailey shrieks didgeridoo-blowing, teepee-weekending white boy who's managed to coil his tongue around a Xhosa click and thinks he's in heaven.

There's something so flea-market fey about his short knitted waistcoat, small knitted cap and bald head that he makes you feel slightly uncomfortable. He looks far too much like a Zen gardener to deserve the distinctive honour of being a contender to transform South African theatre's fortunes.

Yet Bailey's bean-curd image doesn't fail to expose him as an entrepreneur of entrancing wit and theatrical power. His new production, *iMumbo Jumbo*, caused rare excitement in Grahamstown



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this year as he put sangomas on stage to tell the story of Chief Gcaleka and the search for King Hintsa's head.

Coming so soon after his unexpected hit debut, *Zombie*, *iMumbo Jumbo* could show that Bailey's got the balls to produce a new kind of South African theatre. Fortunately, he's enthusiastic about the irrelevant nature of other people's snipes about curio theatre and their suspicions that all he wants is fame and his own private little circus.

*iMumbo Jumbo* spun into life after study in India, a thwarted attempt to study the trance-state in Nigeria and, finally, three months living with sangomas in the Eastern Cape, finding a home in a traditional community where his imagination was tickled by the entertaining story of Chief Gcaleka and the search for King Hintsa's head.

Bailey wrote the piece with Gcaleka's blessing and also out of a desire to relate its fabulous honesty as a moment in South African life. Writing *iMumbo Jumbo* offered him the pleasure of stating the importance of the visual message in theatre and of retelling a tale that attracted international attention - and scandal at home.

Bailey doesn't talk about boundaries (why not put imams and priests on stage, he asks?), only about uncertainty, the existential quality he relishes most. He uses expressions like "millennia colliding" to describe how the world feels to his generation, a large proportion of whom are actively and constantly seeking new spiritual or mental stimulus. As a writer and observer, Bailey's never asleep to the images and the sounds.

Inside a small first-floor rehearsal room, he's rousing his post-prandial cast into energy - positive energy. A short burst of aerobics precedes the push-ups and breathing exercises. Someone's ill, so they're down a member. Bailey wants everyone in the room (not including me and the photographer) to join in the singing and energy, warning he would detect negative energy and the rehearsal

simply wouldn't flow.

Up, up, up ... and the drumming begins from the extraordinarily deft wrists of a woman wearing hundreds of fabulously coloured beads in her hair. Bailey's waistcoat comes off and he's directing his cast, apparently into a trance state because, within minutes, two women are overcome and the room is crammed with noise and undeniable spiritual current.

He says one of the most important things he's taken from *Zombie* and *iMumbo Jumbo* is the flight of his own prejudice, and the profound belief in ritual, not as a Western construct and not in the neo-hippie and rave movements, but as the foundation of life.

Bailey's also absorbed a certain humility from Chief Gcaleka, of all people: "I'm quite arrogant, and I found myself actually listening to what he had to say, not wanting to present my point of view and disagree and be in charge."

There's a breeze of amusement in his tone when he talks about his mentor on *iMumbo Jumbo*. He sketches Gcaleka as fast-talking, passionate. Others say conman, some hero.

The energy of this production also reflects Bailey's mood as a Capetonian in Gauteng - there's a real feeling that his "light flows" turn of conversation is invested in bringing some joy into the darkness of Johannesburg. A saviour in beaded spectacles from the wings.

"I have quite a crude aesthetic," he grins, "but I can see what's beautiful underneath the shell. I feel like I'm coming here in celebration."

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# Playing with the energy

Brett Bailey's play, *iMumbo Jumbo*, is putting a new slant on South African theatre. **Janet Smith** reports

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Millennia colliding: An Obie Oberholzer image that helped inspire *iMumbo Jumbo*

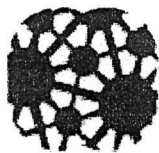
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# G-TOWN

## The story of our times

It's all aboard for a raucous ride up to the Power station and a night with Third World Bunfight's Ipi Zombi? - tipped to be a talking point By Catherine Knox



The zombies have got hold of Brett Bailey. You can tell by the fire in his ice-blue eyes. The whizz-kid of transformed drama has found a patch of sun against the sheltered end of Bra Eddie's Shoppe. He sits hunched up on a plastic chair, talking about culture clash, the pre-rational, social cataclysm, witches, zombies and stuff like that.

The racket of the morning - wailing, funeral chants and the sickening thud of a giant cowhide drum - still vibrates in the secret chambers of the inner ear, and the soul. Zombie business is always with us. That's why *Ipi Zombi?*, featuring on this year's main Standard Bank National Arts Festival programme, works: it's the story of our times, says Bailey.

Bailey's head is shaved, his Docs dusty, the overalls hang on his monkish frame, and his Albert Einstein specs have wonky earpieces bound up with that coloured phone wire.

Ritual fascinates him. He recalls an experience from India: 500 chanting Buddhist monks winding their way down a hillside with flaming torches. Spectacle and states of trance provide an alternative to logic and causality. "I wouldn't work without music. I need its hypnotic effect."

"*Ipi Zombi?* is a journey into the South African psyche," says Bailey. Two years after he first researched the Kokstad witch killings, he still hasn't exhausted the potential of this horrifying story to create theatre that makes meaning.

ZA@PLAY  
June 16 1998



Zombie troupe: Three alarmed maidens in Brett Bailey and Third World Bunfight's *Ipi Zombi?*

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### Dreams of a dragon slayer

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### A bitter beer to swallow

In between the expletives, slugs of beer and cigarettes, Chris McEvoy has some great comic material. Inga Latham watches Sczhoid at the Coffee Lounge

### Consuming Chekov

Reza de Wet reveals the feverish passion of her new play *Yelena* Catherine Knox

Even the facts aren't bald. Another day in Africa: September 30 1995. More carnage on the road. This time it's a busload of schoolboys: 12 dead.

Survivors report they saw 50 old women, naked in the darkness at the roadside shortly before the crash. Trainee witches, chasing after human blood to inscribe their graduation certificates ...

The witches mutilated and then imprisoned the souls of the dead as zombie slaves. Thirteen days later a Mrs Magudu, who is believed to hold 12 zombies in her wardrobe, is tortured and executed by a posse of youths. Emotion erupts at the mass funeral two days later. Witches' meat has been substituted for the bodies and there can be no burial.

Two days later, another witch is executed. Youth leaders are arrested. For six weeks sangomas try to sniff out the witches, and resurrect the boys. On December 6, another funeral is attempted, but youths attack the bodies with axes to try to drive out the witchcraft ...

"I was wide-eyed when I first tackled the material," says Bailey. "As if I was confronting goblins. Now it's more brutal: it's people, not goblins."

And, no, he won't be finished with it after the country tour of the current production. "There's a novel and a four-part docudrama for television on my mind."

*Ipi Zombi?* is overwhelmingly musical with 14 major numbers adapted from the songs of Mali, Pondoland sangoma chants and gospel favourites. The 15 members of his Third World Bunfight company have studied African music with Geoff Tracey and dance with prize-winning choreographer Thandeka Budasa.

Right now they're chilling out next door in their rehearsal space - the cavernous void of the Crossing (an old loco shed at Grahamstown station). The cast is largely drawn from the Third World Bunfight headquarters - the performance school founded by Bailey with assistance from the Standard Bank Foundation. The school was Bailey's response to a *Mail & Guardian* article last year lamenting the lack of real cultural development in Grahamstown's Rini township.

Bailey's credentials (including the smash hit *iMumbo*

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*Jumbo* and the prototype *Zombie*) marked him for the job. "Trainees have also set up drama groups in Rini schools, bringing cultural enrichment to more than 120 children twice a week."

So the project meets broader funding criteria and it looks as though Bailey might just be able to get the R22 000 per month needed to keep the thing rolling. To keep his trainees out of the factories of Port Elizabeth, he provides them with a weekly stipend.

Auditioning was a mission as Bailey was looking for special qualities. "I like rough clay," he says. University drama graduates are too brittle. "Like porcelain." Is there rough clay in him? He has a University of Cape Town drama degree, but stainless steel (lightly dusted with incense) comes to mind more than porcelain.

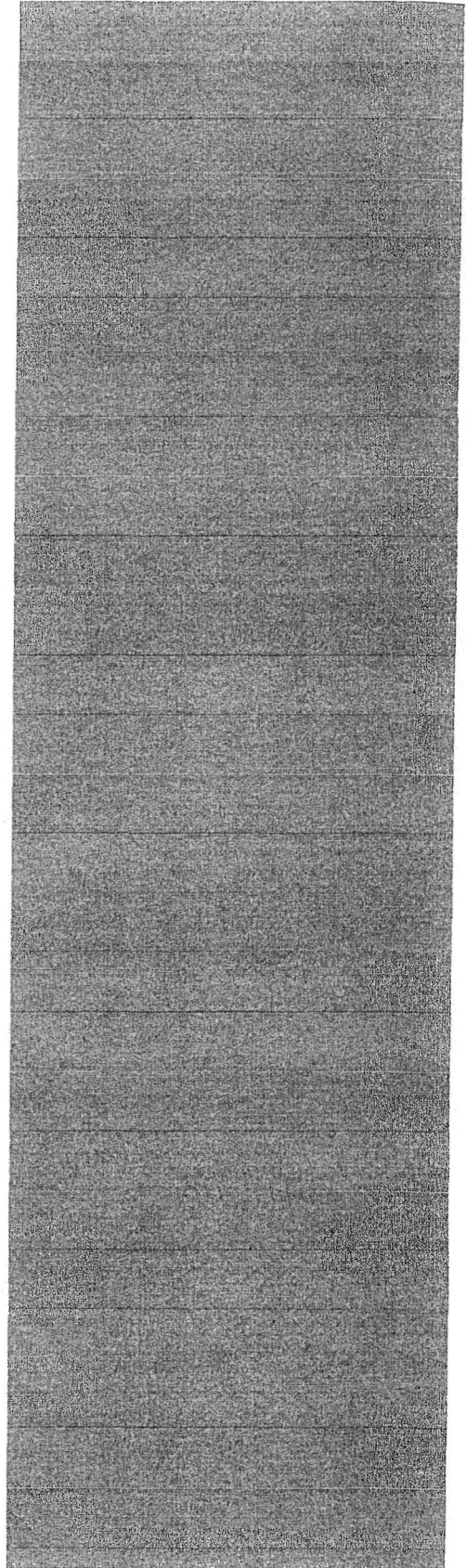
Rough theatre and rough-textured performers go along with rough places in Bailey's canon. As you read this, he's in the process of moving into the old Power Station - a red brick shipwreck on the hill behind the monument - venue for the seven-night run of *Ipi Zombi*?. He's taking his computer, his set-painting brushes and mask-making paraphernalia. The space must be prepared physically and imbued with the vibe. A week before the festival opens, the rest of the cast will move in and live there too.

The spirit of site is crucial to the work. Early rehearsals for the current zombie play were held in a sangoma's cave near Clarens. Inside is a maze of mystics' shelters and stone altars. The zombie troupe prayed and chanted and did candlelit run-throughs of the work, bonded with one another and the spirits during night hikes, and hobnobbed with amaqika and the ama-Zion who also frequent this ecumenical neck of the woods.

Via a dream, the ancestors let it be known that Bailey should sacrifice a sheep and a goat. The nearest automatic teller machine was 70km away. Damn ... but they could afford a couple of fowls, which seemed to go down okay with the amadlozi.

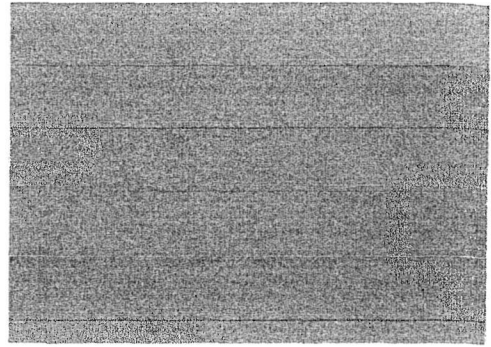
A documentary on the whole adventure is to be screened by SABC2.

Getting there is the first part of the adventure of theatre. For the audience, a curtain-raiser (and hair-raising) ride in the heebie-jeebie shuttle from Somerset Street to the Power Station is recommended.



After the festival the show goes on the road with an army tent, a dog and a couple of fowls. They'll do street shows and Xhosa and English versions of *Ipi Zombi?* in places like Lusikisiki and, of course, Kokstad. During a month's run in Durban, they'll teach, learn and do the show.

An overseas tour of *iMumbo Jumbo* is already penned into next year's diary.



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## Bailey sticks with winning style

by Ines Watson

**IPI ZOMBI?, now on at the National Arts Festival**

IF A production was judged merely on the amount of attention that it attracted, then Brett Bailey's *Ipi Zombi?* must be one of the highest rated shows at this year's festival.

And perhaps that was the problem. Heightened expectations are nearly always disappointed and this show, which has been playing to full houses, seemed often to be a shadow of its predecessor, last year's *iMumbo Jumbo*.

Anyone who saw and enjoyed that startlingly unique production will find the techniques used in this one very familiar. From the costumes, to the set, to the music --even to the chickens -- the similarities are striking: Bailey has obviously found a winning style and intends to stick with it.

This year's production is a much simpler tale than that of *iMumbo Jumbo*, which was more complex and multi-layered in its approach. Again it takes a bizarre event which occurred recently and presents it theatrically with a great deal of declamation, drums and drama.

The difference is that with *iMumbo*'s telling of the Hints's head debacle there was a great deal of humour, whereas in *Ipi Zombi?* the events are so



**SHADOWS OF THEIR FORMER SELVES:** Brett Bailey's latest production *Ipi Zombi?* retells the true story of the witch and zombi hunts which took place near Kokstad in 1995.



grim that we go away with a feeling of disturbed uneasiness.

The play concerns the strange happenings which overtook the people who lived in Bhongweni township outside Kokstad in 1995 after a bus crash killed 12 schoolboys.

Overwhelming community grief gave rise to rumour which quickly ran rampant. Mass hysteria is an ugly thing and it makes people do mad things -- and so it was in Bhongweni.

It was claimed that witches had caused the crash, that the spirits of the boys had been transformed into zombies which were being kept in an elderly woman's wardrobe. Events got to such a stage that two women were gruesomely murdered and the 12 bodies hacked and desecrated in order to exorcise "the evil spirits."

This horrific piece of recent history is presented in a suitably unsettling style with the murder of one of the women portrayed in a particularly convincing way.

As the dreadful events unravel, Bailey resorts frequently to dance and drums -- a device which certainly oils the theatrical flow but which eventually begins to feel like padding.

With the atmosphere enhanced by the sounds of the drums, the smell of burning herbs, the air full of the swirling dust under the dancers' feet, we are immersed in a world governed by superstition, magic, fear and terror. Bailey has succeeded again in taking us to a world that is at once foreign and yet familiar.

And yet, something rankles. To review anything in racial terms can be offensive and simplistic and yet this was the last of three productions about black South African life that I saw in the same day.

The first was a simple 35 minute play from a local Grahamstown drama group at the Studio. It had no gimmicks but it had sincerity and a collection of characters which were totally believable. They gave the case for and against circumcision rites and they told it like it is.

This was followed by the Young Artist Awardwinner for Drama, Aubrey Sekhabi's Not

With My Gun. Set in a black township, it was excellently written and performed and had a script which kept the packed audience alert, entertained and enlightened.

And then there was Ipi Zombi?

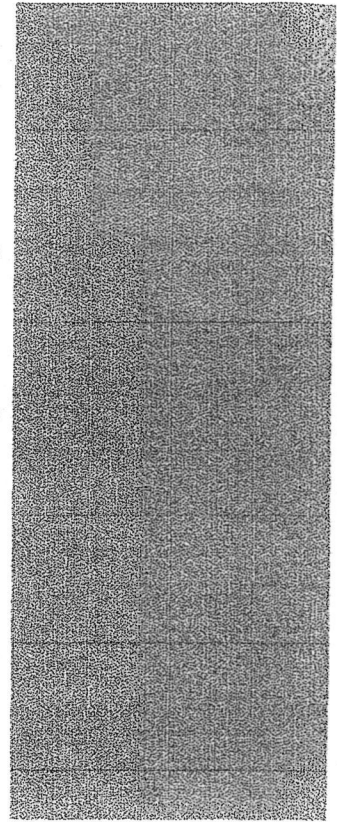
It is perhaps ironic that a white observer can relate more to characters created and performed by black writers and directors than that of Brett Bailey's voodoo nightmare vision.

Ipi Zombi? is good theatre but it is also exploitative of black culture and has extremely worrying aspects about it.

Leaving the gloomy Power Station, I couldn't help but think that this was a perfect production to tour overseas. How foreign audiences would love it.

Beating drums, chicken feathers and violent death -- is that really the reality?

**I Ipi Zombi? can be seen at the Power Station today at 19h00 and on Saturday at 19h00.**



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## My African dream

Brett Bailey's new book reveals a theatre director caught between showbiz and ritual, writes **Matthew Krouse**.

*The Plays of Miracle and Wonder*  
by Brett Bailey  
Double Storey

Reviewed by Matthew Krouse

**N**one of the flak Brett Bailey has attracted (and for which he continually blames the black intelligentsia) is directly attributed in his newly published commentaries and scripts. Of course, in his philosophical meanderings South Africa's edgiest director refers often to the threat out there, something bearing down on him while he creates. In his self-portrayal he is almost like a character in his own ritualised dramas, being attacked from all sides by frenzied ancestral spirits.

For the sake of *The Plays of Miracle and Wonder*, the founder of the Third World Bunfight company has resolved to quote only the nicely worded press raves. And to lash out at some of the restrictions he witnessed in the theatre of his formative years: "In the mid-



Abey Xakwe as Nongawuse with actors from Third World Bunfight. (Photograph: Elsabe van Tonder).

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Nineties I found most of the urban black theatre I had experienced formulaic — impoverished by the apartheid years when it had to serve as a medium of resistance and creativity and technique were often unnecessary frills."

One is inclined to refer Bailey back further, to the Eighties, when Mbongeni Ngema came up with *Sarafina*, quaint and colourful as a township toy. Possibly, he was too young in the Seventies when Welcome Msomi toured the world with *Macbeth* as *Mmabatha*, complete with sangomas and a legion of Zulu warriors.

Instead of promoting himself as a break from the theatre past, and a continuation of ancient custom, Bailey may appease his black critics by showing just how much of a product of local theatre history he really is.

That Bailey is a product of apartheid is not in question. Like most white narratives Bailey's book begins in his own backyard — Cape suburbia of the late 20th century. Here we find the youngster encountering "a few maids my mom had employed" and convicts who had broken out of the nearby Pollsmoor prison — "black men with hot breaths and murderous intent, crouching in the rockeries".

This brief portrait of his childhood could be a scene from one of his plays. And he has spent the ensuing years enthralled at the possibility and latent energy of the writhing black mass.

Returning in 1994 from a spiritual year in India, Bailey turned his sights from the mysteries of the East to those of the homelier South. He then embarked on a path to discover "the people who live beyond the barbed-wire fence".

In the process Bailey travelled to Zimbabwe where, on a dry river bank, he seems to have had a metaphysical encounter with "an immensely tall being. His skin was silver-blue and completely covered with large feathers or scales." For Bailey this was "the African Spirit, come to drink at the River of Life".

But the river was dry and this is where Bailey got his message to undertake his mission of restoration. With this lofty purpose, Bailey has an answer for his African critics: "When black sophisticates have challenged me 'Why you messing with our culture, white boy?' I've had a clear picture of a scaled snakeman communicating to me across the vistas of time

and space." Bailey's recourse to this kind of rhetoric indicates an anxiety about cultural appropriation and authenticity.

Bearing his claim to the African trance-state, Bailey took off to the Transkei in search of a story to tell. This he found in Kokstad in March 1996 in the tale of witchcraft and murder surrounding the death of 12 youths killed in a kombi crash. Survivors told of the presence of 50 female spirits in the doomed vehicle's headlights.

The play was called *Ipi Zombi*. Its title references *Ipi Tombi*, South Africa's much-lambasted work of the Seventies on the Jim Comes to Jo'burg theme. Bailey refers to his play as: "A pun on the patronising hit musical drama, which was boycotted by conscientised blacks all over the world."

His opinion provides an interesting detour. On the one hand he looks down at this internationally acclaimed musical. On the other hand he feels that he is above criticism himself. The issue is complicated by Bailey when he writes of *Ipi Zombi* in his workbook: "The two realms — showbiz and ritual — can work together."

He is at pains to stress, in the many conclusions he comes to, that there is more to his showbiz and ritual than just "inflaming superstition". But at the end of it Bailey is a conflicted soul trapped in the issue of whether one should consciously construct drama to change society.

About *The Prophet*, which deals with the sensitive subject of Nongqawuse, whose prophecies led to the Xhosa cattle-killings of the late 19th century, Bailey writes: "This is supposed to be a period of reconciliation in our country, and a part of me really wants to make a dramatic offering to those who died so tragically, so unfairly. But there is another unsentimental (or twisted) side to me that watches from cold peaks, and enjoys too much the controversial, the macabre and the theatrical to make heartfelt monuments to the dead."

Later he writes: "Can art/drama really make a difference? Or are we who live along the margins of society just naive dreamers? Deluded prophets?"

This week sees the Cape Town staging of



Bailey's masterpiece *iMumbo Jumbo*, about the nutty Chief Gcaleka who went to Scotland in search of the missing head of his ancestor King Hintsa. This, he believed, would cure the country of its ills.

In his text Bailey explains how the mere belief that he had found Hintsa's head carried enough "symbolic value" for Gcaleka to reconcile some of the disparate forces at play. In the same way, one is tempted to argue that if cultural producers believe they're making a difference, and if audiences believe it too — then who are we to argue?

*iMumbo Jumbo* is showing at the Baxter Theatre in Cape Town until August 9.

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# Cheap tricks and white lies

*Ipi Zombi?* by Zaheda Mohamed, Sowetan

*IPI ZOMBI?* — another Bunfight saga told by real-life blacks to real-life whites who sit with gaping mouths and googoo-eyed at performers in trance-like states moving and talking like "doped-up" freaks. Black people who are essentially portrayed as morons. The deeper part of their story obliterated for crude sensationalism in order to achieve maximum shock effect. If you are into seeing black people portrayed like savage morons tinselised with cross-dressing in calabash boobs and a dance on a coffin, then go ahead, indulge.

Just what is Brett Bailey trying to prove? To create theatre that is creative and provocative is one thing, but to denigrate people's stories and selves in

the process is a cheap trick. That whities can now get away with all in the spirit of reconciliation. They have the legitimacy to say as they please when they so please and dare you call that racist.

But then who am I to complain when the cast members in Bailey's play are not, right? Perhaps he has made an offer that they just can't refuse like fame and fortune, or is that just like a reach-for-a-dream concept in this country so he told them to get real and go for the big kill. Use Bunfight as a front for a new political party or get some recognition from the TRC and of course to secure a place on the Main Festival next year.

from the Sowetan's Zaheda Mohamed  
UE 6/7/98 p.

*Ipi Zombi* is nothing new, it is just a different story, but the same thing the audiences were subjected to in *iMumi Jumbo* last year. Basically, if you've seen one you've seen 'em all. Let me not take away everything from this force-to-be-reckoned-with-cum-new-age-rainbow-child, Third-World-evocative-little-theatrical giant.

As a designer, writer and director I has proven that he is a creative thinker. The costumes and setting are great. If black people are afraid to show their culture then why is it a sin if Brett Bailey and the sponsors have helped? Now I understand what Edward Said meant when he said that one form of racism is exoticising it.

# Zombies from Cradock

DRAMA: Zombie

GILLIAN ANSTEY, *Sunday Times*

Capetonian Brett Bailey is one hell of an enterprising guy. He arrived in Grahamstown six weeks ago, sourced a 38-strong cast from local schools and drama groups, roped in the Masakheke Choir, and with help from the Rhodes Drama Department and Pep Stores set about creating this play.

The result is astonishing - a visual splendour with powerful dramatic effects.

Zombie tells the story of the renowned zombie incident which took

place in Bhongweni, Cradock, last year. After twelve boys were killed in a car accident, the township youth, declaring it to be the result of witchcraft, went on a rampage to find the culprits who had "stolen" the spirits.

Many believed the dead had become roaming zombies bringing them bad luck and, while the bodies remained unburied for three months, sangomas tried to raise them and Christians held prayer vigils.

Although Bailey's production features an unremarkable script which does little more than portray, rather than explain the events, its strength is its staging.

On a floor mat made of intertwined washing-powder boxes, the dead boys appear in napkins made of sack, their white-washed hands, crossed at the wrists, flapping delicately as they make the cry of birds.

The stalled funeral scene is both haunted and haunting as the zombies, wearing ominous, elongated paper-mache masks, peer into the open coffins.

When simultaneously the frightened funeral folk stop singing in mid-phrase, they continue to open and shut their black umbrellas, the repeated action swishing eerily.

In the final scene, Bailey rushes from the auditorium to join his cast singing and dancing on stage. He richly deserved their warm hugs and the audience's appreciation for spear-heading this polished production.



Snap, crackle, pop!... Lisa Melman, above and Natalie Lotkin below, in the musical comedy, **SNAP**, at the Glennie Hall.

## Township demons exposed

DRAMA: Azotshon 'Amalanga

INES WATSON, *Daily Dispatch*

Old rhetoric dies hard. This story of the hardships of the shanty town has three main messages: all men are bastards, beware the demon drink, to be strong women have to unite.

All good stuff, perhaps, but this production by the Umtata Community Arts Centre should add to accepted knowledge, and unfortunately that doesn't happen much.

Life is grim and prospects are bleak and those facts are conveyed through the portrayal of the lives of a group of poor women and a nursing sister who fight for their rights, against men in general and the police and local bureaucracy in particular.

A simple set consisting of three screens, no costumes to speak of, and some good harmonious singing and noisy acting do, surprisingly, come

together at times to lift the production out of the doldrums.

The issues dealt with are pertinent ones, and women, particularly in poor and rural areas, have to be informed of their rights and supported in their fight for justice, Azotshon does that, but some things could be improved.

Sometimes the dialogue is lost in a flurry of garbled, indignant shouting, and the audience is harangued from the stage in an off-putting way. But worst of all some of the complaints are severely dated.

Do we still have to fight against minority regimes, the Suppression of Communism Act, the Group Areas Act, the dompas? Surely we can find new battles.

The cast's women are vigorous in their indignation about the treatment of their sex - and rightly so. Just say it coherently, keep it relevant and that message will be all the more powerful.

Critics go schizo on Emmel



# Your heart ripped out in a graveyard

**Heartstopping** By David Greybe, Business Day

CUE 10/7/98 p11

HOW BLOODY FITTING! An African drama about making peace with one's ancestors, performed on the graves of former "colonial masters" with across the city, the 1820 Settlers Monument as the backdrop.

*Heartstopping*, as with the Third World Bunfight Company's other Festival piece *Ipi Zombi?*, will not leave you cold.

Just imagine – 15 black performers on white men's graves, tearing out their hearts (literally) and offering them as a sacrifice to their ancestors. And all done slo-mo, using the Japanese theatre technique that involves slow movements and high concentration.

The fact that the audience hung around afterwards discussing the piece with director Brett Bailey surely attests to the power and impact of this theatrical piece – a piece first performed to the acclaim and approval of sangomas in a sangoma's cave near Clarens.

The show begins before the audience get to the cemetery, when Bailey meets the audience at the Grahamstown

Railway Station, to walk them to the "secret" venue.

The authorities had turned down a request to use the old quarry to stage the drama and, after protests from eager theatre-goers when the show was cancelled, the company looked around and locked onto the old Grahamstown graveyard which borders the city centre and the township (where most of the cast were recruited from).

Bailey explains that the reason for keeping the venue secret is that permission was not requested (and therefore could not be denied).

He requests our silence, and our walk begins, across the railway tracks to the old graveyard where we are met by six members of the cast, completely wrapped in newspaper pages, standing statue-like on trunk-like stone graves.

Also visible is a single drummer and three cattle horn players. Also statues. The rest of the cast are camouflaged and out of sight in the long grass. Everyone's painted, including bloody red tongues.

When the drummer signals the start of the show, a couple of township kids pull in and a group of council workers cutting the nearby graveyard grass move closer.

There are no words, and the 40-minute "rise and fall" of the performance is done purely to the slow, rhythmic pounding of the drum.

Don't take any preconceptions at all – let the dance take you in and then the performers rip your heart out.

The cast were only told of the venue a few hours before the noon show.

Some, Bailey says, were rather apprehensive about performing in a graveyard, and on graves.

However, he suggested they use their performance to make peace too with those underfoot. Everyone was happy and *Heartstopping* went ahead.

The second and final show takes place tomorrow (at R10 a head), and also with a noon meeting at the Grahamstown Railway Station.

Do yourself the favour, and go. For your own sake.

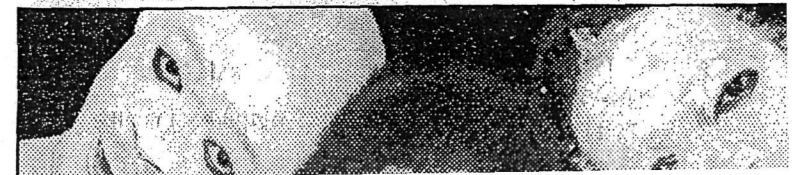
## ► News

# Catching the Zombi bus

By Solomon Makgale, Cue Student Reporter

GOING UP TO THE POWER Station to watch Brett Bailey's *Ipi Zombi?* can be a thrilling experience. It is like an adventure into the unknown.

If you don't have transport, you can drive in the "Heebie Jeebie Shuttle". The name says it all. Not because the



# Grahamstown goes back to the ancestors



At The Festival  
ADLINE  
SIGCHEL

Chief Nicholas Tilana Gcaleka, who was led by a vision to go on an ancestral odyssey to Britain last year to recover the skull of Chief Hintsa, was expected to see his internationally publicised expedition mirrored in a theatrical ritual last night.

Gcaleka, a businessman who has practised both as a Methodist minister and sangoma, was invited by director Brett Bailey to attend the world premiere of *iMumbo Jumbo*, which takes the form of an iNtombi, a Xhosa sangoma ritual. The role of Gcaleka is played by two actors and a company of performers which calls itself Third World Bündfight. Among the char-

acters are the prophet who went to Scotland with Gcaleka, Sky TV which broadcast the event, and Professor Phillip Tobias and scientists who put the retrieved skull through forensic tests and declared it to belong to a white woman.

This mainstream festival production in the recreation centre was created over six weeks in the Bantu Methodist Church in Grahamstown's nearby Tantiy location.

The cast, a dozen of whom participated in *Zombie* Bailey's acclaimed, equally topical festival fringe debut last year, ranges in age from six to at least 70 and includes two real sangomas from Butterworth and Port St Johns, a schoolteacher, a nanny, a goat and live chickens.

Bailey, a practising vegetarian, has incorporated the ritualistic sacrifice of a chicken in the perfor-

mance, which contains actual trance. The improvised script is based on 30 hours of taped conversation the 29-year-old Cape Town director has had with Gcaleka since February. When a series of personal misfortunes, like the theft of the performing chicken from *Zombie*, befell Bailey, Gcaleka told him he obviously hadn't asked the ancestors permission to do *iMumbo Jumbo*. An iNtombi was duly performed and, says Bailey, whose grandmother is a spirit medium, the bad luck ceased.

Predictably when the 23rd Standard Bank National Arts Festival started yesterday the shows with the heaviest bookings weren't the local works like *iMumbo Jumbo* but the international guest artists appearing for the first time in the mainstream programme. Top of the list is Steven Berkoff's *One Man* which

opens tonight, followed by Nederlands Dans Teater 2 and the Choir of Trinity College, Cambridge, which sings in the cathedral next Friday and Saturday.

Also in great demand are tickets for the film festival and the art walkabouts for seven mainly South African visual art exhibitions.

International collaborations feature strongly this year. Leading the way is Johannesburg's Windybrown Centre for the Arts with two co-productions.

The first is *Bob Marley - 16 Years After*, a musical directed by Cliff Moustache, artistic director of the Nordic Black Theatre in Oslo, features Norwegian and South African performers. Moustache, originally from the Seychelles, stars as Marley. This production is a sequel to a cultural exchange initiated last year when Arthur Maimane's *Hang on in*

there Nelson played in Oslo.

The second is *isithukuthuku*, using an epic poem written by Windybrown director Walter Chakela, which was created at Windybrown during the past month by Charles Cornette and Hilde Ulterlinden from Belgium's International Nieuwe Scene. This production, with a cast 12 South Africans, and Prince Lengoasa as musical director, is sponsored by the Flemish government.

Also in the 60-strong Windybrown contingent are Sandra Smith, executive director of the Madame Walker Theatre in Indianapolis and Laura Greer, director of programming for Aaron Davis Hall in Harlem, New York City.

Both are part of an extensive international multicultural programming network to which Chakela and Windybrown are connected.

## Attendance fails as creativity soars



At The Festival  
ADLINE  
SIGCHEL

Attendance figures for the 1997 Standard Bank National Arts Festival are down by 20 percent while, conversely, creativity is way up, offering the best selection of drama and music this event has presented in years. Or perhaps ever.

The drop in ticket sales on both the main festival and the fringe came as no surprise to the organisers.

"This is better than expected," said media manager Marguerite Robinson.

The economic situation was mainly to blame for this prognosis. Perhaps the crime wave also played a role.

But a viable police and army presence got right it's nothing unusual to see soldiers in the midst straight out of an

Oliver Stone movie) have kept the festival one of the safest and friendliest places to be. The only crime reports so far have been drug related.

Although by Sunday only 43 017 mainstream tickets had been sold (compared to 55 992 in 1996) and 57 481 fringe seats (compared to 69 519 in 1996) the Village Green craft market drew a count of 17 000 compared to last year's 41 000. The weather always plays a significant role.

There's also been a change in the booking pattern. Cautious festival goers arrive first, hear what's hot then book or buy tickets at the door.

Because of word of mouth, Nederland Dans Teater 2, Steven Berkoff's *One Man* and Deon Opferman's saucy *Die Sake* have sold out for all performers.

This tendency not to support the

unfamiliar has also caused lack of support for extraordinary collaborations like Pops Mohamed and the Ngqoko Cultural Group which had two weekend performances and proved to be one of the festival's sensations.

If the South African public isn't fully paying attention to what's unique and wonderful about our evolving culture, visiting international festival directors and agents are.

Alicia Adams, curator of the Kennedy Centre's African Odyssey Festival, is in town from Washington DC, as is the music director of the Turn of the Century Festival to be held in Nantes, France, in September.

Representatives from Canada, Norway, West Australia's Artrage Festival and Africa Exchange in the United States are also scouting shows for touring or to set up cultural exchanges.



Third World Bunfight  
presents

# THE PROPHET



DRAMA

The Power Station

Time: 19:00

Dates: Sat July 3

Sun July 4

Tues July 6

Wed July 7

Thur July 8

Fri July 9

Sat July 10

No Interval

Duration:

1 hour 40 minutes

## Company Manager

Barbara Mathers

## Assistant Director

Saskia N. Hegt

## Musical Coordinator

Phillip Nangle

## Photography

Elsabie van Tonder

and Brett Bailey

## Third World Bunfight

ABEY XAKWE

Andile Bonde • Boniwe Tyota •

Silulami Lwana • Makhosandile

Yafele • Vuyani Hoboshe •

Nomanenekazi Tyala • Noxy

Donyeli • Xola Mda • Rhea

Cakwebe • Thulani Mene •

Luyanda Butana • Camagweni

Pali • Nomboniso Ebony •

Sonwabo Makhubalo •

Susiwe Dyan •

Tongesayi Gumbo

"Behold, the day comes that shall burn like a furnace. And all the proud and every evildoer shall be stubble, and that day that is coming shall set them on fire, and it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But for you who revere me, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings, and you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall." – Malachi 4:1-2.

1856, the 'Eastern Cape', and the British colonists were rolling eastwards, devouring Xhosa lands and assaulting Xhosa culture in the name of civilization, conquest and security from the Natives. Tribes were thrown back upon tribes, a devastating cattle plague swept the region, and British magistrates moved in to dismantle traditional structures and hierarchies. From out of this brewing despair a voice of hope arose: all was not lost, an apocalypse was imminent, and thereafter the renaissance of the amaXhosa.

Nongqawuse, the young niece of a local seer, Mhlakaza, was visited by visions of dead Xhosa heroes who announced that all the dead of the nation would rise from beneath the ground driving immortal cattle herds before them. Divine grain would come forth, and the utopia would dawn with the eviction of all invaders by a hurricane, whereupon everybody would live happily ever after. All that was required to bring about this utopia was that the Xhosa slaughter all their cattle, destroy their corn reserves and refrain from cultivating.

Taken up with evangelical zeal by Mhlakaza and given sanction by Xhosa Paramount Chief Sarili, the Movement gained momentum, sparking off terrible conflicts between those who supported it and those who thought it spelled disaster.

The colonists were divided between alarm at what they suspected was a plot to mobilize the Natives against them and glee that the 'heaven-sent' destruction of Xhosa society was happening with minimal effort on their part. When the last in a series of Great Days passed without event for the expectant Xhosa, the nation was in tatters: several hundred thousand cattle had been slaughtered, and between 60 000 and 100 000 people were to starve to death. Tens of thousands were carted across the colony as a cheap labour force, and the British boldly swept the territories of survivors and proudly hoisted the Union Jack.

"There are many symbols (among them the most important), that are not individual, but collective in their nature and origin. These are chiefly religious images. The believer assumes that they are of divine origin – that they have been revealed to man. The skeptic says flatly that they have been invented. Both are wrong ... they are in fact 'collective representations', emanating from primeval dreams and creative fantasies. As such these images are involuntary, spontaneous manifestations, and by no means intentional inventions ..."

– C.G. Jung, *Man and his Symbols*.

#### DIRECTOR'S NOTE:

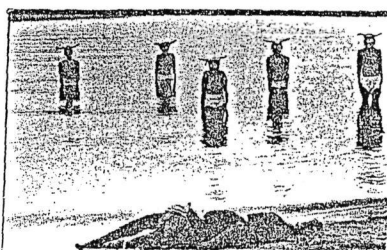
What a saga to tell! I spent months and months researching, both in libraries and in the field: reading, interviewing,

gathering contrasting accounts. Some people say that this is the most fascinating aspect of the event – that there are so many utterly different and violently opposing versions, according to the outlook/background/affiliations of the raconteur, and that this is what should be emphasised in *The Prophet*. I don't know – that seems rather academic to me.

When I wander among the fallen stones of the ruins of some might place – such as Great Zimbabwe – it is the aura and mystery which entrance me. I am not one to follow the tour guides around to learn all the facts, though I might eavesdrop a few moments. Rather my imagination escapes and plays amongst the angles and flourishes of the great hieroglyph, stopping a while to gaze at the detail revealed by a beam of light here, the passage of water there. I see forms and faces moving in the shadows. I thrill at the vines which tear the walls apart, and at the blue lizards which rule the scattered bricks.

So. A HEALTH WARNING TO THE UPTIGHT AND THE POLITICALLY CORRECT: My imagination will not follow neat and narrow ideological tracks – fortunately! This drama has grown out of reflections upon and meanderings among a myriad accounts of the saga: those of feminist sociologists and Xhosa grannies, sangomas and nineteenth century colonial commissioners and pastors, reactionary post-apartheid historians and the musings of my cast and friends. More than just a documentation of the 'Cattle Killing', it is an astonished gasp at the proportions which collective tumours can grow to. A perfect play for the millenarian madness which possesses us right now.

– Brett Bailey.



"Hugh: Yes, I know that historians and writers will condemn Nongqause as a fool, a traitor, a devil-possessed witch. But is that everything that can be said about this? I hope to God not. No, I will not believe, I cannot believe that the tragedy which is now upon us can be explained in that way only. There must be something deeper. I believe that in the distant future someone will catch the proper spirit and get the real meaning of this incident and write about it. Who knows? – H.I.E. Dhlomo, *The Girl who Killed to Save (Nongqause: The Liberator)* (from which excerpts are included in *The Prophet*).

**Third World Bunfight** is a performance company and training project which aims to revolutionise theatre in South Africa by creating a unique new theatre with its roots deeply imbedded in local soils, accessible to people across the social spectrum of this country. With its outreach programmes, high quality training and extensive touring, the group is working hard at stimulating a performance culture in rural and urban South Africa. This year the company based itself in the fertile chaos of Port St Johns, and spent a month touring Zimbabwe with workshops and three productions, including *Ipi Zombi?* which enjoyed a riotous two week tour of the Transkei in a Xhosa translation last September.

**Sponsors:** The Standard Bank National Arts Festival, ARCA / South Africa Development Fund, HIVOS, Anglo American Chairman's Fund, The Royal Netherlands Embassy, Business and Arts South Africa (matching grant funding from BASA), AVIS Car Hire, Theater Instituut.



# CUE



Standard Bank National Arts Festival



R2-00

Rhodes University Department of Journalism and Media Studies

3/7/99 p.1

## Dipping into the unknown



Review: New Directions  
by Gwen Ansell, *The Star Tonight*

Steve Dyer's new show for Grahamstown, *New Directions in South African Music*, is a bit like a gigantic lucky bag. It gives you all the excitement of dipping into the unknown. None of the new jazz compositions by reedman Dyer, pianist Paul Hanmer, guitarist Menyaso Mathole, trumpeter George Mari and bassist Marc Dube have been heard before. The team itself is new. But lucky bags have their risks. You may get a hugely satisfying rainbow gobstopper — or an ephemeral fizzy sweet.

In Dyer's case, the contents were wonderful, but the wrapper was shabby. Intense, delicate, highly intimate music does not sit easily in the cavernous Rhodes Great Hall, with a huge gap between players and audience and a hungry acoustic which swallows and deadens the sound. This stuff needs a concert hall.

The compositions were a further uncomfortable reminder of how much good new music is lying around in musicians' homes waiting for an outing. Almost everything was intriguing, intricate — and projected in 3-D by the sparkle of the musicians.

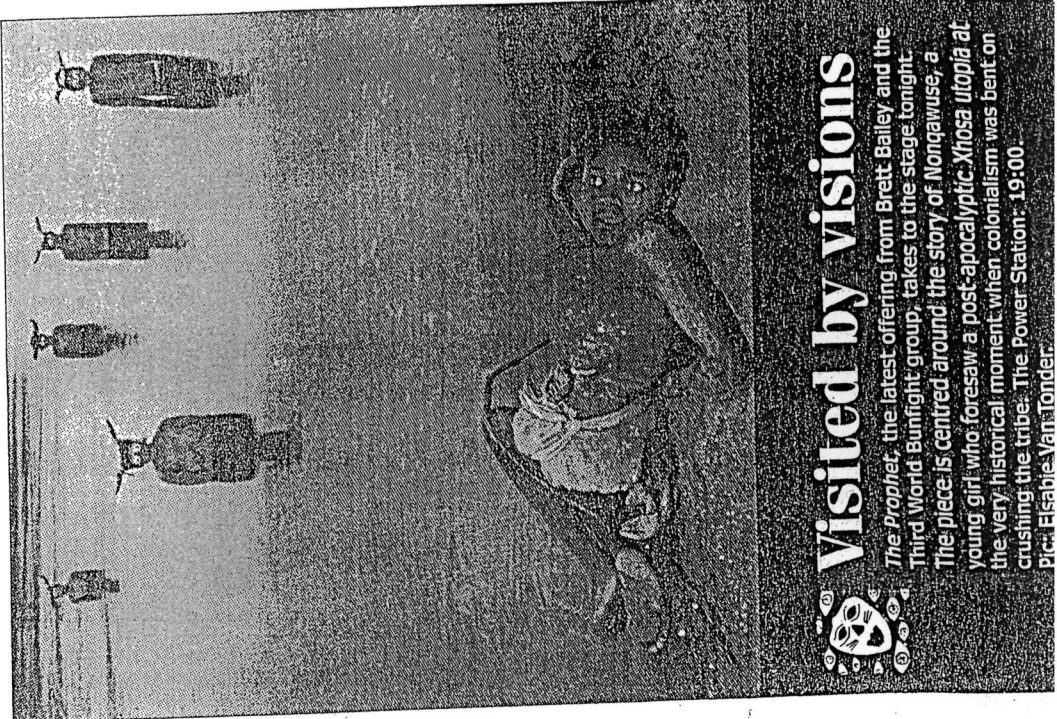
For me, the standouts included Dube's *For me, the standouts included Dube's*

enough. In a strong ensemble, Mathole's guitar playing stood out. Every time he moved forward, you could hear that slight intake of audience breath as they waited to hear him. And Mathole has built since its breakup on the elements in his playing that helped make Sakhile such a groundbreaking group.

He gave us cyclical progressions of a single note building in volume and intensity. He gave us jagged fragments of melody punctuated with sharp-edged space. In his own *Friendship*, he gave us a theme that moved through challenging changes into a strong, complex Pedi beat. Everything swung, but except on the last rocking *Marabi* he played little of what you'd expect from a South African guitarist of his generation. Another of our neglected modernists, this player must be recorded.

Steve Dyer gave us more flute and soprano than usual: perfect for a group of this scale and with a wonderfully risky but tender soprano solo on George Mari's *Moombai*.

A newcomer to this type of music, Zimbabwean drummer Sam Matura shows huge promise. He's been hailed as the next Jethro Shasha, and certainly he has the rhythmic complexity and inventiveness which could take him there — something that showed to great effect on *Marabi*. On this first



### Visited by visions

*The Prophet*, the latest offering from Brett Bailey and the Third World Bunfight group, takes to the stage tonight. The piece is centred around the story of Nonqawuse, a young girl who foresaw a post-apocalyptic Xhosa utopia at the very historical moment when colonialism was bent on crushing the tribe. *The Power Station*: 19:00.

Pic: Elisabje Van Tonger

Tues July 6, 1999

## YOUR PEARL OF COMFORT

### ON THE RAVE

Quieter times  
ahead  
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### MOVIES

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How  
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TV GI

# Prophet makes thrilling debut

## Worthy successor to Ipi Zombi hit

BLANCA COLEMAN  
IN GRAHAMSTOWN

Brett Bailey and his Third World Bunfight theatre company have produced another triumph at this year's National Arts Festival.

Following the success of 1998's *Ipi Zombi?*, this year's performance, entitled *The Prophet*, is the theatre which is spectacular in its spiritual intensity and is impossible to view without becoming personally involved.

Bailey has taken the old power station above the town and made it his own. The shabby industrial building, and the low-ceilinged candle-lit tunnel we are required to pass through, add a palpable sense of anticipation.

Bailey warns his audience beforehand that some of the seating is "unconventional" and requests that we arrange ourselves according to age and fitness levels. What he means is that most of us will be sitting on the floor on grass mats arranged in a circle around the central stage.

Thus we are drawn in and made part of the proceedings.

The story of *The Prophet* is that of Nongqawuse, the 15-year-old niece of a seer, who in 1856 - the time when British colonists were sweeping across the Eastern Cape, taking over Xhosa land - claimed to have been visited by dead Xhosa heroes who told her the dead would rise from the ground, driving immortal herds of cattle before them. Before this could happen, however, the Xhosa would have to destroy all their grain and slaugh-

ter every last cow. Then, a "Great Day" would dawn, when the sun would rise blood-red in the east, travel halfway over the sky and then return to set in the east again. After this, the prophecy would be fulfilled.

Needless to say, the Great Day never dawned. Thousands of cattle were killed, and between 60 000 and 100 000 Xhosa starved to death in the following months.

While it might seem impressive that I can repeat all this, it would not be possible - nor would following and understanding the play - without the help of an informative synopsis handed out beforehand.

This seems to be a mark of Bailey's productions; last year I found *Ipi Zombi?* bewildering, incomprehensible and guilty of what I consider to be the cardinal sin of theatre: trying too hard to be clever, strange, shocking, or whatever.

But even this jaded, cynical critic was so involved that I was completely caught out at one point when, during the ritual killing of the Xhosa king's prize ox on stage, the young man next to me began twitching and moaning. As the tension built, so his apparent discomfort increased.

At the moment the "ox" was killed, he began flinging himself about and shouting wordlessly. My face must have mirrored the shock and horror of those around me.

So it was with immense relief that I realised he was only one of several scattered through the audience, and was indeed the spirit of one of those dead heroes who, through a young girl, brought about the downfall of the Xhosa.

EDITED BY  
DEREK  
WILSON

TONIGHT  
EDITORIAL  
(021) 488 4580



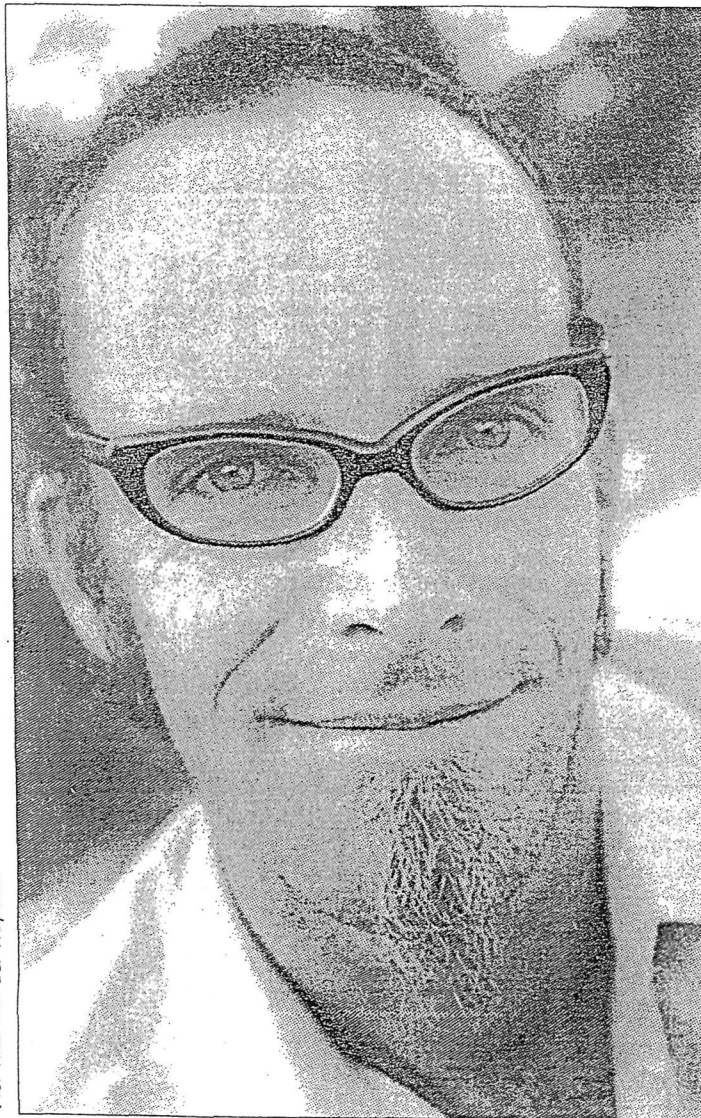
CUE - 9 July 1999 p12

# A ceremony of healing

Where iMumbo Jumbo and Ipi Zombi? came easily, *The Prophet* has been "like pulling a tooth out".

Back stage

Pic: Tina van der Heyden.



Back stage: Brett Bailey  
by Mary Lynn Mather, Cue

**W**riter, designer and director of *The Prophet*, Brett Bailey uses a large group of local children to tell his version of the story of Nongqawuse, the young girl at the heart of the Xhosa cattle slaughter of 1856.

"We are living in a time where talk about renaissance and the huge flowering of culture is all around us," he begins, explaining the dangers of choosing to focus on a kind of Armageddon, particularly painful for many people.

"I see this as a ceremony of healing, where the story is brought into the temple and laid on a platter or an altar. It has been influenced by voodoo and styled as a voodoo ceremony of sorts."

For years now, the idea has been turning in his mind and imagination, emerging as the final piece in his trilogy. But where *iMumbo Jumbo* and *Ipi Zombi?* came easily, this play has been "like pulling a tooth out".

As he sifted through different accounts and listened to versions of the saga, he kept hearing that he was looking for trouble and being too controversial.

"I felt people would be walking into the production with swords and lances, so I decided to disarm them," he says. "You can't aim things at children. I'm glad I did it. It would have been very stodgy with adults. Children bring innocence, sweetness and life into this story."

To counter any dangerous suspicions that he was portraying something serious as childish or silly, he has the young performers in the roles of the white soldiers too.

"There is a sense of devastation and horror. Children are the future. Everything moves in cycles, from beginning to end. In the natural world, moons and pumpkins wither and return."

Bailey decided to approach his topic as a fairy story: "Strange beings promise a girl the earth, and instead death comes."

Even though *The Prophet* is based on the annihilation of 100,000 people, he prefers to see hope and growth, represented by the children who stand up and bow after playing their parts.

All his recent works have dealt with "states of hysteria" and the collision between African ideas and forces Western or Christian. "I have had enough of this now," he states. "It's definitely time to move on."

Before heading for Amsterdam and a scholarship in September, he has vowed to "take six weeks off, lie in the sun and read, and not think a single theatrical thought".

He may also indulge his growing fascination with rituals and ceremonies. "Perhaps I'll do Bar Mitzvahs next year," he announces, and he keeps a straight face.

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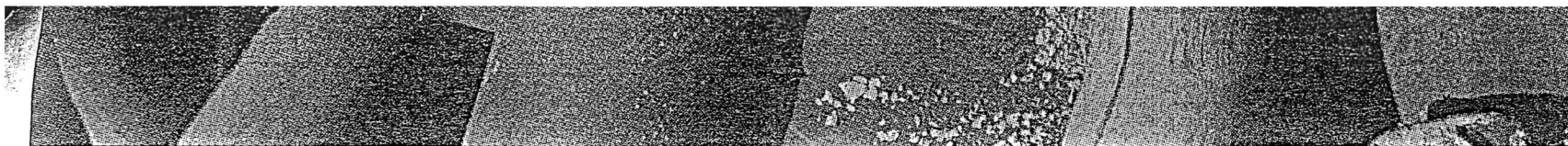
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Ritualistic theatre:  
The performers of  
Brett Bailey's group,  
Third World Bunfight,  
achieve something of a  
state of mesmerisation  
in their performance  
of *The Prophet*, which  
will be on show at  
the Standard Bank  
National Arts Festival.  
PHOTOGRAPH: ELSABÉ  
VAN TONDER





# Resurrecting a vision

*In The Prophet, Brett Bailey boldly takes on one of the most enigmatic figures in Xhosa history, writes John Matshikiza*

Six weeks before the play was due to premier at Grahamstown, Brett Bailey had his laptop computer stolen from his makeshift office in Port St Johns, where he was rehearsing with his group, Third World Bunfight. Lost with the precious hard drive was the developing script of his play *The Prophet* — potentially a disaster for most playwrights.

Bailey was momentarily nonplussed, but it would take more than a technological mishap to put him off track. The show goes on.

Bailey's plays so far have all developed from the germ of an idea in his brain, which is then developed with the group. Nothing is cast in stone, it seems, until the last moment, and even then the ideas continue to grow.

In this case, he started writing the script in August last year, then worked with the core group and others in Zimbabwe and the Eastern Cape, to focus on various themes and musical styles that would blend into his brand of ritual and theatre.

At a later stage more fresh blood would be brought into the mix — a contingent of schoolchildren and a traditional Xhosa singing group. Bailey got his long-time collaborator

Saskia Hegt, a New York and Amsterdam-based teacher and director, to join him on the creative team. By the end of the process, there was probably enough brainpower and collective memory around to turn the loss of a mere computer into a hitch, rather than a crisis.

Collective perception is the coin Bailey likes to deal in. *Ipi Zombi*, Bailey's 1998 offering at Grahamstown, was based on a true story of collective hysteria that turned into a lethal witch hunt near Kokstad. *iMumbo Jumbo*, Bailey's previous festival blockbuster, was based on the exploits of trickster Nicholas Gcaleka who took the whole country on a roller-coaster ride to Scotland in search of the head of king Hintsa.

This time round it is the legend of the prophetess Nongqawuse — a tale that is bound to be a tormented presence in the collective memory of South Africa for generations to come.

"What really fascinates me," says Bailey, "is the mesmerisation, the fact that so many of the

Xhosa were mesmerised by the visions and prophecies of a small girl."

It is a painful wound to reopen among Xhosa people, and probably for the greater black population, too. Nongqawuse's is the ultimate tale of African self-delusion in the face of European colonial aggression.

Through her visions, the lonely and unremarkable 15-year-old girl persuaded the Xhosa nation in the mid-19th century that their

salvation lay in the mass sacrifice of their cattle and crops. As a result, more than 100 000 people died of starvation, and the victory the British army could not achieve by military assault was achieved by other means.

This led to speculation that the British themselves were responsible for laying the seeds of this cataclysmic prophecy in Nongqawuse's mind — a

belief still firmly held by many people in the Eastern Cape. The question has never been resolved. Nongqawuse herself has always remained an enigmatic figure in Xhosa history.

Bailey stresses that rather than opening an old wound, his interest is in helping to heal it. He believes that his style of ritualistic theatre, where the performers themselves achieve something of a state of mesmerisation, and the audi-

ence is drawn in as an active participant, complete with the aura of incense and medicinal herbs, is part of this healing process.

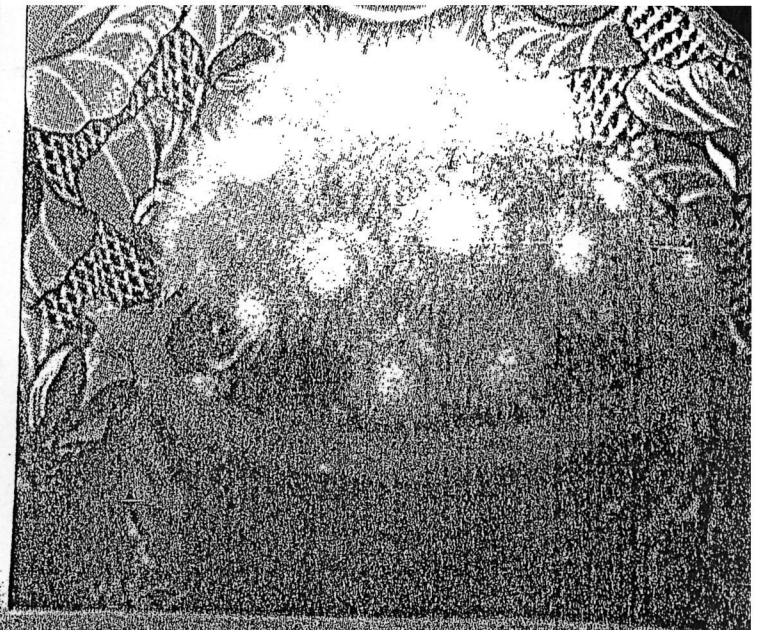
Bailey is not interested in demonising Nongqawuse more than she has already been. He cites a play written by HIE Dhlomo in the 1930s (one of many previous attempts to dramatise the saga of Nongqawuse) where the author, himself a black man, ironically portrays Nongqawuse as a godsend because her folly, and the destruction that followed it, led to the black race abandoning their belief in the supernatural.

In the Dhlomo play, the real heroes were the white missionaries who brought the word of reason to the benighted heathen. Such a perception would receive a poor response in today's world.

Bailey confesses to have been initially daunted at taking on this story, with its potential for inflaming raw sensibilities. Now, he says, having spent so long working his way around the story, he wonders what the controversy is about. It is no more nor less than a simple human story, like all his other stories, whose consequences were far bigger than anyone could have foreseen.

The important thing will be not so much the nature of Nongqawuse's elusive character, but the reverberations of her actions on the people she lived among, and their descendants.

To PAGE 2



on in drag: Pieter-Dirk Uys in Noël & Marlene (above) and Vita Praat Kaktus (right)

throughout South Africa, encourage growth and be shared." Years later, the country more united, but theatre have never been so far course, there's still no real recruit, so Uys has engaged for himself.

Not Bus tour complete, most would have retired to a rner, but not Uys. A week election he took to the main Market Theatre, not with show, but with two: *Dekaf* and *Going Down Gorgeous*. onse, suburbanites paid n artist considered more ad, putting aside fears of crime — as Uys always

Uys was unanimously praised, apart from a singular black critic who called him a racist (a response he'll probably confront more often in the future).

In a way, the Market Theatre season has been a sort of homecoming for Uys — for Evita Bezuidenhout at any rate. It was here at the Market Theatre café, no longer in existence, that Evita was born in 1982, a short while after Uys decided not to run as a joke candidate in a by-election for Westdene.

In the process of trying to find 300 signatures needed to register his candidacy, he received an anonymous death threat from somebody inquir-

Go back to the theatre where you are strong." So he sat down and wrote *Adapt or Dye*.

In those days, Uys was so marginal that Evita took to the podium in a late night slot — meaning he only began his performance way after 10pm. Likewise in the late Seventies, he took most of his plays to Grahamstown, staging them on the festival fringe.

These days, of course, he is so prolific and well known that he owns his own little town. While Darling on the Cape's West Coast is not exclusively his, it might as well be.

This year, at the Standard Bank National Arts Festival, Darling comes to Grahamstown in the form of five different productions — that's

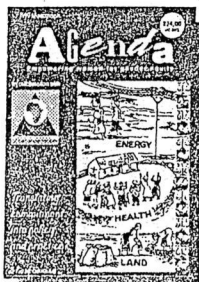
*Tannie Bolla Praat Kaktus*, *Our Osewania Praat Vuil* and *Going Down Gorgeous* are all the proof needed verify that Uys is one of the world great drags, along with Ru Paul, Dar Edna Everage and the late Divir. *Dekaffirmated* is Uys's major take of the election, while *Noël & Marlene* an offshoot of his previous obsession with the lives of Hollywood sirens.

All of these productions emanate from Evita se Perron, the refurbished station from where Uys runs his life. In fact, in what is probably to be his final act before he collapses, Uys is effectively staging a festival within the festival — testimony to the fact that performer in the country has his energy. Not after the year he's had.

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## Resurrecting a vision

### From PAGE 1

For example, how were the families of the cast members involved in this drama 150 years ago? What happened to them? The absence of this knowledge is part of the exploration of the piece.

Bailey describes his work method as being about "giving a slant on reality, not about reflecting the whole of reality". He brings to his exploration of these themes his own training as an anthropologist, counterpointed with his own mystical experiences.

After graduating from the University of Cape Town, Bailey travelled extensively around India and was absorbed by that huge country's mysticism. Then he returned to Southern Africa and felt he had to get in touch with the spiritual heart of his own country.

Hitchhiking alone through Zimbab-

we in 1992, he "had a very powerful and extraordinary vision whilst spending the night in a remote ravine. This changed my life dramatically and put me on the course of working with theatre to nurture the embattled Spirit of Africa."

He brings the tensions of these "rational" and "mythical" sides of himself to his work with these daunting tales from the African soul.

Bailey promises that in terms of staging and casting the audience of *The Prophet* "is in for some big surprises". One of these is probably the use of his constant collaborator, the diminutive Abey Xakwe, as Nongqawuse.

This year Third World Bunfight will be housed at the Power Station. Audiences will be transported to this out-of-the-way spot on a vehicle called "the Cattle Truck". Watch out for a wild ride.



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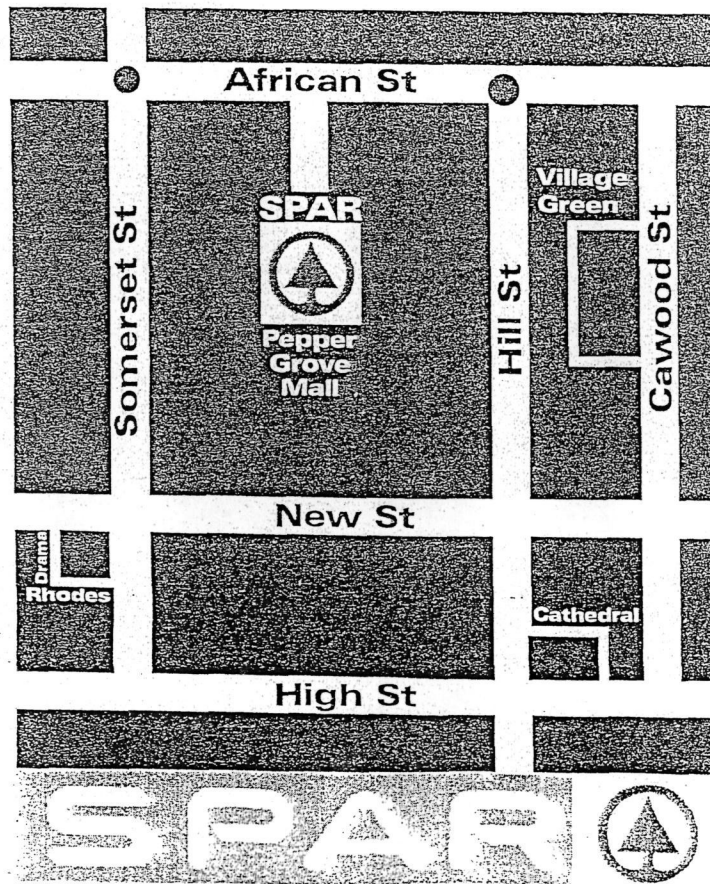
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**Dance** — American dancer and choreographer Bill T Jones of the Bill T Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company is using a series of traditional African folk songs from Madagascar for his *Duet* with Janet Wong.

Australian designer Nigel Triffitt puts the Gumboot Dancers of Soweto onto the world stage with *Boots*.

**Drama** — German saxophonist Gert Anklam performs the music he composed for *Dark Continent*, written and directed by South African Chris Pretorius. He is joined by Jamaican performer and engineer Elizabeth

and Chicago resident Mickie Maher who plays the Man in Tarboosh.

Indian choreographer Savitry Nair joins South African, Zimbabwean and French artists in *Passage*.

**Fine Art** — The retrospective of exile Gerard Sekoto documents his life in France and Senegal. The 1998 World Press Photo Exhibition features work from all over the world and South African award-winners.

**Film** — American actress, producer and writer Deborah Twiss introduces *A Gun for Jennifer* with director Todd Morris.

duces Sekal Has Jaroslav Boucek

**Music** — Mexico Amello perform. Symphony Orch. Netherlands South Africans i SA which plays Instrumenta Belgium's Ricer visual artist Wil Handspring Pup Return of Ulysse

# Celebrating the East Cape infl

by Mary Lynn Mather, Cue

Local colour suffuses a number of Eastern Cape productions and exhibitions. On both the Main and the Fringe, performers and artists draw on home ground for inspiration.

"Some part of my heart is in this area," says Brett Bailey, the man behind *The Prophet*. "The people I work with and the stories I tell all come from here. It's a rich and exciting place for me."

This year, the imaginative writer and director takes the saga of Nongqawuse as a starting point for the Third World Bunfight presentation. In 1856, the young girl foresaw a time of plenty for the Xhosa nation. To bring about the miracle, the people had to slaughter their cattle and destroy their corn supplies.

Some saw sense in this; others anticipated the destruction of the tribe. At the same time, the British were bent on bringing civilisation to the land.

"The Eastern Cape served as the frontier between colonialism and African society all the way back then," Bailey explains. "The collision between the first and the third worlds excites me. I am looking at when it all started."

Bailey uses the word "maelstrom" to

catch the essence of certain places in Transkei. Cultural divisions and confusions seem to fascinate him, resulting in a dramatic work that probes the collective psyche even as it draws strongly on a sense of place.

Celebrating "the many aspects of the particular atmosphere of the Eastern Cape" is the express aim of The Studio at the Recreation Centre. The experience includes sampling a tasty Xhosa meal at the launch and being entertained by seasoned storytellers, dancers, singers and jazz musicians from the townships.

When Andrew Buckland started auditioning for his collaborative venture with the local communities, he was not sure what the workshoped play would be about, so he questioned the groups before helping them to develop their ideas and expand their techniques.

"The concerns that engaged people had to do with the clash between traditional and western ways of thinking. Attitudes overlapped and conflicted," he says. For instance, where the President's Award gumboot dancers favoured American music over South African sounds, the Khumbulani Traditional Dancers were guided by Thandeka Budaza, an expert on Xhosa culture and customs. As a result, *A dream of*

Rini reflects the who look to the change.

Among a wictions is *Fishwife* by an ichthyolog Caroline Meltor Hecht and Lind to what Dardag: is completely E: bias and protea. "There is also tl laughing. "I con the land in a ve There's a kind c as well. "In our that say, "This is Extending tl *Odyssey* from Cl novel perspecti the nearby hart ing positions.

Place is at t *Journeys to the* site-specific ins around an old s poet Norman M Players give the edge.

Grahamstov to locate *The U*

Standard Bank Young Artist Award  
Winner Andrew Sekhohi

EXHIBITION OF THE  
**CENSORSHIP**

to Die with producer Soucek.

— Mexican castanet player Sonia performs with the National Symphony Orchestra. Netherlands musicians collaborate with Africans in *The Millennium Quadrant* which plays a blend of traditions. Instrumentalist Philippe Pierlot and um's Ricercar Consort combine with artist William Kentridge and the spring Puppet Company to create *The* of Ulysses.

## influence

reflects the divisions between those look to the past and those who embrace ge. Among a wide range of visual art exhibits *Fishwives*, a collection held together by ichthyology link. Roxandra Dardagan, line Melton-Thorp, Stella Lughi, Anne it and Lindsay Quirk have contributed at Dardagan terms "a whole wall that mpletely Eastern Cape". Aloes, euphor and proteas typify the approach. re is also the odd nude fish," she quips, hing. "I come from here. I respond to and in a very basic, instinctive way. re's a kind of spirituality about this area ell. "In our work, we use little symbols say, 'This is where I live.'" Extending the sea images is *A Painter's* ssey from Chantelle Staude. Taking a el perspective on the familiar, she views nearby harbours and ships from surpris- positions. Place is at the core of *Labyrinth -* rneys to the Centre, Elaine Matthews's -specific installation which revolves und an old settler well. Local talents like t Norman Morrissey and the Masande yers give the event an Eastern Cape ge. Grahamstown's Anton Brink has chosen locate *The Unseen Universe* in Fort

AND THE  
DRSHIP

anniversary festival.  
According to Nelson Mandela, international ties are forging part of South Africa's new emergence on the world stage. And, according to Cue, Grahamstown is the hand that brings these ties together. The global arts meltdown happens here ...

Selwyn, the building beside the Monument, using the colonial relic as a foil to his exploration of feminine reawakening. By combining the elements of war with those of the Mother Goddess, he creates a strange unity from disparate elements.

Among the Eastern Cape practices that have endured is stick and pipe carving from indigenous woods. Festival committee member and director of the King George VI Art Gallery Melanie Hillebrand has assembled a collection of the traditional yet functional Nguni artefacts.

Home grown music is epitomised in the stirring strains of the Masakheke Youth Choir, playing at The Studio and joining the African Jazz Pioneers for *Viva Madiba*.

Speaking for the group, public relations officer Esther Khanise calls this region "the most powerful province, especially in choral music. People are surprised when we're on stage - there is something that pushes us."

## Collection of African art

Art and Craft — Zimbabwe's Dominic Bendura, recognised as one of the best sculptors to come out of southern Africa as a result of his innovative use of carving techniques, namely inlaying different coloured stone.

Ghanaian Coffin making. Ben Kane Kwei crafts ornate coffins using traditional woodcarving in this new artistic genre. The exhibition includes coffins in such diverse shapes as cars, boats and even an eagle.

Film — A tribute to the late Senegalese director Djibril Diop Mambety. His films *Touki Bouki* and *Hyenas* will be screened as part of this year's diverse film line-up.

Music — Ugandans Samite Mulondo known as Samite of Uganda, Mar Gueye and MJ "Emma" Potter play African instruments such as the Kalimba (finger piano), the marimba (wooden xylophone), the litungu (A seven-stringed Kenyan instrument), guitars and djembe. Their unique sound crosses all language barriers.

Ghana's Pan African Orchestra, directed and conducted by Nana Danso Abiam. Inspired by traditional African themes, this sophisticated music incorporates innovations from American Jazz, Caribbean and Latin American sounds.

Oumou Sangare (Mali) and Hanitra Rasoanaivo (Madagascar) — Both women feature in the "Women of Africa," a collaborative effort that will include South Africa's own Sibongile Khumalo. Each of these women has received international recognition for her particular style and interpretation.

ARISEN... A scene from *The Prophet*, the latest production from Brett Bailey and the Third World Bunfight group.  
Pic: Elsabie van Tonder.

09:00 NEWS  
Regular news broadcasts every two hours until 17:00.

09:05 FESTIVAL  
INFORMATION SERVICE  
Begins and continues throughout the daytime broadcast until 17:00  
Main and Fringe Festival information updates, weather, music videos, quote of the Day and highlights from the previous days broadcast.

17:00 SUNDOWNER SHOW  
Broadcasting live from the heart of the festival at the Monument fountain foyer. Covering Fringe Festival performance extracts with a live audience and interactive presenter:  
• The Standard Bank National Youth Jazz Festival (music - jazz)  
• As the Koekie crumbles (drama - comedy)  
• Ditsala (dance - Namibian traditional & contemp)  
• Gatiepie Sien sy Gat (comedy)

New Directions archives:  
A Brother With Perfect Timing by Chris Austin

21:00 THE INTERVIEW SHOW  
Love Crime and Johannesburg with Malcolm Purkey and Ramalao Makhene.  
White Men with Weapons with Greg Coetzee  
Boots with Nigel Triffin  
Basil T. Jones / Arnie Zaxe Dance Co. with Basil T. Jones!!!!

22:00 THE SOUND SCENE SPONGE SHOW  
Off-the-wall coverage of Festival music performances focusing on alternative rock, jazz and kwaito. A musical lucky-packet.

22:30 THE FUNK EXPERIMENT  
A late-night lounge show featuring live DJ's playing deep, jazzy grooves accompanied by live VJ's.



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# New direction of theatre in SA

*Ipi Zombi?* goes a long way to free the theatrical imagination

MAURICE PODBREY

**IPI ZOMBI?** the show that will open at Spier tonight, could be a prime indicator for the way South African theatre evolves over the next few years. It was a runaway success at last year's Grahamstown Festival. It goes a long way to free the South African theatrical imagination and shows political correctness in the rubbish bin where it belongs. This show establishes director Brett Bailey as a new talent.

*Ipi Zombi?* has its origins in Kosi in 1994, where 12 black schoolboys were killed in a bus accident. A survivor claimed he saw female witches burning the bus to its disaster and he unleashed a murderous witch hunt. The village people, led by the schoolboys, were convinced the dead were now endeavoring to do the witches' bidding. This is potent stuff.

At our killer in *The Crucible* told the story of an American witch hunt in a strictly realistic style. Bailey chooses a gothic/burlesque approach — exaggerated and outrageous — as the anti-realistic schoolchildren under the audience. In the world of the walking dead. The play is anything but politically correct. The reviewer for *The Sowetan* found it offensive. Indeed, our suspension of disbelief is tested by Bailey's cynical approach but he knows when to shift gear. When we witness the murder of the witch and her son's attempt to reason with the collective madness, the horror strikes home and we feel the suffocation of the moment.

Bailey is director of astonishing confidence, especially given his young years. *Ipi Zombi?* is part of a trilogy: all three plays come to grips with South African stories new and old. *Murder in the Bush*, was staged at the Grahamstown Festival in 1997 and then at the Market Theatre, Johannesburg. The story is of the quixotic quest to bring back Chief Gcaleka to retrieve the head of his ancestor, King Hlisa kaPhalo, paramount chief of the amaXhosa who was killed in a skirmish in 1835, and "thereby to restore peace to this country which Hlisa's Devil Spirit is ravaging". The third play, based on the story of Xhosa prophetess Nongqawuse and the killing of the cattle, is scheduled for the Grahamstown Festival this year.

Bailey is serious and ambitious. *Ipi Zombi?* has played to black audiences throughout the Eastern Cape and the Free State and now seems set to hit the international festival circuit, funding permitting.

His work has its roots in the populist theatre of the past era. The aesthetics of that time were born out of economic necessity. There were few conventional stages available to them and little funding for décor and costumes. What they did have was an astonishing energy, a seamless interweaving of music, dance, mime and song and a deep commitment to the stories that make up our many communities.

Like Bailey, David Kramer has produced work with strong organic roots in a particular culture. His latest shows, *Kat and the Kings*, was enormously popular here and in England and is about to start its North

American tour. It appears that universality is found in particular truths, not the other way round.

What is astonishing is that not one of the established theatres in this country has shown interest in presenting *Ipi Zombi?*. Indeed, phone calls to a major theatre company in Johannesburg went unanswered. This is a serious indictment of the timidity and lack of imagination that is endemic throughout the country. The next wave of theatrical activity could be pass them entirely.

The Market Theatre has shown itself to be committed to South African theatre but it is alone in this. Funding problems seem to have left our theatres destitute conceptually as well as materially. Young playwrights who may have received a modest grant to write something will have to be very inventive to get their work staged. Among our senior writers, Reza de Wet went the route of the festivals to get her latest play, *Yezulu*, on the boards. It was then taken to Pretoria's State Theatre. Both Grahamstown and Oudtshoorn festivals still offer opportunities to new ventures but the Fringe has seen declining numbers and the self-producing playwright there will be living very dangerously.

What is common to the success of Bailey, Kramer and Nicholas Ellenbogen's Theatre for Africa, now playing at the Castle in Cape Town, is a high degree of self-reliance. These artists are successful not only in the making of good work but also in the skills of marketing, fund-raising and production. It's a lot to ask of individual artists and how many like-minded and enterprising producers will encourage one of the populist ranks will be seen in the future. Although New South Africa's theatrical skills are already the stuff of legend.



BLACK STAR: Ahey Xakwe as intomb'enyama in the controversial play at Spier.

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...the name of the famous Brazilian composer, Antonio Carlos Jobim, who died in 1995. The name change is a tribute to his importance to the culture of our country," said Cardoso. ...to travel to Rio soon to ...the airport that ...his name."

Jobim, a pianist, guitarist and flautist, is considered the father of bossa nova, a musical form that emerged from Rio's fabulous Copacabana, Ipanema and Leblon beaches. — Sapa-AP

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# of performance

The use of black iconography by white artists has angered many people. Is it exploitative or informative? **John Matshikiza** enters the debate

**R**obyn Orlin sets out to startle. Her visuals dazzle, her fragments of realist dialogue, generally spoken by people who are not actors, provoke laughter and self-recognition. Her anti-choreographic choreography makes you respond one way or another — with rage if you are a purist, or with an appreciation of her subversion of convention, if you like her work. (Which most people who go to see her pieces do — that's why she's still doing it.)

She has made a career out of inviting the world to watch her slaughtering cows that are presumably sacred to them, and making them enjoy the experience (or storm out in a rage, which probably happens less often than she would like. Disruption would be part of the performance.)

I was inclined to ask her what her *Orpheus* had to do with Orpheus when I saw her last work. The present work, *Life After the Credits Roll*, makes questioning her intentions more urgent. She has, after all, previewed the title with the comment that it is "a piece for five performers and the spirit of Makana". I'd have gone to see her new work anyway, because I find what she does challenging and entertaining, in spite of niggling questions at the end. But Makana was a special kind of hook.

Makana is one of my heroes. He was an early 19th century African nationalist who expressed his political beliefs through his spiritual convictions, his musical inspiration, and the arts of war. He was a political prisoner who tried to escape from Robben Island. He was a dreamer whose exploits inspired his followers, and also inspired succeeding generations to dream of liberation.

In Orlin's new work, Makana is a question mark. He doesn't really appear as a character. The closest we get is the image of a black man drowning in the sea, or the image of a black body rising triumphantly from the waves, or a black figure sailing off into a new horizon in an improvised tub.

What about Makana the prophet? The man who first converted to, then rejected Christianity? The background manipulator in the power struggle between King Ndlambe and his nephew Ngqika, a power struggle that was to have such a critical impact on the outcome of the wars against colonial invasion?

What about Makana the man who nearly inflicted a military rout on the garrison at Grahamstown and thereby came within an ace of

changing the course of history?

There are a number of ways of looking at Orlin's decision to leave this complex (and highly dramatic) character out of her piece. The one which Orlin herself cites is lack of information. In this reading, the whole point of the performance is to highlight the fact that most people know hardly anything about this critical historical figure.

"If people are talking about renaissance and empowerment and an African identity," she says, "why is the information about someone like Makana not more readily available? Why are bells not ringing all over the place? Makana is part of my history too, but I'm not being allowed to know anything about him."

The point is underlined within the dialogue of the piece. "We've been everywhere looking for the spirit of Makana," says one of the characters. "We've been to bars, we've been to she-beens ... we even went to the library." Nowhere was Makana to be found is the implication.

But how does this justify using Makana's name at all? Is it for the shock value once again? Orlin's audience is mostly white and middle class. What is Makana to them, apart from an exotic provocation?

There is still a perception in certain parts of the black community that black images are too easily appropriated for white amusement, without any respect for the deeper meaning these images might have for the black community. Brett Bailey came up against this when his *Imumbo Jumbo* was performed at the Market Theatre two years ago. Most white audiences were stunned by the spectacle, a bold mix of sangoma ritual, stylised movement, and cartoon storytelling. Most black people I spoke to disapproved of exactly those combinations. The bottom line was the perceived lack of respect for black history and culture.

Bailey defiantly went on to do *Ipi Zombi* at the Grahamstown Festival and this year is making ready to unveil *The Prophet*, his take on the touchy legend of Nongqawuse. Bailey himself confesses to being at a loss to understand how Nongqawuse could have held such power over a whole nation, to the point where they were prepared to destroy themselves. But is Nongqawuse more incomprehensible than Jim Jones, who led hundreds to their ecstatic death at Jonestown in Guyana, or David Koresh at Waco? Why Nongqawuse?

It's a debate that reverberates backwards for almost as long as we have had a cultural histo-

*Questions of cultural ownership.*

ry. Beezy Bailey caused a storm in the art world when he posed as an unsophisticated black house maid for one of his exhibitions. The laugh was on the stuffy white art world and its uneasy liberal values, because they bought into the deception. But was it an internal white laugh that was enjoyed at the expense of the non-existent black woman who nevertheless represented an all-too-present black personality? What did it say about real black women who were real painters and whose credentials were now open to all sorts of new questions? Had they all been tokens all along?

There is another kind of perceived appro-

priation in the works of Barney Simon and Athol Fugard. Having started their theatrical careers in the *People Are Living There* mode in the 1960s, they went on to make an exploration of black life their main activity. *Boesman and Lena*, *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, *Woza Albert!*, *The Island*.

It was these, and not their pieces about the white South African identity, that brought them international renown.

It goes on and on. *Ipi Tombi* and *The Gods Must Be Crazy* both received international brickbats from the anti-apartheid lobby. Both howled back indignantly that they were strict-

ly "entertainment". (Besides, they created employment.)

And what about Saartje Baartman? Nothing her French circus exhibitors said could persuade her that displaying her ample haunches to an uncouth mob in Europe was all just good clean fun. She died of a broken heart.

So what's a nice white artist to do? Orlin is aware of the criticism. "A caller to some radio show [strangely enough citing *Yizo Yizo* as a white-inspired programme] was saying that white people should be looking at how white people are dealing with the post-apartheid era, not black people." But she reiterates that "Makana is part of my history too, whether I am black or white or blue or green. How I choose to deal with it as an artist is the issue. Theatre is about entertainment and I'm damned if I'm not going to entertain them. It doesn't make my attitude to Makana flippant!"

She makes another useful point in her own defence when she asks what black artists are doing about these historical icons. Even the black members of her cast knew very little, if anything, about Makana.

But there's a bit of a deception here. Nelisiwe Xaba, Orlin's current prima ballerina, says that Orlin did indeed challenge their lack of knowledge about Makana, but discouraged them from finding out more because it was not part of the process that Orlin wished to engage in. She wanted the piece to be about Makana, but not in the sense of telling a story about the man.

Instead, Orlin is seeking to engage her audience in a debate about style, history and many other things. Sexuality is one of them. "Sexuality?" "Yes. I pose the problem that Makana could have been a woman," says Orlin, "or at least that there might have been a woman at the time who was as vibrant and as important as Makana, facing the same dilemmas."

Now there's an interesting angle. Whether that comes across at first, second or third viewing is debatable. But what Orlin does to great effect is to use the icons she picks out of the air as a springboard for her eclectic explorations. If you want more than this, you'd better go somewhere else.

For Robin Orlin, the medium is the message.

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Mail & Guardian  
May 7 to 13 1999

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# The sacrifice

Brett Bailey has made headlines by having a chicken killed in one of his plays, but for him it's all in the spirit of harnessing a true South African energy, writes Caspar Greeff

IT'S not often you see real death at Cape Town's Baxter Theatre, so the night that a life got snuffed out on stage, there were, as you can imagine, some very ruffled feathers.

A number of people, some weeping, stormed out before the play ended. Among them were: an old lady holding an umbrella, a woman from Camps Bay named Sonja Killian and the actor-director/cabaret artist Graham Weir.

The old lady with the umbrella later said that if she could have, she would have stabbed the killer to death with her umbrella, right there on the stage; Killian, describing the killing, said: "Somebody came out with a knife and started cutting... At first I thought, 'This can't be. It must be an act. But I realised it was real when I saw the blood... That picture will stay in my head.' And Graham Weir confronted the director of *iMumbo Jumbo* in the foyer. "YOU C\*\*T! YOU C\*\*T! YOU C\*\*T!" he shouted at Brett Bailey. Later, he told a Cape Argus reporter that Bailey "should be publicly flogged".

"I'd love to be publicly flogged," Bailey tells me afterwards. "As long as it's on the stage of the Baxter Theatre. I'll even do it myself."

We're in a retro-futuristic room in Cape Town's Long Street and Bailey, undoubtedly South Africa's most controversial playwright and theatre director, is sitting next to two fake black sheep.

He says he wants to do nothing less than "bring the scent and the thrust and the smell and the cry of Africa into the theatre and redefine it completely".

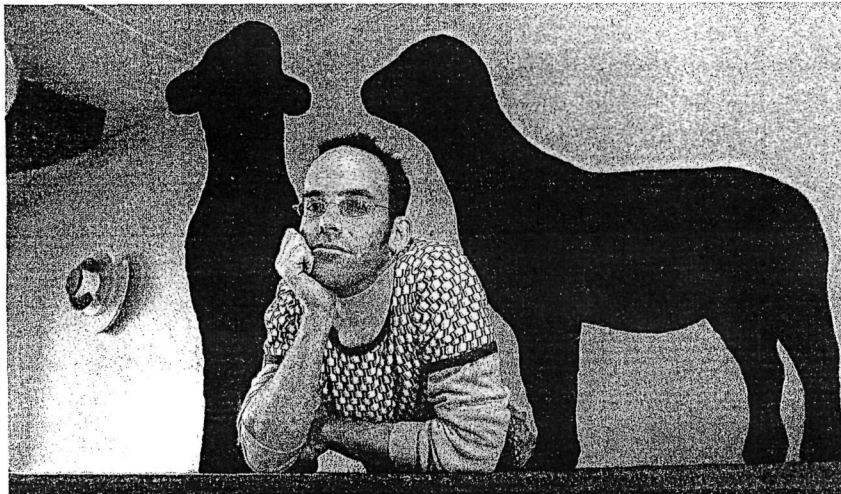
All right, so one of his performers killed a chicken on stage ("Murder most foul", clucked the Cape Argus in its front-page headline), but, that aside, Bailey has redefined South African theatre. In his plays you will find ritual, religion, magic, music, masks, dance, drums, dreams, kitsch, clowning, satire, sacrifice, possession, political incorrectness, the grotesque, the macabre, the bizarre; there are real sangomas and real fire and real brandy and a real runchback dwarf and yes, now, there's even real death.

His plays have told stories of zombies trapped in a cupboard, of a sangoma on a quixotic quest, of Idi Amin, of the prophet Nongqawuse, of Carl Jung in Africa.

"There's black and there's white and there's the space between that and that's where we operate," Bailey says.

Bailey is long and lean and grins like a trickster. He's quick and cunning and has a mercurial mind. He's fluid, flows like water and exudes energy.

Energy. He loves that word, that concept. When I ask him what a Brett Bailey drama entails, he says: "People who have spoken to me after one of my shows, they say: 'Wow! The energy! That's what we concentrate on. During the first two weeks of the rehearsal process I don't touch the script at all. I work with the energy. With harnessing energy, so the actors are in touch with booming that energy out. Music, showbiz, dance, ritual. It's about blurring



SENSATIONAL: Brett Bailey brings the 'scent and the thrust and the smell and the cry of Africa' into the theatre

boundaries and giving everything a sort of quasi-Day-Glo voodoo hue."

He uses unconventional methods to harness the energy of his actors. "In one very extreme exercise," he says, "I took the actors out into the countryside and blindfolded them and for an hour they ran around the woods acting as animals, just completely blind. At the end of that I laid them all down and covered them with branches and then got them to run down the valley and they all ran down the valley completely blind, screaming their heads off because it was so scary, and they were hurting themselves on branches and tree stumps and falling down rocks..."

"What an exercise like that does is push the performers to a place beyond the one they are accustomed to, and in doing so, energy comes up, an energy that can be trained to harness."

In his book *The Plays of Miracle and Wonder*, Bailey tells of an epiphany he had in Zimbabwe's Chimanimani mountains in 1993: "All at once everything went quiet... Approaching slowly, tentatively down the opposite bank and clutching the leafless saplings as he came, was an immensely tall being. His skin was silver-blue and completely covered with what looked like large feathers or scales. When he got to the edge of the bank, where once the river had flowed, he knelt down, cupped his hand, dipped it and raised it to his lips. There was, of course, no water. Then he raised his head and looked into my eyes and I was transported away."

The scaly silver-blue being, says Bailey, was "the African Spirit, come to drink at the River of Life, devastated when he found it dry... This visitation or vision was to become a guide in my life, a calling to work with the African Spirit in some way."

I ask whether this vision is to be taken literally and he replies: "I feel a bit shy now about having written that—I wrote it in a moment—but ja, that was a real event."

Bailey grew up "in the sweet white suburb of Tokai", Cape Town, and "became interested in the spirit world really early because my grandmother was a spirit medium and she would interpret the dreams my sister and I had, and she had these two tall black cones in her lounge, and apparently at her seances they used to dance."

"So that stuff's sort of in my subtext, but I think I really cottoned on to ceremony when I spent a year in India in 1994 and went to a lot of Hindu temples and Buddhist ashrams."

They've got this ceremonial way of life and it's so florid and ostentatious—it's wonderful."

He returned from India with, as he writes, a "mission to fuse ritual and drama in some way, to make drama which would transport performers and spectators the way I myself had been transported by the ceremonies I attended in India".

Looking for a story and a means to dramatise it, he hitchhiked to Transkei and spent three months living in a mud hut with a sangoma. "It was an extraordinary time of a whole world opening up to me," he says.

And he writes that during his stay with the sangoma, Zipathe Dlamini: "I learned the songs and dances and found the atmosphere and meaning that I put to use in [the plays] *Zombie*, *iMumbo Jumbo* and *Ipi Zombi*. These were among

the richest days of my life so far."

*Ipi Zombi*? was seen by more than 50 000 people—it was translated into Xhosa and hit the road.

"We toured the rural Transkei and we played Umtata town hall and the Bisho casino, with these guys in white paint and skins running through the casino where people were gambling. We played school halls, villages and at night—which was quite scary sometimes, because it dealt with witchcraft and there had been witchcraft killings in the area."

"My plays are aimed at South African audiences more than anybody else. We took three shows overseas, where they feel like an African mask within a glass

box, which I despise. I feel like [the work] is taken out of its context and it's lost its power and it's trapped."

"For instance *iMumbo Jumbo*, which was very strong on sangoma energy on a South African stage—and spiritual energy—really struggled to find its feet in England. The climax of the play is a sangoma ceremony—the infamous sangoma ceremony—and on an English stage they really battled to find the energy."

Ah yes, the infamous sangoma ceremony. The one in which a chicken was slaughtered on stage at the Baxter. I ask Bailey about it.

"An art gallery or a theatre is a realm within society which is contained; it's like a garden where you can actually do stuff which you can't do anywhere else. It's a place where these things can be tested, should be tested."

"One of the most powerful works of art I've seen, a performance piece, was by a

Yugoslavian artist, Marina Abramovic, a performance artist at the height of Milosevic's power, who stood dressed as some sort of military figure with blood splashed all over her, while live rats in cages underneath her devoured each other, which was a commentary on what dictatorship does to people. For me, that is gritty art, it disturbs you, it makes you think about what things are."

"I wish I had a lot more freedom to make art which disturbs people..."

"In South Africa we live in an ideological minefield and, no matter what you do, somebody's going to take offence. I think the most important thing is for an artist to be as unfettered as possible and not to censor him or herself, because if you do that then you're toeing some ideological line."

"Obviously I'm not going to slaughter an Alsatian or a Maltese poodle because it's not culturally condoned, but the fact is that slaughtering a chicken is culturally condoned."

Of all his works, the one he loves most is *Ipi Zombi*, because it "managed to capture the darkness and a *joie de vivre* around the darkness. I love darkness, there's no doubt about it. I love the macabre and I love the grotesque—it's beyond the straight lines and the square corners we have to live with every day..."

"Sanity is all too cold."

"My social life is in absolute ruins," laments Bailey. "There are not even traces left any more, because I'm so goal-orientated. All that actually matters is the work. And that's fine, actually, because I don't matter either—it's just the work that matters. I think of drama, the stage as an altar and what I require from my performers—and it's not as if I don't live it by my own example—is an act of sacrifice."

"You've just got to sacrifice everything because the most important thing is the work. It's an offering, it's an act of sacrifice, it's non-negotiable."

This week Bailey went to Haiti to work on a script called *Voodoo Nation*. "It's about the journey of the voodoo gods from West Africa on the slave ships and how they were transformed into gods of voodoo in Haiti. I'm just going as a consultant on this production, and then I'm working on my own production, which is about the meaning of land issues. I'll spend some time in Zimbabwe and collect stories."

His long-term goal is "to have my own theatre where we can rehearse and create our works. It's like a supper theatre and we can have cats and dogs living there and chickens, and you can come and you can sit on a bench and watch a drama and eat. And you're served by the waiters who are the performers and there's a cat sitting on your lap and there're children and there are grannies and there's a fusion of Broadway and voodoo and African and Indian and whatever. It doesn't pander to any exotic notions—it's just straightforward theatre."

● *The Plays of Miracle and Wonder* is published by Double Storey, R250

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