

THE WHITENESS OF SOUTH AFRICAN  
ENGLISH RADIO DRAMA:

A POSTCOLONIAL STUDY OF  
THE RISE, DECLINE AND DEMISE  
OF A DRAMATIC SUB-GENRE

by

MARGARET ELAINE LOGAN

submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the subject

THEORY OF LITERATURE

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: PROF MARISA KEURIS

NOVEMBER 2009

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The author would like to express her appreciation to the following for their contribution to the formulation, execution and presentation of this study:

Prof. Marisa Keuris, Head of the Department of Afrikaans and Theory of Literature, UNISA, Pretoria, for her encouragement, guidance and support. Her interest in radio drama, expressed at an early stage in my studies at UNISA, has been a source of inspiration for me:

Retha Roux of the SABC Sound Archives, Johannesburg, for the provision of invaluable information, and her unfailingly prompt response to my many queries:

Former radio drama practitioners, friends and former colleagues, who completed my questionnaires or gave interviews, most notably Nigel Vermaas, Jack Mullen and Bev Peirce, whose valuable insights, opinions and recollections form such an important contribution to this work:

Old Time Radio experts and archivists Frans Erasmus and Kevan Mardon, for their readiness to share their expertise, including recordings and magazine articles:

Claire Welch, Technical Support Executive of the South African Advertising Foundation, for her helpful assistance, and the provision of radio audience statistics:

My husband and children for their patience and encouragement.

## **ABSTRACT**

An exposition of South African English radio drama tracing the historical, cultural and political issues which led to the demise of the art form in 1999, and its resurrection at ICASA's insistence in 2006. The research demonstrates the ideological influences of both British Imperialism and Afrikaner Nationalism on the development of South African radio drama, drawing parallels between the development of Afrikaans radio drama, Zulu radio drama and English radio drama. The study also deconstructs the role played by English language radio drama in underpinning the ideologies of whiteness, and illustrates attempts made towards transformation from 1985. The recent development of an essentially South African form of radio drama is described, and the effects of new ideological constraints imposed by the SABC are discussed. The study also provides a critical lens through which the SABC's failure to observe its public service mandate is made evident.

Title of dissertation

**THE WHITENESS OF SOUTH AFRICAN ENGLISH RADIO DRAMA: A POSTCOLONIAL STUDY OF THE RISE, DECLINE AND DEMISE OF A DRAMATIC SUB-GENRE.**

Key terms

South African English radio drama, Afrikaans radio drama, Zulu radio drama, ideologies, British Imperialism, Afrikaner Nationalist ideology, African Nationalist ideology, apartheid, whiteness studies, white supremacy, South African Broadcasting Corporation, demise of an art form, postcolonial, transformation.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 TITLE OF THE STUDY**

**The Whiteness of South African English Radio Drama: a postcolonial study of the rise, decline and demise of a dramatic sub-genre.**

#### **1.2 AIM OF THE STUDY**

The South African Broadcasting Corporation's decision to terminate the production and broadcast of all English radio drama in April 1999 not only signified the end of an era, but the apparent demise of this art form in one South African language only. However, radio drama in English was re-introduced on SAfm in April 2006, in compliance with licensing regulations stipulated by the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA).

A distinction should be drawn at this early point between the "old" and "new" forms of South African English radio drama<sup>1</sup>: that is, between the "old" radio drama, deeply rooted in British colonial culture and imperial ideology, and later confined within a white space by apartheid's supremacist ideology, and the "new", truly postcolonial radio plays and serials currently broadcast, which aim to attract a wider audience of both first and second-language English speakers.

The research that follows, begun and partly conducted during the seven-year interregnum imposed on English radio drama, seeks to deconstruct the role played by the original art form in underpinning the ideologies of whiteness, and provide a greater understanding of the historical, cultural and political issues that contributed to the demise of SAE radio drama. In tracing the influence of British colonialism and apartheid on the formation and development of English radio drama in South Africa, it also attempts to explicate the relative ease with which ideology may infect an art

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<sup>1</sup> Future references to the "old", traditional form of South African English radio drama will be abbreviated to "SAE radio drama".

form, with potentially fatal results. Attention is finally given to the new, essentially South African form of English radio drama, introduced on SAfm in 2006. The possibility that the development of this promising new form may also be affected by ideological constraints imposed by the SABC is also considered.

### **1.3 THE CENTRAL PROBLEM**

The critical question initially raised within the ambit of this study is as follows:

#### **What factors led to the decline and demise in 1999 of South African radio drama in one language only?**

There is no single “real reason” for the cessation of South African English radio drama in 1999. The management of SAfm issued statements to the media, citing a decline in listenership to radio drama, and the relatively high cost of production as reasons for the closure, but neither explanation seemed convincing. SAE radio drama practitioners and listeners, who generally regarded the closure of the English radio drama department on SAfm as an error of judgment, questioned the motivation behind this apparent act of discrimination against an art form in one language only. It was argued that the advent of television had steadily eroded radio drama listenership ratings on both SAfm and Radio Sonder Grense<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, production costs of drama for both stations were similar, if not identical, yet listeners to Afrikaans radio drama continued to enjoy this form of entertainment on a regular, if reduced, basis. Why, it was asked, when English is commonly accepted as the lingua franca of South Africa, had radio drama on SAfm been abandoned, while its counterpart in Afrikaans, regarded by many as “the language of the oppressor”, had survived? Moreover, once the political climate at the SABC eased in the late nineteen eighties, the SAE drama department had eagerly, even joyously, grasped the opportunity of producing original South African plays by authors such as Athol Fugard, and expressly focused on discovering, encouraging and producing work that reflected the reality, past and present, of all South Africans. Given the rapidly changing demographic profile of SAfm, it was seen as ironical that the “new order” at the SABC had destroyed, rather than embraced, this attempt to develop a uniquely South African form of English radio drama. ICASA’s insistence on the re-introduction

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<sup>2</sup> Radio without borders.

of radio drama on SAfm in 2006, in order to comply with licensing regulations, may be seen as a vindication of the many criticisms voiced following the closure in 1999.

The difficult task of this study is to chart the development of a complex chain of historical events, ideologies, and attitudes, some peculiar to the culture and identity of first-language English-speaking listeners, which led to the cessation of SAE radio drama on SAfm in April 1999. Consideration will also be given to the adverse effect of decisions made by the public broadcaster which affected issues such as the closure of Springbok Radio in 1979, the relegation of radio drama to off-peak listening times, and the contribution made by private recording studios in producing serials, comedy shows and plays for broadcast

#### **1.4 THE RESEARCH HYPOTHESES:**

The following hypotheses emerged during the research process:

##### **1.4.1 SAE radio drama has been adversely affected by powerful political ideologies:**

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to identify the number of ideologies that influence an art form such as radio drama, in which the creative and technical processes involve a variety of individuals from different backgrounds, each contributing different skills. These would include the scriptwriter/adaptor, producer/editor, technical controller/s, and actor/s<sup>3</sup>. Large broadcasting corporations, such as the BBC and SABC, are bureaucratic by nature: many of the restrictions these organisations place on programme development and material broadcast are ideologically biased and thus hamper creative development. Unlike the film and television industry in this country, however, SAE radio drama remained relatively unaffected by the cultural imperialism of the United States, but the sum influence exerted by British colonial and Afrikaner Nationalist (apartheid) ideologies was both sustained and profound. SAfm's re-introduction of a revised form of English radio drama in 2006, in order to comply with licensing conditions imposed by ICASA, has

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<sup>3</sup> Due to time constraints, actors in radio drama are frequently given some discretion as to the portrayal of a character. Moreover, they may be called upon to generously ad-lib dialogue if the running time of the production falls short of the time-frame allotted to the programme.

led to the emergence of an essentially South African art form, but one confined by yet another ideological influence, namely that of African Nationalism.

#### **1.4.2 Issues of language, culture, and white supremacist ideology, precluded SAE radio drama from successfully developing as a uniquely South African art form prior to 1985.**

As shown by Hauptfleisch & Steadman in *South African Theatre* (1993:166), "Afrikaans, English and Black theatre have evolved different methods and attitudes in accordance with specific determining factors". Similarly, English, Afrikaans and African language radio drama have undergone a different process of development, each producing different responses to the influence of white supremacist ideology according to ethnic and linguistic factors. In an attempt to escape the severe restrictions imposed by the apartheid ideology of the SABC, SAE radio drama practitioners redoubled their earlier efforts to emulate, and even surpass, the work produced by the British Broadcasting Corporation. This resulted in the strengthening, rather than shedding, of the influence of British imperialism in the hearts and minds of English-speaking listeners of all cultures. While other language forms of South African radio drama succeeded in contributing towards the listener's sense of cultural identity, their English language counterpart developed a listenership still fossil-bound in its colonial beginnings. I hope to demonstrate this in the first and largely historical section of the dissertation by providing broad comparisons between the early development of SAE radio drama, and the same art form in Afrikaans and isiZulu. These historical overviews of the formative years of English, Afrikaans and isiZulu radio drama will demonstrate the dual nature of SAE radio drama's ideological infection, as referred to above, as well as revealing the cultural and political differences which were influential in the art form's demise.

The lifting of the cultural boycott imposed on South Africa during the apartheid era, and the access afforded by global technology to an ever-widening range of entertainment in the English language, meant that much of the drama broadcast in English either reproduced, or was similar to, dramatic work available in audio books, on the internet, and the BBC's channel 4. Attempts made by the SABC's English radio drama department during the late 1980's and '90's to create a new, multi-cultural identity for English radio drama failed to revive the flagging interest of existing listeners and bolster the ratings of SAE radio drama.

### **1.4.3 The SABC's decision to terminate radio drama on SAfm was precipitous, and represents a serious error of judgement by the public broadcaster.**

The cessation of SAE radio drama in 1999, officially due to a drop in listenership, failed to take into account a number of factors, as follows:

- the growing numbers of second-language English speaking listeners to SAfm;
- the medium's potential contribution towards transformation within a divided society;
- radio drama's important function as a platform from which new playwrights are able to launch their work;
- the time it would take for the older, first-language English speaking listener, accustomed to the "old" form of SAE radio drama, to adjust to the "new" form of radio drama, particularly the delivery of dialogue by second-language English speakers;
- the effect of the relegation of plays and serials to off-peak listening times, and reductions in the amount of drama broadcast;
- the insufficient attention paid to marketing the "new look" of SAE radio drama, which also played a part in the drop in listenership.

Given the commitment demonstrated by the SAfm drama department to the development of a creolized, essentially South African form of radio drama which would attract and serve the needs of the rapidly growing numbers of second-language English-speaking listeners, the decision to "axe" SAE radio drama can be seen as being both premature and misguided. Statements made by the SABC to the media following the last broadcast of SAE radio drama manifest a lack of will on the part of SAfm management to continue, allegedly due to the cost of production and low listenership appeal. It will be shown that this approach contrasts with that of the management of RSG, who decided that radio drama should continue on this station.

### **1.4.4 The ideological infection of an art form affects the worldview of its adherents:**

It will be argued that SAE radio drama achieved a high degree of artistic excellence but, due to ideological constraints, served to foster the belief in English-speaking

listeners<sup>4</sup> that “whiteness” functions as the norm in society and, as such, is aspirational. A discussion of *Squad Cars* (Chapter 4.5.1), arguably the most popular of all SAE radio drama series broadcast, briefly raises the issue of the continuity of art and life, and questions whether a production of this kind can exert an adverse effect on its audience.

## 1.5 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

### 1.5.1 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH

As stated above, the main focus of this dissertation is on the cultural, historical, and political factors affecting the development, decline and eventual demise of SAE radio drama. Particular emphasis is placed on the negative impact of “whiteness”, or white supremacist ideologies, on this once-popular art form. A Nexus search confirms that South African radio drama in English is a relatively new subject of study, which has suffered from a remarkable degree of critical and academic neglect. It should be noted that the same art form in Afrikaans has attracted a steady flow of interest, commencing as early as 1946 with an MA dissertation by J.D. Fuchs on *Die radiodrama: wese, vorm en verskyning in Suid-Afrika*. A number of MA dissertations and Doctoral theses have subsequently been completed on different aspects of radio drama as broadcast in several indigenous South African languages, including Afrikaans<sup>5</sup>, isiZulu<sup>6</sup>, isiXhosa<sup>7</sup>, and Setswana<sup>8</sup>, yet only one MA dissertation has been

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<sup>4</sup> This includes “not-white” listeners, such as those of South Asian descent, so-called “coloureds”, and black South Africans who listened to SAE radio drama, particularly during the Springbok Radio era.

<sup>5</sup> Schutte, J.H.T. (1952). *Die radio drama: histories-kritiese ondersoek*. DLitt, Nexus document no. 303369. University of the Orange Free State.

Odendaal, L.B. (1967). *Prinsipes van die radiodrama, soos afgelei van enkele Afrikaanse radiodramas*. MA thesis, Nexus document no.: 303472. University of Pretoria.

Malan, L.J. (1971). *Die Veraanskouliking in N.P. van Wyk Louw se hoorspel Dias*. MA thesis, Nexus document no.: 700645. University of Pretoria.

Zaayman, T. (1981) *Die gesproke woord en ander ouditiewe middele in N.P. Van Wyk Louw's radio dramas*. MA thesis, Nexus document No.: 812251; 788134. University of South Africa; Department of Afrikaans.

Giliomee, C.B. (1983). *Die Hoorspele van N.P. van Wyk Louw*. MA thesis.

<sup>6</sup> Msimang, C.T. (1983). *Folktale influence on the Zulu novel*. Unpublished MA-dissertation, University of South Africa, Pretoria.

Maphumolo, A.M. (2001). *DBZ Ntuli's Radio Trilogy*. Unpublished D.Phil-thesis. University of South Africa, Pretoria.

Brelage, E. (2002) *Die radiodrama in isiZulu met verwysing na die werk van D.B.Z. Ntuli*. MA-dissertation. Nexus Document No.: 994343. University of Pretoria; Department of African Languages.

<sup>7</sup> Makosana, N.E. (1991). *A comparative study of six Xhosa radio dramas*. Unpublished MA-dissertation, Nexus document no. 878306. University of Stellenbosch; Department of African Languages.

Gqibitole, K.M. *Creativity or control? A critical historical study of Xhosa Radio Drama: the tensions between cultural practice and political control between the 1950's and the 1990's*. D-Phil thesis. In progress. University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus.

completed based on a study of South African English radio drama. In 1991, Mariza Brooks of the University of the Orange Free State completed a MA dissertation entitled *A critical literary study of IDEM awards for radio drama in English*. Brooks details the history of the establishment and function of the IDEM radio drama scriptwriting awards<sup>9</sup> in 1980, followed by a critical literary study of the first nine prize-winning plays awarded the annual English radio drama prize during the awards' decade-long existence. The winning scripts were chosen on the basis of the following criteria:

- originality of thought and approach
- fullest use of the medium of sound in all its aspects
- dramatic content
- the script as script (no consideration given to the actual audio production).

In 1983 the original two categories for English and Afrikaans radio drama were expanded to include awards for radio plays in the Nguni group of languages (isiZulu and isiXhosa), and the Sotho group of languages (North Sotho and South Sotho), and the cash prize of R500 to the winner of each category was increased to R750. In 1987 the scope of the awards was further widened and the categories redesigned as follows:

- Best radio play or series in English or Afrikaans
- Best radio play or series in isiXhosa or isiZulu
- Best radio play or series in North/South Sotho or Tswana
- Best radio play or series in Venda or Tsonga

The connection between a study of the now defunct IDEM radio drama awards, and research focused on factors leading to the decline and demise of SAE radio drama, may appear tenuous. However, several observations related to my own research, can be drawn from Brooks' dissertation. They are as follows:

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<sup>8</sup> Seshabela, D.O. (2003) *Walter Ntsimane's portrayal of women in the radio drama Motlhabane*. Unpublished MA-dissertation. North-West University, Potchefstroom campus.

<sup>9</sup> These awards were launched in November 1980 at the instigation of the South African Scriptwriters' Association (SASWA), and sponsored by a paper manufacturing company known as Wiggins Teape.

- a fairly substantial pool of talented and experienced radio drama script-writers existed at this time (1980-1990); writers capable of producing creative, even experimental drama, and exploiting the potential of the aural medium by pushing the boundaries of technology, production, and the listeners' imagination;
- despite the stringent restrictions imposed by the SABC on subject matter, language, and cross-cultural interaction in radio drama, many of these script-writers succeeded in producing plays that conveyed valuable social comments, stirring the empathetic imagination of the listeners. For example, Brooks describes the theme of *Inside*, Jill Fenson's 1988 IDEM award-winning play, as being concerned with predators and victims, with sub-themes that "constitute the scriptwriter's comments on various social and moral evils, such as greed, lust and the abuse of a number of institutions, including marriage and power" (Brooks 1991:300). Nigel Vermaas's 1997 award-winning play entitled *The Day of the Trolleys* constitutes an outwardly humorous look at the potentially dangerous situations created by exploitation and abuse<sup>10</sup>.

Brooks (1991:7) comments in her introduction on the "restrictive and oppressive factors that influence radio, as well as television, in South Africa". Reference is also made by Brooks to Tony Ulyatt's professorial inaugural speech entitled *Theatre of the Mind/Theatre of the Mindless*, in which he argues for the removal of radio and television dramas from the "oppressive grip of a bureaucratic SABC". Ulyatt (1987:23) concludes as follows:

If broadcast drama in South Africa is to avoid becoming a cultural anachronism it must achieve congruence with the social environment and its historical moment. It must be taken from the repressive clutches of the bureaucracy so it can confront the realities of these times in this land.

A number of articles and papers, both published and unpublished, have also been written on the subject of radio drama in a number of South African languages. Elizabeth Gunner's *Wrestling with the present, beckoning to the past: contemporary Zulu radio drama* (2000a), and *Zulu radio culture* (2000b), have proved to be valuable sources of information and reflection on the development of isiZulu radio drama, while

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<sup>10</sup> Nigel Vermaas provided a tape of this play, as broadcast. These comments represent my response to the production, not that of Brooks.

a paper delivered at London University by Marisa Keuris entitled *Afrikaans Radio Drama in South Africa* (2000) has provided information on radio drama in Afrikaans. A significant contribution has also been made by Tony Ulliyatt's (1992) *Study of the impact of various ideologies on South African radio drama in English*, in that it provides both an affirmation of my own findings concerning the deleterious effect of ideologies on SAE radio drama, and invaluable statistics and information, all relevant to the task in hand. An article by Ulliyatt entitled *Ideology and South African Radio Drama in English* was later published in *Textures* (1995:19-31). Ulliyatt's earlier (1992) and more detailed paper draws on several unpublished works that he has generously provided as aids to this study. These are *The Howling Paraclete: South African radio drama in English* (1986a), *Ideology and South African radio drama in English* (1986b), and *Theatre of the Mind/Theatre of the Mindless: some observations on South African radio and television drama* (1987)<sup>11</sup>. Produced with the financial support of the Human Sciences Research Council, and research assistance by Debra Lourens and Mariza Brooks, Ulliyatt's (1992) *Study of the impact of various ideologies on South African radio drama in English* represents an impressive attempt to address the issue of radio drama's critical and academic neglect in South Africa.

The primary consideration of a radio drama project, initiated in 1985 by Prof. Ulliyatt under the auspices of the University of the Orange Free State, was to identify various areas of future research, and begin some preliminary work in certain of those areas. Seven possible approaches to South African radio drama in English were identified at the outset of this project:

1. the historical;
2. the bibliographical;
3. the critical;
4. the theoretical;
5. the ideological;
6. the comparative;
7. the miscellaneous.

Ulliyatt acknowledges both the interrelated nature and the "scope and diversity" (p.2) of these areas. Research material produced by the project covers several aspects of radio drama, as listed above. It includes one MA thesis<sup>12</sup>, two Honours research essays, three conference papers and one Honours course in radio drama. Ulliyatt's paper describes the research conducted by the project in order to identify some of the ideologies impacting on SAE radio drama, and the subsequent effect on the radio

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<sup>11</sup> Reference to these papers will also be made during the course of this dissertation.

<sup>12</sup> Mariza Brooks's critical and literary dissertation on the IDEM awards, discussed above.

drama process. This research was structured according to the five levels of ideology operating during the various phases of the broadcasting process, as proposed by Tomaselli, K. et al, in *Broadcasting in South Africa* (1989:2-4). These are:

1. programmes;
2. channels;
3. broadcasting institution;
4. legislation;
5. technology.

Modifications to Tomaselli's ideological scheme were effected, namely an inversion of the order of levels, with the incorporation of most of the technological level into the programme level, and the balance into the legislation level. Further, a five-component model of ideologies affecting the radio drama process at programme level is structured as follows:

1. the radio dramatist;
2. the play writing process;
3. the radio play production process;
4. the radio play transmission process;
5. the radio play listener/audience.

An audience typology that would aid further research into the fifth component, namely the radio drama listener's ideological stance, is also proposed, based on the two-audience scheme of (1) general public and (2) specialized audience, as promulgated by Merrill and Lowenstein (1979:106-110, cited by Ulliyatt 1992:30-34). A further breakdown of these two major audience types into three basic subgroups is proposed as follows:

1. the 'illiterates';
2. the 'pragmatists';
3. the 'intellectuals'.

My own dissertation on SAE English radio drama refers to, but is not structured according to, Tomaselli's ideological scheme, and does not take advantage of the research design as outlined by Ulliyatt. The broad scope of the research undertaken in this study, touching as it does on most aspects of SAE radio drama, necessitated the adoption of a holistic approach. This decision was made at the outset, prior to the discovery of Ulliyatt's work on the impact of ideologies in radio drama. The use of a research design specifically structured to facilitate work on one specific area was therefore precluded, but I am indebted to the work generated by the University of the Orange Free State's project on radio drama in English. It should be noted, however,

that both the approach and subject of this research differ substantially from other existing studies on SAE radio drama. As stated above, focus is placed on those cultural, historical and political factors that influenced both the popularity and eventual demise of the old form of English radio drama in 1999<sup>13</sup>.

Not only are white supremacist ideologies identified as having restricted the development of this dramatic sub-genre, but textual analysis and listeners' response to change suggests that radio drama may also be culpable of underpinning those ideologies in the receiver's imagination. The sub-sections below provide more detailed information on the content and form of the thesis.

### **1.5.2 METHODOLOGY**

The explanation for the closure of SAE radio drama given by the SABC was accepted at the outset of this research. Listenership to radio plays and serials had, indeed, steadily decreased over the years. No assumptions were made, however, as to the reason, or reasons, for this decline. In order to identify the cause of this loss of listenership, consideration was given to seven aspects of SAE radio drama that would bear investigation. Six of the seven were also identified by the radio drama research project of the University of the Orange Free State as work proceeded, namely

- the historical
- the technological
- the ideological
- the critical
- the theoretical
- the comparative

The inclusion of replies to a questionnaire completed by radio drama practitioners in 2002 contributes towards the empirical nature of this study, as does my own long-term association with the SABC as a listener and free-lance actor and writer<sup>14</sup>. Given the strong influence exerted by certain highly-motivated radio drama practitioners in

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<sup>13</sup> Ulliyatt's paper on the impact of ideology on SA radio drama in English was completed prior to the introduction of SAfm in 1995.

<sup>14</sup> . My personal and professional interest in radio drama has determined the chosen field of study and the methodology employed.

several language groups during the past, it was decided that the impact made by the dedication of these individuals, as it affected the development and continued success of those language forms of radio drama under comparison, merited attention. The seventh aspect of radio drama that may have some bearing on the problem, therefore, is

- the empirical

In order to demonstrate that the ideologically motivated “policies” of successive ruling parties have exerted an influence on broadcasting in general, and radio drama in particular, a linear, historical approach, in which the eras of broadcasting are clearly demarcated, has been adopted. Each era is divided into two phases of qualitative research, the first of which is largely historical, ideological, technological and non-empirical. The second phase focuses on radio drama: as such it is largely historical, comparative, critical, theoretical and empirical, but all seven aspects of research may overlap in each section. Care has been taken in considering the critical interpretation of the radio drama practitioners’ questionnaires to heed the observation made by Leon de Kock (2006:185) concerning discourse analysis, in which he suggests that there is always “a question of balance: how much weight one accord’s one’s own primary research data, and how much one’s own conclusions”. The responses from radio drama practitioners are extremely valuable for their insight and the respondents’ extensive experience of radio drama in general, and SAE radio drama in particular. As such, they deserve to be cited at length, and allowed to speak for themselves. This second phase of research deals in some detail with the five-component model identified by Ulliyatt (1992:21) as being those aspects of the programme level most affected by ideology. These are as follows:

- the radio dramatist
- the radio play writing process
- the radio production process
- the radio play transmission process
- the radio play listener/audience

The ambitious nature of research work in which parallels are drawn between the early development of radio drama in three different languages, with each section and sub-

section presenting topics worthy of further in-depth research, is acknowledged. My justification lies in the need to provide a broad historical overview as a means of tracing the influence of those political, cultural and social issues, which, having initially promoted the development of radio drama, also contributed to its eventual decline.

## **1.6 STRUCTURE OF STUDY**

### **CHAPTER 1**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Title of the study**
- 1.2 Aim of the study**
- 1.3 The central problem**
- 1.4 The research hypotheses**
  - 1.4.1 Hypothesis 1**
  - 1.4.2 Hypothesis 2**
  - 1.4.3 Hypothesis 3**
  - 1.4.4 Hypothesis 4**
- 1.5 Overview of research and methodology.**
  - 1.5.1 Overview of research**
  - 1.5.2 Methodology**
- 1.6 Structure of Study**

### **CHAPTER TWO:**

#### **2.1 RADIO DRAMA: THE NEED FOR RESEARCH**

The issue of academic and critical neglect of radio drama is discussed, and the need to recognise the valuable contribution made by this particular form of sound art in stimulating the imagination, and prompting “sympathetic identification” in the consciousness of the listener.

## **2.2 WHITENESS STUDIES**

Describes the beginnings and aims of a relatively new academic discipline referred to as Whiteness studies, which aims to deconstruct white supremacist ideology in its many forms, exposing those systems, structures and institutions which serve to underpin this ideology and the privileges of white power. The relevance of a discussion of this new form of scholarship to a dissertation on the now defunct form of SAE radio drama will be made evident in the course of this study.

## **2.3 THE NEED FOR POSTCOLONIAL RESEARCH IN WHITENESS:**

Suggests that the need exists for further postcolonial research in this new form of scholarship, particularly in South Africa, where we are well-positioned to contribute towards the task of examining social structures and institutions, such as the SABC, in which racial divisions have been entrenched and racial power promulgated.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **EARLY DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH AFRICAN BROADCASTING**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

A summary of the contents of Chapter 3 is provided, and mention made of the enthusiasm and excitement generated by the new medium of wireless broadcasting.

#### **3.1 HISTORICAL/IDEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

A brief history of the South African socio-political situation in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century is presented, highlighting the ideological influences of the two forms of colonial-era white power that shaped the course taken by broadcasting at this time. As Stephen Barnard (2000:220) observes, “[r]adio has been wilfully and artfully used down the years, especially by totalitarian states, to inculcate the dominant ideology of the state and its politics”.

Section 3.1 also serves as background and prelude to later historical events presented in 4.2. Note, however, that whereas in Chapter 3 the focus is on the effect of historical events and technological developments on the beginnings of broadcasting, in Chapter 4 the emphasis shifts to those social, political and ideological factors that have influenced, and continue to influence, the development of radio drama.

### **3.2 EVENTS PRIOR TO THE FIRST BROADCAST**

An outline of the most notable activities of amateur broadcasters and scientific contributions by South Africans before broadcasting began in 1924.

### **3.3 INTRODUCTION OF REGIONAL BROADCASTING STATIONS**

An account of the launch of the Johannesburg Broadcasting Service under the auspices of the Associated Scientific & Technical Societies of South Africa in 1924, followed by the Cape Broadcasting Service and the Durban Borough Council's Broadcasting Service in the same year.

### **3.4 NATIONAL BROADCASTING UNDER THE ABC**

Broadly details the period from 1927-1936, during which I.W.Schlesinger's African Broadcasting Company controlled and expanded the development of national broadcasting in South Africa.

### **3.5 THE FORMATION OF THE SABC**

An account of Sir John Reith's 1934 report on the viability of a public broadcasting service in South Africa, Parliamentary approval of the establishment of the South African Broadcasting Service in 1936, and the inauguration of a separate Afrikaans transmission service in 1937.

The chief sources of information referred to in this chapter are Eric Rosenthal's *You Have Been Listening...* (1974), and a publication issued by the SABC to celebrate 60 years of "broadcasting excellence" (1936-1996) entitled *The Voice – The Vision, the Sixty-Year History of the SABC*.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **SOUTH AFRICAN RADIO DRAMA**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The linear structure of this chapter and its division into six broadcasting eras, with the Springbok Radio era running concurrently with that of the “A” and “B” programme era<sup>15</sup>, is described. An explanation of the relevance of the overview of socio-historical and political events in each era, in order to demonstrate the effect of ideologies on radio drama’s development, is provided. The ephemeral nature of radio drama, and the concomitant difficulties facing the researcher, are also briefly discussed.

#### **4.1 EARLY EXTERNAL INFLUENCES ON SOUTH AFRICAN RADIO DRAMA**

An outline is given of the experimental developments in the art form, chiefly those that took place in Britain, Australia, and the United States of America, which influenced the beginnings of SAE radio drama.

#### **4.2 THE REGIONAL STATIONS ERA: 1924 – 1927**

In part an historical account of the causes of political and social tensions that existed between English and Afrikaans-speaking South Africans following the Anglo-Boer War, their influence on Afrikaner cultural identity, and the adoption of Afrikaans as an official language. The effects of these tensions on Afrikaans theatre and the emergent art form of radio drama during the regional stations era are considered, and mention made of the political events motivating the formation of the ANC in 1911. Also noted are the political changes as J.B.M. Hertzog’s Pact government comes to power in 1924, the year in which the regional broadcasting stations are launched.

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<sup>15</sup> In common parlance, the “A” programme referred to the English Service, and the “B” programme referred to the Afrikaans Service.

#### **4.2.1 ENGLISH RADIO DRAMA**

The beginnings of SAE radio drama are outlined, demonstrating the hegemonic influence of the English language on this art form in the very earliest years of regional broadcasting.

#### **4.2.2 AFRIKAANS RADIO DRAMA**

The more restricted beginnings of Afrikaans radio drama are detailed.

#### **4.2.3 ZULU RADIO DRAMA**

No opportunities existed for Zulu radio drama in the early years of broadcasting. The introduction of a variety show by the Zulu Versatile Company on the Durban Municipal Station is cited as an exception.

### **4.3 THE ABC ERA: 1927-1936**

An account is given of the insurmountable financial difficulties experienced by the three regional stations. This situation led to a request for help from the man regarded as the tycoon of the South African entertainment business, I.W. Schlesinger, who was granted permission by the SA government to form the African Broadcasting Company Ltd. Issues such as the rise of the National Party during this period, the effects of the "Great Depression" on the economy and cultural life of South Africa, and the introduction of further repressive legislation affecting the lives of the country's black citizens, serve to illustrate the prevailing conditions that affected the development of broadcasting and radio drama.

#### **4.3.1 ENGLISH RADIO DRAMA**

Describes the formation of the popular ABC Dramatic Company in 1928, providing examples of the dramatic material broadcast and details of the more prominent personalities involved in developing SAE radio drama.

#### **4.3.2 AFRIKAANS RADIO DRAMA**

This section records the determination of the Afrikaans broadcasters and radio drama practitioners to increase the airtime allocated to Afrikaans on the national broadcaster. Reference is made to the earliest Afrikaans radio dramas, and the personalities who emerged as prominent broadcasters and household names during this period.

#### **4.3.3 ZULU RADIO DRAMA**

No record exists of Zulu drama broadcast by the ABC.

#### **4.4 THE ENGLISH SERVICE or "A" PROGRAMME (1936-1986) and AFRIKAANS SERVICE or "B" PROGRAMME (1937-1986) ERA**

The South African Broadcasting Corporation took control of the airwaves on 1 August 1936, in accordance with the Broadcasting Act, No. 22 of 1936, with the financial assistance of a loan from the Suid-Afrikaanse Lewensassuransie Maatskappy (SANLAM). Political developments and cultural activities during this formative period are outlined, particularly those related to the development of South African broadcasting. An account of the role played by the SABC during the war years is included.

##### **4.4.1 ENGLISH SERVICE RADIO DRAMA**

Examples are provided of the variety of radio drama broadcast during this period. The organisational ideology of the SABC as it affected SAE radio drama and the material broadcast is discussed. Some comparisons are drawn between the different responses of Afrikaans and English radio drama to these restrictions, and a brief parallel is drawn between SAE radio drama and much professional theatre during the apartheid era.

##### **4.4.2 AFRIKAANS SERVICE RADIO DRAMA**

An account is given of the difficult task facing radio drama practitioners during the early years of broadcasting; namely, that of developing a new literary form in a relatively new language. The problems encountered in sourcing and encouraging new

writing in Afrikaans, and the translation and adaptation of work in other languages, are related. Comparisons are drawn between the challenges facing the Afrikaans radio drama department in finding material, and the plethora of English radio drama available for broadcasting.

#### **4.4.3 ZULU RADIO DRAMA**

This section discusses the struggle against almost untenable odds experienced in the establishment of broadcasting and radio drama in isiZulu. Focus is initially placed on the impressive contribution to African language broadcasting made by former schoolteacher, King Edward Masinga, during the formative years of Zulu radio drama. Employed by Hugh Tracey, manager of the Durban studios, on Christmas Eve 1941, Masinga dedicated himself to the promotion and preservation of traditional Zulu music and culture, and introduced the new aural art of radio drama to an enthusiastic and highly responsive black listenership. The role of other announcers and dramatists such as Hubert Sishi, particularly after the establishment of Radio Bantu in January 1960, and the growth of serialized radio drama, is discussed.

Textual sources for this section include news items featured in the SABC radio bulletin *RADIO*, later re-named *SABC* in 1952, a doctoral thesis entitled *D.B.Z. Ntuli's Radio Trilogy* by A.M. Maphumolo, and papers by Elizabeth Gunner on isiZulu radio drama, as referred to in the Introduction. Other sources include extracts from an historical taped recording of an SABC interview on 5 March, 1979, with King Edward Masinga (Appendix 1), first isiZulu announcer to be employed full-time by the SABC, and John Bryan's (1969) English Service series entitled *The Bantu People of Southern Africa*.

#### **4.5 THE SPRINGBOK RADIO ERA: 1950-1985**

The SABC's introduction of a "C" (that is, commercial) station in 1950, after five years of planning, is described. The changes that took place during this period, following the electoral victory of the National Party in 1948, receive brief attention. Examples of a typical "Springbok" week-day programme schedule is compared with those of the English and Afrikaans Service in order to illustrate the different ethos of each radio station, and the nature of the audience each served.

#### **4.5.1 SPRINGBOK RADIO DRAMA**

The popularity of SAE radio drama in both English and Afrikaans is linked to the success of this first commercial, dual-language station. Reference is made to a few of the most memorable serials, comedy shows and series broadcast. This section features a textual analysis of the first episode of the popular serial *Squad Cars*, and a copy of the script is provided as Appendix 2. Introduced by the Divisional Commissioner of the Witwatersrand Division, South African Police, Brigadier J.P.D. Vorster on the 30<sup>th</sup> August, 1968, the script reveals the racial prejudice and stereotypes that were accepted by the majority of white listeners as “normal”, and comments on the insidious nature of propaganda presented in the guise of entertainment. Also discussed are the effects of the cultural boycott on radio drama, and the SABC’s controversial closure of Springbok Radio.

I would ask that the copious footnotes, not only in this section but throughout the study, are seen as an attempt to convey a more detailed impression of the complex issues and events that have played a part in the story of South African radio drama.

#### **4.6 RADIO SOUTH AFRICA (1986-1995) AND RADIO SUID AFRIKA/AFRIKAANS STEREO ERA (1986-1996)**

The introduction of advertising on Radio South Africa and Radio Suid Afrika, formerly the “English Service” and “Afrikaans Diens”, is discussed, as are the effects of political propaganda and decision-making on the course of broadcasting. The changes in management and the progressive decisions made following the appointment of a new board in 1993 are described, together with an account of the action taken by the “new order” in order to attract a culturally diverse listenership to both stations.

##### **4.6.1 ENGLISH RADIO DRAMA**

Relates attempts by RSA to include Springbok Radio’s more popular serials, series, and comedy shows, the tentative beginnings of a new era in which stories featuring local settings and characters are broadcast, and the search undertaken by the drama

department in collaboration with COSAW<sup>16</sup> to discover and develop new writers from different cultural groups.

#### **4.6.2 AFRIKAANS RADIO DRAMA**

Similar efforts to discover new writers of Afrikaans radio drama, and workshops held in conjunction with the ATKV<sup>17</sup>, are briefly described. Roelf Jacobs and Robert Young attempt to compensate former listeners to Springbok serials and plays with a marked increase in drama on Radio Suid Afrika.

#### **4.7 SAFM (1995 - ) AND RADIO SONDER GRENSE (1996 - )**

Records the revisions that took place in broadcasting as a result of the change in the balance of political power after the 1994 democratic elections, including the decision to establish an independent Public Broadcaster and Broadcasting Regulator. Reductions and changes in staff in order to implement affirmative action, bolder attempts to broaden the appeal of both SAfm and RSG for all English and Afrikaans-speaking South Africans, the sale of six regional stations to private consortiums, the Commission of Enquiry Report (2006) into the "politically-driven" blacklisting of commentators and analysts, and the fluctuating listenership figures for SAfm are discussed.

##### **4.7.1 AFRIKAANS RADIO DRAMA**

A reduction in all forms of cultural programming, including radio drama, and the introduction of the annual RSG/SANLAM writing competition in 1997 is discussed. Examples of plays broadcast, particularly those by new writers and finalists in the radio drama writing competition are given, and a comparative analysis between the demographic profiles and listenership figures of SAfm and RSG is also provided.

##### **4.7.2 ENGLISH RADIO DRAMA**

Attempts by SAE radio drama practitioners to discover and encourage new writers with stories reflecting the South African experience from all cultural viewpoints are recorded

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<sup>16</sup> Congress of South African Writers

<sup>17</sup> Afrikaanse Taal- en Kultuurvereniging.

and examples provided. The decision to close the SAE drama department in April 1999, thus bringing to an end these early attempts to develop a local, hybrid form of English radio drama, is discussed. Efforts of various individuals and organisations to maintain an interest in English-language radio drama during the seven-year long interregnum are chronicled, and the difficulties of an emergent new form following the re-introduction of radio drama on SAfm are considered.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION**

The findings of the first phase of research demonstrate the influence of powerful political ideologies, which precluded the successful development of SAE radio drama as a uniquely South African art form prior to 1985.

A number of other conclusions are drawn from the study, as it attempts to illustrate the historical, political and social factors at play. Some of the most interesting are those that were least expected, concerning matters such as:

- the parallels that emerge concerning the structure of broadcasting, past and present, and the political influence exerted by successive South African ruling parties on decisions made and material broadcast by the SABC;
- the nature of “Whiteness” in a postcolonial clime;
- the final deciding factor that led to the closure of SAfm’s radio drama department in 1999;
- the ideological constraints that continue to affect SA English language radio drama since its resurrection, at ICASA’s insistence, in 2006;
- the need for new productions and new ways of imagining if the art form is to achieve its true potential.

Finally, the early beginnings of the difficulties facing the public broadcaster in 2009 are evident in the body of this work. I suggest that the listing of the crises affecting the SABC and inclusion of comments from those most closely concerned is warranted, therefore, particularly in view of the historical importance and possible future impact of these recent unusual events.

## CHAPTER 2

### 2.1 RADIO DRAMA: THE NEED FOR RESEARCH

*Academics, media theorists and writers in most cultures have not fully appreciated that the medium of sound has provided an environment in which a new storytelling genre has been born.*

*(Crook T. 2001:3)*

Media theorists and academics worldwide have neglected radio drama as an area of research, prompting Tim Crook's description of the medium as being "the most unappreciated and understated literary form of the twentieth century" (2001:3). In an earlier, preliminary essay on the subject entitled *International radio drama – social, economic and literary contexts*, Crook (1999:8) expands on the subject of radio drama's neglect, highlighting the fact that "a famine of research cuts across every discipline", adding that "[t]here are only a few isolated examples of published cultural, sociological, and literary analysis" (p.8).

Existing research and criticism largely emanates from and covers the development of radio drama in "first world" countries, such as Britain and the United States of America. Crook compares the plethora of information on radio drama in these countries with the lack of research in the art form in Asian, African and Latin American cultures, suggesting that this gap is evidence of "the perpetuation of a cultural apartheid based...on a sub-conscious and explicit belief in national or racial superiority" (p.20). Our country's history has shown that "cultural apartheid" does not only create divisions between whites and blacks, but between blacks and blacks, and whites and whites. The apartheid government policy facilitated the study, use and development of Afrikaans in all its forms, including radio drama. As discussed in Chapter 1.5.1, Afrikaans radio drama has attracted a steady stream of academic interest, commencing as early as 1946 with an MA dissertation by J.D.Fuchs on *The radio play: nature, form and appearance in South Africa*. Once the political climate at the SABC showed signs of reform, academic dissertations on aspects of Zulu, Xhosa, Sesotho and Venda radio drama have been produced, laying solid foundations for future research. SAE radio drama, however, remains the "Cinderella" medium, with the exception of the remarkable work of Prof. A. Ulyatt, and his students at the University of Free State. In

an article entitled *English radio drama in South Africa*, Mariza Brooks (1994:20) refers to the degree of critical and academic neglect suffered by South African radio drama as “incredible”, given the “large public demand for radio dramas” at that time. Brooks cites the research undertaken by The South African Radio Drama Project of the English Department at the University of the Orange Free State, as a good example of work started in this field. The programme is described by Brooks (1994:20) as involving

the investigation of theoretical bases, methodological approaches and practical implementation of radio and television drama projects undertaken in Canada and Great Britain; the acquisition of recordings of plays, scripts and critical materials, and regular visits to the SABC archives in Johannesburg to gather information towards a South African radio drama bibliography.

Brooks provides details of a course in radio drama introduced in 1986 as part of the English Honours degree, and a Radio Drama Seminar held at the University of the Orange Free State on 13 May 1985. She also makes the observation that “the SABC Archives in Johannesburg is the only source of information with regard to bibliographic references on numerous microfilms” (p.21). Not mentioned is the fact that research in radio drama in all South African languages has been compromised by the public broadcaster’s failure in the past to preserve important material stored in the archives. Although the SABC Sound Archives retains a fair number of recordings, and is able to provide restricted information on English and Afrikaans radio drama, many valuable recordings appear to have been sold, lost or destroyed. Particular difficulty is encountered when attempts are made to unearth material on African Languages radio drama from these archives, giving further credence to Crook’s reference to “cultural apartheid”.

Another reason for the dearth of research in South African radio drama, as suggested by Brooks, is that radio drama is a relatively new literary area, one that lacks an appropriate critical vocabulary, and has yet to gain critical academic acceptability. The closure of the English radio drama department on SAfm in April 1999, and the seven-year interregnum which followed, has also played a part in this continued neglect.

Addressing the past neglect of SAE radio drama as a research subject represents a challenge, but other issues concerning sound itself present interesting avenues of

research. In *Senses of Culture* (2000:213), editors Sarah Nuttall and Cheryl-Ann Michael pose several questions as follows:

- What is sound?
- How does it work its way through cultural study, which so often privileges the word and the image?
- What might the relationship be between the written, the oral, and the aural?
- What different forms of listening are there?

Perhaps the most compelling reason for further research on this subject arises from Crook's description of audio drama as "a fast route to the centre of human consciousness and psychological engagement", one that raises questions such as:

- What are the potential benefits of radio drama listenership?
- How does the psychological impact of audio drama differ from that on TV?
- Can this art form contribute towards transformation and the goal of a non-racist society?

The psychological impact of the voice when placed within an emotive context, aided by a richly semiotic acoustic, is borne out by the traumatic experiences, and high turnover, of audio-editors during the Truth and Reconciliation hearings<sup>18</sup>. In a preface to her poem *The Sound Engineer*, Ingrid de Kock comments on this phenomenon: listening intently to truth's sound bite, and editing accounts of a brutal former reality, exacted an exhausting emotional toll on the listener. Through sound, an intense process of "imaginative identification" took place between the listeners and voices of victims. The lack of imaginative and sympathetic identification with the other has been described by Mike Marais (2000:59), in an article on J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*, as leading to violence within society. Following Jane Taylor (1999:2)<sup>19</sup>, Marais posits a relationship between the European Enlightenment's legacy of the autonomy of the individual, resulting in the divorce of self and other, and the violence and lack of ethical action experienced in contemporary South African society.

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<sup>18</sup> Ingrid de Kok also states in her preface to *The Sound Engineer* in *Terrestrial Things* that "[o]f the professionals engaged in Truth Commission reporting, the highest turnover was apparently among reporters editing sounds for radio" (2002:33).

<sup>19</sup> In a *Mail & Guardian* (23-29 July 1999, p.2) review of *Disgrace*, Taylor refers to "a sealing of imaginative identification that has been a necessary precondition for us to engage in the long-term and sustained business of slaughter".

An article by Graham Linscott in the *Natal Mercury* (2002:9) argues that our nation is in need of healing: social ills such as murder, rape and child rape are “rooted in the dysfunctionality of a society that has experienced the destruction of old social orders, rapid urbanisation and a prolonged phase of political and criminal violence”. I would argue that the lack of imaginative identification with the other is crucial to these issues: we urgently need, as part of the healing process, to raise the level of moral and ethical reasoning at all levels of society. As a “fast route to the centre of human consciousness and psychological engagement” (Crook 2001:ix), audio drama’s potential for arousing the listener’s “imaginative identification” with the other begs further exploration.

## **2.2 WHITENESS STUDIES:**

*A new social movement that seeks to expose and dismantle the machinations of White Power...needs a constant flow of analysis and theoretical debate in order to comprehend the ways in which racism is intrinsically interconnected with other forms of social division.*

*(Ware & Back 2002:13)*

The journey towards a non-racist society is not an easy one. In the introduction to *Out of Whiteness*, Ware & Back (2002:8) warn that the route leading to this race-free destination is “torturous, dangerous and unpopular”, adding that they “look to the situation in South Africa for evidence of how difficult but how necessary this vision continues to be for progressives trying to rebuild that country” (pp.8-9).

However, it has been in the United States, rather than South Africa, that a new scholarship described as “Whiteness Studies” has emerged, offering possibilities for research in the subject of whiteness as it affects almost every academic discipline. The broad strategic aim of this new scholarship is the deconstruction of whiteness; that is, probing its many facets, calling into question its hegemonic structure, and exposing the “historical and contemporary devices” (2002:5) used to maintain those systems, structures and institutions that serve to underpin the ideology and privileges of white power.

Whiteness first came under critical scrutiny by one of its own in film scholar Richard Dyer's seminal essay entitled *White*, published in the Autumn 1988 issue of the British Film journal *Screen* (Vol. 29:445-464). In subjecting the depiction of white characters in three films<sup>20</sup> to close, innovative reading, Dyer thrust whiteness into the limelight, revealing it as a culturally constructed subject, and interrogating its seemingly invisible yet all-encompassing influence. Kuchta (1998:1) cites Julien & Mercer's (1988:6) statement that Dyer also "inaugurate[d] a paradigmatic shift" in film and cultural studies "by precisely registering the re-orientation of ethnicity". This seminal moment in British cultural studies "offered the theoretical ground for interrogating whiteness in other areas of cultural inquiry" (p.1). Nine years later Dyer (1997:x) expanded on his original essay in a book-length study also entitled *White*, focusing on photography and film to illustrate his claim that "[w]hite people create the dominant images of the world and don't quite see that they thus construct the world in their image". *White*, as described by López (2005:3), "has emerged as an ur-text that has generated much commentary and discussion as well as subsequent studies".

Toni Morrison's (1988) *Playing in the Dark*, widely regarded as the founding text of North American whiteness studies, examines "the impact of notions of racial hierarchy, racial exclusion, and racial vulnerability and availability on non-blacks who held, resisted, explored or altered those notions" (p.11) through the medium of literature and the literary imagination. As an African American writer living in a "genderized, sexualized, wholly racialized world" (p.4), Morrison's personal and professional experience leads her to consider "what happens when other writers work in a highly and historically racialized society" (p.4), and ask "When does racial "unconsciousness" or awareness of race enrich interpretive language, and when does it impoverish it?" (p.xii). These reflections precede a proposal that a new area of research join the existing and well-established study of the effects of racism on the object of racial policies and attitudes: the study of the impact of racism on those who perpetrate and perpetuate it. Morrison (pp.11-12) contends that

[t]he scholarship that looks into the mind, imagination, and behaviour of slaves is valuable. But equally valuable is a serious intellectual effort to see what racial ideology does to the mind, imagination and behaviour of masters.

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<sup>20</sup> *Jezebel*, *Simba* and *Night of the Living Dead*.

Morrison concedes that historians, anthropologists, psychiatrists, social scientists and literary theorists had already begun work on the subject of whiteness. However, her call for an intensified study of racially inflected language in American literature, together with Richard Dyer's study in *White*, is credited with setting in motion the "first wave" of whiteness studies, which sought to expose the invisibility, privilege, "normativity", hegemony and history of whiteness. Genealogies of whiteness unearthed by a wide range of theorists, including David R. Roediger, Ricky Lee Allen, Les Back, Vron Ware and Melissa Steyn, suggest that the "making" of whiteness has taken place over a period of 500 years, beginning with the Renaissance voyages of discovery. Allen (2001:478) states that

European thought gave rise to white supremacy during the age of imperialism by constructing perceptions of humans along a measuring stick that read "civilized" on one white end and "natural" on the darkened other.

Citing the socio-historical studies of scholars such as Anthony Giddens and Immanuel Wallerstein, Allen (2001:476) argues that the global expansion of capitalism has been "coextensive" with European imperialism, facilitating the spread of white supremacy as a system that not only constructs global relations, but

confers unearned power and privilege on those who become identified as white while conferring disprivilege and disempowerment on those who become identified as people of color.

One of the challenges facing the late nineties "second wave" of work on whiteness, as identified by Mike Hill (1997:3) is the "epistemological stickiness and ontological wiggling immanent in whiteness". Perhaps the most disconcerting aspect of this "ontological wiggling" is the way in which whiteness re-invents itself, an aptitude that poses a threat to even the most objective white critic. The resulting conflict raises the question, as posed by Hill, as to whether "the political force of white writing can be separated from its political symptoms" (p.3). A connection with this conflict may be found in the subsequent development of several different trends within the field of Whiteness studies. A group referred to as the New Abolitionists have as their manifesto the complete abolition of all forms of whiteness, while other theorists argue for an end not only to whiteness, but to race itself.

Another faction favours the retention of race as a useful index, together with a reformed white identity devoid of racist and supremacist connotations, an equal of the

not-white other. This adoption of a middle-ground approach presents its own difficulties: as Ware & Back (2002:28) ask, how do we separate the descriptive term “white” from the ideologically charged “White”? Do we not run the risk of reifying the concept of race itself if we simply expose and illuminate the hegemonic impulse of whiteness, and its status as a social construct? Ware and Back’s goal is the abolition of “the odious confines of caste, race, and breed” (p.32), a vision which brooks no compromises, exceptions or half-measures, but looks forward to a utopian future in which all forms of racism and race-thinking cease to exist. Their description of whiteness as a racial category which cannot exist in isolation and should be “comprehended and analysed as a purely relational construct” (p.5), lends credence to the argument that once the primacy of whiteness is eradicated, the threat of forms of so-called “reverse racism” feared by many white South Africans would also fall away, and the goal of a non-racist society could finally be achieved. Ware (2002:27) cogently argues that

If the twenty-first century is to transcend the color line inherited from earlier social, economic, political and cultural formations, a progressive, forward-looking politics of social justice should embrace the will to abandon “race” as any kind of useful category, alternative or otherwise.

The undoing of this deeply entrenched system of race privilege may prove to be a lengthy process, but it must be transformed, “even if the theoretical or methodological details are not immediately clear” (p.27). The difficulties of achieving the goals of the New Abolitionism project are, however, acknowledged, being “in reality as long-term and as far off as those of any social movement for emancipation from oppression, injustice and exploitation” (p.8).

Despite differences that exist within this social movement, or field of study, theorists share the “first-wave” commitment to expose the invisibility and “normativity” of whiteness, and its widely accepted status as humanity’s norm.

Another challenge facing the “second-wave” phase of study, as foreseen by Hill (1997), is to confront “the face of white terror”, a commonplace event for race victims, but a salient exercise for the white male critic whose voice, however conciliatory and “neutral”, has tended to dominate white studies thus far. Hill offers the Oklahoma City bomber, the blonde-haired, blue-eyed Timothy McVeigh, and other WASP (White

Anglo-Saxon Protestant), militants as witness to the fact that “to be an American is to be...both terrified and terrifying” (p.3). The tragic events of 9/11 have shifted focus from the white terror within the United States to the “war on terror” without, but the US government’s immediate and aggressive military response has, ironically, served to expose the full horror of terror’s white face<sup>21</sup>. White South Africans may wish that our country’s list of individual and state-sponsored acts of white terror could be consigned to history, but certain images imprinted on the nation’s psyche resist erasure: the “Wit Wolf”, Eugene Terreblanche, Dr. Wouter Basson, and Eugene de Kock still loom large in my own memory. Even now, arbitrary acts of violence such as those committed by the teenagers known by the media as the “Waterkloof Four”<sup>22</sup>, are reminders that to be a South African is also to be both “terrified and terrifying”. The need for an “intellectual effort” to address the effects of race ideology on both oppressed and oppressor, as envisaged by Morrison, assumes urgency in a country still divided by race.

As a South African woman living in a “genderized, sexualized, wholly racialized world”, my personal and professional experience has offered some insight into the effect of racial ideology on radio drama and the imagination, attitude and opinions of its listeners. The act of tracing the historical development of this once-popular art form reveals the epistemological, ontological and logical structures of cultural imperialism, and the extent to which the colonial imperative infected, and subsequently affected, a seemingly innocuous art form. Representations of blackness were elided or, as highlighted in Morrison’s study of American literature, reduced to the level of function, “as tropes employed in the construction of white identity” (López 2005:3). It will be shown that, working within certain stringent social and political constraints, radio drama practitioners produced an entertaining art form and cultural discourse in which whiteness achieved invisibility as the accepted norm.

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<sup>21</sup> López points to the “collective myopia” of U.S. whiteness scholars regarding that country’s “involvement in historical colonialisms and the neo-colonial relationship it maintains today with many of its minority populations” (2005:5).

<sup>22</sup> The “Waterkloof Four” refers to four white schoolboys - Christoff Becker, Frikkie du Preez, Gert van Schalkwyk, and Reinach Tied – pupils at the prestigious Waterkloof High School in Pretoria, who were found guilty of the apparently racist murder of an unidentified man and the assault of another on December 2, 2001. (Report: Louis Oelofse, *Mail & Guardian Online*, 25 July 2006).

### 2.3 THE NEED FOR POSTCOLONIAL RESEARCH IN WHITENESS:

Fundamental questions on issues concerning identity and the representational power of whiteness in the colonial and postcolonial context have arisen during this research process, some of which may appear to be tangential to the subject under study, but are relevant to the development of a new, hybrid form of sound art and the transformation of society, and, as such, invite further research. In his introduction to *Postcolonial Whiteness*, Alfred J. López (2005) poses two such questions: Firstly, he asks, what happens to whiteness after empire? That is, what happens to whiteness after it loses its colonial privileges? Secondly, to what extent do white cultural norms or imperatives remain embedded in the postcolonial or post-independence state as part – acknowledged or not – of the colonial legacy? He points to the dependence on the ideology of white Western superiority of both colonized and colonizers in a postcolonial country, and the need that exists for these fellow citizens in a post-independence state to face the unpleasant truth of “their own complicity in the telling, and believing in, the cultural lie of colonial whiteness” (p.4). Describing this moment as a “bitter epiphany”, one that is indispensable for the future health of both the postcolonial state and world as a whole, López argues that “such a facing-down of colonial ghosts is crucial to the task of constructing an integrated postcolonial subject” (p.5).

Given the highly racialized nature of our own post-apartheid and postcolonial society, it is, perhaps, surprising that relatively few South African scholars have accepted the challenge of “facing down colonial ghosts” through the medium of whiteness studies. As we emerge from a past in which racist divisions were legally entrenched by a white minority, South Africans are well-positioned to contribute towards the task of examining social structures and institutions in which racial power was promulgated, and assess the long-term effects of white supremacist rule on a multi-cultural society. The response of post-mastery whiteness to the loss of power and privilege in our nascent democratic society invites further research. Also of interest is the response to the acquisition of power and privilege of the middle-class, non-white subject who “simultaneously identifies with the white ideal and [yet] is radically alienated from it” (López 2005: 17-18).

Valuable contributions of special relevance to my own study have, however, been made by cultural theorists such as Melissa Steyn, Sarah Nuttall and Liese van der Watt. Steyn (2001:3), maps “the emergence of patterns of signification”, dating back to the ancient and medieval periods, which have contributed towards the myth of European supremacy. This phenomenon is described by Steyn as “the Master narrative of whiteness” (p.3). The author of this book-length text also explores the psychological adjustments made by white South Africans as they attempt to accommodate political change. Steyn analyses responses to questionnaires, and broadly categorizes the narratives that emerge as her respondents attempt to describe what it means to be white in the new South Africa. Political change and the advent of democracy have brought about a complex process involving social adjustment and the renegotiation of identities: South Africans of all cultures are, as Steyn observes, “engaged in one of the most profound collective psychological adjustments happening in the contemporary world” (p.xxi).

Steyn's interest in the changing registers of whiteness is also evident in Sarah Nuttall's (2001) *Subjectivities of Whiteness*, a critique of whiteness in South African autobiographical literature. This essay invites comparison with Morrison's study of American literature in that both focus on non-black writing and the effect of various forms of racial practice on those who, as described by Morrison and quoted above, either “resisted, explored or altered those notions”. However, Nuttall describes her essay as departing from other African-, US-, and British-based studies in that it “is not about whiteness per se” (p.115), but focuses on the construction of whiteness in South African autobiographies and other narratives of the self. In examining selected texts by prominent political activists and authors opposed to racial oppression, the essay

draw[s] out the particularities of the South African context and the ways in which whiteness emerges within the tropes of looking, watching, masking, concealment and secrecy in these texts. (p.115)

Morrison's *Playing in the Dark* illuminates the white critical neglect of the presence and formative influence of the real or invented “Africanist” persona in American literature, and the relegation of the black subject to the margins of the writer and reader's imagination. By contrast, the heightened state of awareness of the white self in relation to the not-white other revealed in the work of exceptional South Africans such as Ruth First, Gillian Slovo, J.M. Coetzee and Antjie Krog, is the result of stringent legal

restrictions placed on social interaction and political affiliations across the colour line. The object of fear and desire occupies a central position in the writer's consciousness, drawn from the shadows by the monstrous inequities of apartheid. Evident, too, is a desire to be less white in order to distance the self from such injustice and be less visible as part of the system. Nuttall observes that her chosen texts are written by those "most invested in changing registers of whiteness" (2001:117), and suggests that the post-apartheid production of whiteness in new registers is a subject that invites wider study.

In *Senses of Culture*, Nuttall (2000:10) discusses the tendency for cultural studies in South Africa to focus on "the over-determination of the political, the inflation of resistance, and the inflections given to race as a determinant of identity". She argues for a re-imagining of the politicised paradigms of community, resistance and race through the "creolization" of cultural forms, with its emphasis on fusion, connections and commonalities. This process of re-imagining "involves a rethinking of intellectual and artistic work in South Africa" (p.13), a suggestion which seems to find a reply in Liese van der Watt's (2004) *Exiting Whiteness, Unthinking Race, Imagining Different Paradigms*. This essay examines ways in which the visibility of whiteness can be achieved through the medium of South African visual culture. Van der Watt (2004:93) follows Paul Gilroy, citing his injunction in *Against Race* (2000:252) to think of identity as "a noun of process", and

let go of our obsession with origins and fixity and to find alliances based on "complex conception[s] of sameness" that accommodate, rather than repress, differences.

In Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks's (2000) psychoanalytic study of race and racism entitled *Desiring Whiteness: A Lacanian Analysis of Race*, race is also described as a practice of visibility rather than a social construct, lending credence to Van der Watt's argument that an exit from whiteness studies and entry into a race-free world can be found if we divest ourselves of racial looking and explore different paradigms that change the way we see. In a detailed account and critique of various South African art exhibitions and individual art works that interrogate racial signification, Van der Watt explores Seshadri-Crooks contention that a new practice of "adversarial aesthetics" would destabilize racial looking. If race is primarily a practice of visibility, Van der Watt argues, it may best be countered by pitting the visual against the visual. As illustration,

she cites the work of Berni Searle, an artist whose portrayal of her own mixed identity “disavows the logic of racial thinking by asserting the self as a changing and fluctuating entity, thus proposing powerful ways to harness the visual’s power to help us see differently” (p.93).

Van der Watt cogently argues for visual culture’s potential for identity activism, “once released from its scopic regime of classification and fixity”, but her valorisation of the visual, and the question mark raised over the efficacy and validity of social theory’s deconstruction of race, seems somewhat contentious. While skin tone and other biologically determined attributes act as visible markers for the socially constructed concept of race, “racist viewing” is not only skin deep, being founded on more complex issues of language, culture, class, ethnicity and gender. I would argue that the task of dislodging the “resilience” and “intransigence” of racism, entrenched within the binary thinking of black/white, calls for intervention from all quarters, including critical theory and analysis, operating in tandem with creative forms of identity activism in all the arts. Both the written and spoken word may challenge the way we see, but cultural study has tended to privilege sight over sound, leaving interesting oral and aural spaces still to explore. Free from issues of “categorization” and “fixity” imposed on older forms of sound art, ground-breaking work emerging from a new generation of South African slam poets and rap artistes not only explores issues of identity, but shows signs of challenging entrenched gender and racial stereotypes. The progress of this work invites documentation and analysis. The re-introduction of radio drama on SAfm, and the introduction of the art form on Radio Lotus and Bush Radio, also offers a new generation of scriptwriters the opportunity of producing work that breaks with the past by challenging, rather than reinforcing, racial stereotypes.

How, then, does the voice affect us? The research of Drs. Murray Cox and Alice Thielgaard of the Shakespeare Institute<sup>23</sup>, working with psychiatric patients in Broadmoor, demonstrates the therapeutic power of the spoken word, married to mutative metaphor, to carry thought across seemingly unbridgeable divides. My study seeks to affirm the belief that the medium of radio not only offers greater scope to the imagination than television, but also has the potential to build, blur or break boundaries. If domination affects the mind and body of both “slave” and “master” as

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<sup>23</sup> See Cox, Murray & Thielgaard, Alice (1994) *Shakespeare as Prompter: The amending imagination and the therapeutic process*, and Cox, Murray & Thielgaard, Alice (1997) *Mutative Metaphors in psychotherapy*.

referred to above, can we afford to ignore the positive powers of the voice to stir the imagination and dislodge the “intransigence” of race? Alfred J. López (2005:5) poses a rhetorical question, asking whether

whiteness, and its lingering, if somewhat latent, hegemonic influence over much of the world does not occupy some as-yet-unexamined corner of the “colonial unconscious”.

He contends that this is “a continuing malaise that many postcolonial whites (and non-whites) intuit but few are willing to address” (p.5). Ways are needed, then, in which to treat this elusive condition. Further research is needed in oral and aural art forms that also offer “alternative paradigms” which stir our “colonial unconscious”, and dislodge the image that Bachelard (1969:xix)<sup>24</sup> describes in the introduction to *The Poetics of Space* as having “touched the depths before it stirs the surface”, thus changing the way we think, feel and see.

The interrogation of my own white identity has been the result, rather than the impetus, of my research into the development and demise of SAE radio drama. Although whiteness is not my chosen field of study, its imperial impulse threads its way through the historical accounts, interviews, and analyses of recordings. I found myself researching the social construction of whiteness, working within an area Les Back (2002:36) refers to the “gray zone” in which “uncomfortable congruencies” exist between ethnographer and informant. I not only drew on the good will of former colleagues to further my research into radio drama, but also exploited my privileged access to their confidence in my like-minded worldview. Despite this new role as race traitor, my intention is not to portray SAE radio drama practitioners as “sherry-guzzling, hounds-tooth coated, colonial Nazis”, to borrow a phrase from the veteran actor/voice artist, Mike Mayer (2005:3). On the contrary, the majority were liberal-minded individuals, who would reject with horror the notion that their satin-cloaked voices and “slegs blankes” stories played any part in apartheid. As a radio drama practitioner for almost three decades, my professional integrity is also subject to scrutiny. My suggestion is that the “unwitting” act of complicity with a racist-based policy is more difficult to avoid or identify than instances of outright racist abuse or discrimination, yet the insidious effects of an ideologically-aligned art form may inflict greater harm.

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<sup>24</sup> Cited by Cox, M. & Theilgaard, A. 1994:223.

It will be shown that the “audio space”<sup>25</sup> created by English radio drama during the apartheid regime in South Africa was, of necessity, confined to reflecting a white space within a multi-racial society. This “white space” created within the consciousness and imagination of the listener was largely situated in some nebulous Never-Never land, far removed from the disturbing reality of a society that, though legally segregated, was essentially multi-cultural in terms of composition and everyday experience. The political constraints of the time, as observed and implemented by the SABC, ensured that actors, and even audiences attending “live recordings” of radio shows, were separated in accordance with racial divisions. While many white actors were prepared to play black characters, the majority of producers were sensitive to the fact that the average actor played them as caricatures, rather than real people. Before the stranglehold of apartheid began to slip in the late 1980’s, the restrictions placed on the work selected for broadcast, with few exceptions, made it impossible to produce radio drama that reflected the South African reality. Research reveals the extent to which radio drama practitioners and listeners were “blinded by the white” (Bowles, J. 2001:1), and the degree to which an art form may be manipulated into serving a totalitarian regime. The self-reflexive nature of this study necessitates the rejection of stereotyped assumptions and prejudice, together with a racist-based sense of loyalty. Mumby (1993), cited by Steyn (2001: xxxiii), explains the difficult nature of this process, as follows:

[A]s theorists and researchers, we are never neutral, dispassionate observers of behavior but are always heavily implicated in the construction of the narratives (petit and grand) that provide insight into the social reality that we inhabit.

There is some irony in the fact that the study of whiteness is barely in its infancy in a country that has performed the remarkable feat of shedding the yoke of white power and introducing democracy, yet remains a society stratified by race. The need urgently exists for further academic research that will nullify whiteness as a discourse of power and form of privileged identity. My hope is that this study of an aural art form created within the confines of whiteness will make an incremental contribution to both the new scholarship of whiteness studies and my chosen subject, the demise of SAE radio drama.

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<sup>25</sup> Crook, T. (2001: 6), following Marshall McLuhan, refers to the spoken word as “audio space”.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **EARLY DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH AFRICAN BROADCASTING**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The following brief history of the beginnings of broadcasting in South Africa represents an attempt to:

- convey some idea of the enthusiasm, even passion, generated by wireless broadcasting amongst those individuals who recognised the potential of this exciting new medium, and lent their talents towards developing radio as a source of entertainment, education and information;
- outline the historical development of different stations, acknowledge the contribution made by the private sector, and detail the passage of successive eras prior to and including the introduction of public service broadcasting under the auspices of the SABC;
- explain the hegemonic control exerted by English language speakers during the early years of radio, both before and after the launch of the first service in 1924.

The historical and ideological background outlined in section 3.1 demonstrates that the political influence, economic power, and technological expertise of English speakers, whether South Africans or British colonists, dominated the formative years of broadcasting in South Africa. It also suggests that the close association formed with the British Broadcasting Company, later to become the British Broadcasting Corporation, perpetuated the influence of British culture and Imperial ideology on South African English language radio programmes. Section 3.2 briefly refers to contributions made by South Africans to the development of broadcasting, while sections 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5 record the formation of different stations and the eventual launch of the Public Service Broadcaster in 1936.

### 3.1 HISTORICAL/ IDEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND:

The pre-eminence of English-language speakers during the introduction of “wireless telegraphy”, and regional radio stations in South Africa, was largely in accord with similar developments in other countries. David Crystal (1997:75) reflects on this phenomenon as follows:

When the first radio stations were coming on air, no one seems to have spent any time wondering whether or not they should broadcast in English. There was plenty of discussion about what **kind**<sup>26</sup> of English should be used, of course; but the choice of English in the first place was simply not an issue.

Crystal adds that by the end of the nineteenth century, a “climate of largely unspoken opinion” (p.75) had developed, which made English “the primary or sole means of expression” and “the natural choice for progress” (p.75). His comments on the lack of conscious justification for the role of English in the decision-making processes at that time may be seen as illustrating the invisibility of “Whiteness” and linguistic Imperialism. The world status of English that led to its primacy being “taken for granted” (p.75) is largely attributable to two factors, namely the expansion of British colonial power and “the emergence of the United States as the leading economic power of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century” (p.75). The linguistic consequences of the Industrial Revolution in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century were also influential, in that major technological and scientific achievements, being largely of British origin, added “tens of thousands of words to the English lexicon” (p.72). This terminology provided access to new technical knowledge, empowering first language English speakers, and ensuring that foreigners who wished to share in this information and expertise would need to acquire some competency in English as well.

Historical and ideological conditions unique to South Africa were also to contribute towards the primacy of the English language and culture in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The development of the gold and diamond areas in the Witwatersrand in the 1870's brought an immense influx of Europeans to South Africa during the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, one in which “nearly half a million immigrants, many of them English-speaking, arrived in the country” (1997:39). A marginal victory by the British in the

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<sup>26</sup> David Crystal's emphasis.

South African war lent this sector of the population pre-eminence in the social, cultural and political spheres, and control of the country's economic structures.

The Union of South Africa, formed on the 31 May, 1910, was founded as a self-governing dominion of the British Empire. This "united" South Africa, in which "white power had already been widely institutionalised economically and politically" (Unterhalter, E. 1995: xxiii, cited by Steyn 2001:34), was now "a white settler state, politically self-governing" (p.34), one in which "South Africans of color were completely excluded from representation" (p.34). Although a Governor-General represented the British Monarch, effective power lay with the South African government headed by the Prime Minister<sup>27</sup>.

In the early twentieth-century Afrikaners had to struggle to attain the status of first class citizens: the familiar term "the racial question" referred not to relations between Europeans and Africans, but to the relationship between the Boers and the British. Relations with the Africans were termed the "native question" (Nederveen Pieterse 1992:104, cited by Steyn 2001:26). Memories of the recently resolved South African war, during which the British "scorched earth" policy left Boer families without homesteads and livelihoods, undoubtedly contributed to the strained, even antagonistic, relationship which existed between the two white ethnic groups living in South Africa. Afrikaners regarded the English as imperialists "who treated the Afrikaners with little more dignity or respect for their cultural integrity than they did the indigenous black people" (p.26). The English, "backed as they were by Empire" (p.26), felt a sense of superiority to both the native inhabitants and the more rural Afrikaner. Many British immigrants to South Africa also felt a strong allegiance to their place of birth, retained their loyalty to the Crown, and referred to Britain as the "Old Country" or "Home". In a country where race, rather than class, raised social barriers, these immigrants used their expertise to create a cultural climate which reflected and even bettered the social conditions enjoyed by members of the middle-class in England at that time. By contrast, poverty and lack of education placed the largely rural and working-class Afrikaans and Dutch-speaking South Africans "in direct competition with black people, who had been forced into providing their labour – and therefore into

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<sup>27</sup> Until the establishment of the South African Republic on the 31 May 1961, the British anthem of *God Save the King/Queen* was played on public occasions, including casual social gatherings such as visits to the cinema.

urbanisation – by the 1913 Land Act in particular” (Van der Westhuizen 2007:21). Although the number of Afrikaners in the urban areas increased from 10% in 1900 to 41% in 1926, the progress of these newly urbanised Dutch and Afrikaans speakers was hampered by the high rate of white unemployment, which stood at 20% at the start of the 1920’s (p.21). However, the frequently more affluent English-speaking whites benefited both from their connections with the “Old Country”, and, as discussed above, the input of immigrants with technological expertise in the new medium of wireless broadcasting.

A venture funded by the British Foreign Office also played a significant part in forming not only the listening tastes but also the collective identity of the listeners themselves. In 1927, the BBC launched the Empire Services, which began with experiments in short wave transmissions beamed to Africa. In a paper that “critically evaluates the media imperialism hypothesis with respect to the Central African Broadcasting Services (CABS) radio network”, David Kerr (1995:31) describes the BBC’s establishment of

a permanent Short Wave transmitter at Daventry in the English Midlands in 1928, with programmes called Empire Services, beamed to different parts of the British empire, including South Africa.

In the 1930’s the BBC helped set up broadcasting services in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa, and Southern Rhodesia, all countries that had the capability to make their own programming, but, to start with, relied very heavily on material beamed from Daventry (p.31). Early programmes broadcast to South Africa by the Empire Services, and, later, the B.B.C. Overseas Service, drew largely on the BBC’s domestic service, and, as such, were predominantly intended for a white radio audience. These programmes, which included plays, serials, comedy series, and novel readings, served to foster a belief in a superior British cultural heritage, not only amongst recent immigrants but first, second and even third generation South Africans. Kerr (p.31) cites John Mackenzie’s (1987:41) summary of the function of this phase in broadcasting as follows:

For expatriates it was essential to keep them in touch with home, provide them with a set of nostalgic and and [sic] ritual links that would offer solace in exile, a reward and consolation for service in the tropics, and maintain their awareness of the larger imperial enterprise of which they were a part. The settlers had to be reminded of the wider imperial community, had to be offered a set of symbols that

would counter regional loyalties...while recognising the creation of local traditions and patriotism.

Yet "local traditions and patriotism" could only be created with great difficulty in a country where the white inhabitants' ingrained fear of miscegenation rendered integration with indigenous people unacceptable, and deep divisions existed between the two white minority groups. Steyn (2001:26) argues that a racialisation of the Afrikaner by the British took place, citing Nederveen Pieterse (1992:104) who quotes Lord Kitchener's description of the Boers as "uncivilized Afrikaner savages with a thin white veneer". Steyn (2001:26) suggests that, for the English,

[t]he texture of the Afrikaners' whiteness, then, was coarsened by discourses of indignation and rebellion towards the more confident whiteness of overlordship assumed by the English.

This "interesting configuration of whiteness" can, she suggests, be characterized as an "internal colonization within the white group", one which accounts for the failure of whiteness to draw these two ethnic groups together as "seamlessly" as it did with white ethnic groups in the United States, where this process of internal colonisation did not take place (p.26). Unlike the Afrikaner, the majority of English-speaking South Africans retained strong cultural and ideological connections with their country of origin. As stated by Steyn, "the whole construction of "home" was fundamentally different for these two groups and integral to their respective identifications with Africa" (p.27)<sup>28</sup>.

As will be discussed in 3.5, the dominance of the medium by English language speakers throughout the first twelve years of radio's existence was a highly contentious issue until 1937, when separate channels were introduced for English and Afrikaans language speakers, following the formation of the SABC as a public broadcasting service in 1936.

### **3.2 EVENTS PRIOR TO THE FIRST BROADCAST**

The crucial part played by English language speaking South Africans and immigrants in the development of wireless telegraphy and broadcasting is described in great detail in

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<sup>28</sup> Complex socio-political factors that influenced broadcasting led to SAE radio drama's role in underpinning this unique phenomenon, as will emerge in the historical account of radio drama's development in Chapter 4.

Eric Rosenthal's (1974) *You Have Been Listening...* This account succeeds in capturing the excitement, enthusiasm and frequent frustrations of the amateur radio enthusiasts whose untiring efforts resulted in the introduction of wireless broadcasting in South Africa. Valuable contributions to early wireless entertainment were made by John Samuel Streeter and Reginald Hopkins, who established private broadcasting stations in Cape Town in 1919, and the extroverted Arthur Sydney (Toby) Innes, who operated the highly successful amateur transmitting station known as "2 OB" from Observatory, Johannesburg. Innes played gramophone records, interspersing these musical interludes with personal comments, and supplementing the gramophone music with "live performances by Johannesburg artists, including singers, musicians and speakers on a wide variety of themes" (p.20). However, recognition for the most remarkable developments in broadcasting must be shared between British immigrant Edward Alfred Jennings, who "invented wireless telegraphy independently of Marconi" (p.4), and the distinguished Afrikaner, Dr. Hendrik Johannes van der Bijl, discoverer of the principle of the thermionic valve, "on which all modern broadcasting and television depends" (p.12).

### **3.3 INTRODUCTION OF REGIONAL BROADCASTING STATIONS**

A nation-wide interest in radio as a medium of entertainment rapidly developed in South Africa during the early 1920's, culminating in the introduction of the Johannesburg Broadcasting Service in 1924, under the auspices of the Associated Scientific & Technical Societies of South Africa. Principal members of the ASTS, several of whom had close contacts within the British Broadcasting Company<sup>29</sup>, voiced their concern that South Africa should match the technological developments already taking place in this new field, not only in Britain but other colonial countries. The original BBC began operations in 1922, and by 1924 had already taken over broadcasting in Australia, a precedent which certain members of the ASTS felt should be followed by South African broadcasters, whose ambition was expressed in an interview with the *Star* (8 January 1924) as being the organization of "a broadcasting system equal to anything in the Old Country" (Rosenthal 1974:38). The anthem *God Save the King*, played by the recently assembled Johannesburg Broadcasting Station orchestra, opened the launch by the ASTS of "JB" at Stuttaford's Tea Room on the 1 July, 1924 (p.58). The launch of Cape Town's "Cape Broadcasting Service" followed on the 15

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<sup>29</sup> Predecessor of the British Broadcasting Corporation.

October (p.86), and the Durban Borough Council's "Durban Calling" commenced on the 10 December (p.96) of the same year. As close links continued to be formed between the British and South African broadcasters, assistance and advice on acquiring qualified managerial and technical staff was sought, and given by the BBC. The Durban Borough Council requested that the British Broadcasting Company select a Director and wireless broadcasting engineer for employment prior to the opening of the Durban Broadcasting Station, and the Cape Peninsula Broadcasting Association also sought help from the BBC in the appointment of a Studio Manager as "no-one with suitable qualifications had been found in South Africa" (p.86). This close association was to continue for many decades, leading to the impression that the South African broadcasting service functioned as a satellite of the BBC. The British colonial influence on broadcasting is evident in a winning entry to a questionnaire on programme preferences. Rosenthal (1974:69) relates that this JB listener suggested

Music, popular stuff, with a lilt to it, marches, or quartettes, such pieces as "Men of Harlech", "Sweet and Low", and stirring refrains like "God Bless the Prince of Wales" which, though old, are rich in association. The chorus of "Faust" is always fresh and invigorating. In songs something dashing, like "Tom o' Devon", which was so well transmitted recently, or "Mother McCree", as sung by Mr. Sullivan for 2 OB.

The writer also ventures the opinion that masculine voices "suffer less distortion when wirelessly, and are preferable" (p.69). Whether this comment betrays the writer's gender prejudice is unclear, in view of another male contributor's complaint that "At present, the lady singers do not come in too well as far as diction is concerned. It has not been possible to follow the words of any song by a lady this week. With the male voices it is quite different" (pp.70-71). An appreciation of the "the treasure house of English literature" is evident in another letter, which Rosenthal (1974:70) notes as requesting

[b]its of O. Henry, some H.G. Wells, epigrammes [so spelt] of G.B. Shaw, a poem by Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Ingolsby Legends, a page from Moliere, some of Dr. Samuel Johnson's *Summary of Verbal Judgments*, a verse or two from *Grey's Elegy*, some Compton MacKenzie, parts of the "Ancient Mariner", a chapter from Sir James Barrie, a quip or two from the pawky G.K.Chesterton, "Typhoon" from Joseph Conrad, "The Reflections in an African Night" by J.H. Curle in "This World of Ours", or the account of his last supper at the old Rand Club taken from the same book. A summary of the journeys of

Livingstone, with dates, a hunting story from Gordon Cumming or F. Courtney Selous, some Macauley, Sheridan and Shakespeare.

This letter exemplifies a preference for work from the literary canon that typified the tastes of an elitist minority of radio drama listeners, and became a hallmark of the Public Service Broadcaster's "English Service" drama productions throughout the station's existence. As it transpired, much of the canonical literature recommended by this writer was to be broadcast in the future, with the BBC bolstering local productions by providing recordings of radio play adaptations and serials through their transcription service.

Early broadcasts on JB were in English, although an address in Afrikaans was delivered on the occasion of the station's opening by the Honourable E.R. Grobler, Administrator of the Orange Free State, and Afrikaans programmes were later introduced, including those by Selina Hirsch who arranged talks on Art, Travel, Domestic Subjects and books. In January 1925 Durban Broadcasting introduced language lessons in Afrikaans for their predominantly English-speaking listeners. The Durban station also paved the way for broadcasting indigenous African music by featuring Zulu music "on a small scale on 17 January 1927 with a programme by the Zulu Versatile Company from 21h30. to 22h00" (Mardon, K. 2003:16-17 and Rosenthal 1974:97).

Despite the popularity of wireless broadcasting, paid licences totalled 15,509 (Rosenthal 1974:116) for the whole country. Difficulty in enforcing the £2 annual licence fee resulted in the onset of financial problems that affected all three stations, and the eventual closure of JB on the 19 January 1927 (p.109). Intervention by I.W. Schlesinger of African Theatres Limited <sup>30</sup> was proposed, and in February the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs gave permission for the launch of the African Broadcasting Company Limited, which was to bring all three stations under single control, making national broadcasting a reality.

### **3.4 NATIONAL BROADCASTING UNDER THE ABC**

The African Broadcasting Company era was to last almost 10 years, from February 1927 to August 1936, during which time a uniform policy was introduced, new studios

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<sup>30</sup> The forerunner of African Consolidated Theatres.

were acquired, and new transmitters installed. The acquisition of more technically advanced equipment led to improved radio reception, particularly for listeners living in the more remote areas of the country, and enabled the introduction of bilingual market reports for farmers. Several changes wrought during the "Schlesinger era" in broadcasting are of interest to the work that follows: the increased use of Afrikaans on the air-waves, the formation of the ABC Dramatic Company in 1928, and, on the 20 May 1927, the first successful relay of an overseas programme (1974:126). The last innovation permitted the broadcasting of important events in Europe and elsewhere, including the Grand National, various Royal weddings, the launching of the *Queen Mary*, and the Christmas Day broadcasts of the ruling monarch of Great Britain.

### **3.5 THE FORMATION OF THE SABC**

In 1934 the Prime Minister of South Africa, General J.B.M. Hertzog, invited Sir John Reith, founder member of the British Broadcasting Corporation and Director-General of the British Broadcasting Corporation, to conduct a personal investigation into all aspects of broadcasting in this country, and advise the South African government as to a policy for the service's future development. Acting as an unpaid one-man commission, Reith produced a report that favoured the conversion of the existing commercial broadcasting system, currently operating under the auspices of I.W. Schlesinger's African Broadcasting Corporation, to a public corporation established by statute. It was suggested by Reith that a board of six or seven members should be appointed by the Governor-General-in-Council, but that this board consists of "people who would command the confidence of the community" (1974:152), and the control exerted by them under the Chief Executive should be non-political in nature. Reith's vision of the founding principles of an ideal public broadcasting service have been described by academic and former SABC Board member, Ruth Teer-Tomaselli, as being "essentially modernist" in nature. As summarized by Tomaselli (1996:1) in the 1996 Spry Memorial Lecture, Reith advised that the public broadcaster should:

- provide geographic universal access;
- provide universal programming which would include education, entertainment and information;
- be financially independent of government and the commercial sector through the raising of licence fees;

- be editorially independent; and
- be a unifying force for a single national identity.

Tomaselli observes that this “classic” version of public service broadcasting envisages that the government “should be kept at arm’s length from the day to day operation of the broadcaster” (p.1). Moreover, “broadcasting in this view, is a public good belonging to the whole nation, not to be exploited for private or sectarian gain of either a monetary or ideological kind” (p.1). However, since 1950 the SABC has depended heavily on advertising for revenue, and the political and ideological influence exerted by successive governments on broadcasting in South Africa is a well-documented fact.

Several issues central to this research came under discussion during the Second Parliamentary debate on Reith’s draft bill which proposed the founding of a new broadcasting authority, and was passed into law after the Third Reading as the Broadcasting Act, No. 22 of 1936. All parties expressed unanimity in the matter during the Second Reading, but members expressed concern at the possible use of the service for purposes of political propaganda, as in Nazi Germany, and the Italian broadcasting service under the Fascist government of Mussolini. Rosenthal (1974:156) relates that in a lengthy address Nationalist opposition member, Paul Sauer, also objected to the lack of a “South African flavour” in the programmes broadcast by the African Broadcasting Company, and an “excessive subservience to the BBC as a precedent”. Sauer also notes that “after a very long and hard struggle, the Afrikaans language has come partly into its rights” (p.156) on the privately owned ABC, adding that

[t]here has always been a subtle Imperialistic propaganda to which many people in South Africa strongly object. I hope that when we have our own service in South Africa, as regards the broadcasting of news, it will be done in an objective manner.

As has been shown, Sauer’s complaint concerning the marked British colonial influence on programme content, and the limited air-time allotted to Afrikaans programmes in the past, was justified. His reference to “Imperialistic propaganda” and appeal for objectivity, however warranted, can be seen as ironical in view of Sauer’s later role as senior member of the National Party cabinet.

In 1951, three years after the National party came to power, the SABC inaugurated a daily Parliamentary service. In a 7 March 1953 *SABC* bulletin editorial entitled *Political Broadcasting*, this innovation is described by SABC Director-General Gideon Roos as having been “originally viewed with a measure of doubt and even suspicion” (1953:1). Roos explains that once this move had

gained the confidence of all parties...the Board of Governors at the Corporation then felt that the time had arrived for the next step, namely the launching of broadcasts on political problems.

This lifting of the ban imposed on political broadcasting by previous Governors of the SABC took place shortly before the 1953 election, and was introduced in order to “give politicians of all parties an opportunity of direct contact with the listening public” (p.1). In this editorial, Roos takes care to stress the ethical aspect of the Board’s decision to allow political broadcasting over which the SABC would have no censorship or control, but explains that

[i]n taking this decision, the Board realised the obligation of Broadcasting to make a positive contribution towards the solution of the serious problems which face our country from time to time by reason of the fact that the microphone was indubitably the most powerful instrument of mass communication in the world, the most potent means of spreading objective, factual and unbiased [sic] information, not only to the reading public, but to the large non-reading public, which can only be reached through the spoken word. (p.1)

A genuine attempt to reach out to the “large non-reading public” could have provided translations of the 48 pre-election speeches made by government and opposition politicians for the benefit of the SABC’s many Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho listeners. However, the superficially plausible reasons presented for the introduction of political broadcasting, which earlier SABC boards had resisted for 17 years, forms a keynote of Roos’s editorial. This plausibility was to become a familiar feature of the political propaganda that listeners were subjected to for almost four decades.

Reith’s advice that special programmes be devised for “Non-Whites and Asiatics to suit their tastes” (Rosenthal 1974:154) was, however, touched on during the Parliamentary debate on the draft Broadcasting Bill by the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, Senator C. F. Clarkson, who referred to “the potentialities that lie, so far as Broadcasting is

concerned in the Union, with our great Native population" (1974:155)<sup>31</sup>. Dr. Karl Bremer reminded the House of the potential offered by broadcasting to educate the nation, suggesting that by

[b]roadcasting the best and the most suitable things in our own Afrikaans literature, and in the great English literature, we can do a tremendous service, provided that these things are carefully collected, carefully sorted out, and carefully prepared for the limits of broadcasting. (p.159)

The hegemonic British influence that Paul Sauer objected to was to continue long after the formation of the SABC, influencing the choice of music and literary fare (plays, poetry, book readings, and serials) presented to English speaking listeners on the significantly-named "A" programme, and its successor, Radio South Africa.

The Broadcasting Act, No. 22 of 1936, became law on the 1 October of that year, and the SABC commenced broadcasting to the nation in English on the same date. The prohibitive cost involved in separating the transmission of the two languages, together with the fact that "it would also serve to segregate the two cultures and was not in the spirit of the overall culture of South Africa" (*The Voice – the Vision*, 1996:21), caused a year's delay before a system of two services, the English "A", and the Afrikaans "B" programme, was finally introduced in October 1937. The first step in the stratification of broadcasting in South Africa along lines of language, culture and ideology, had been taken.

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<sup>31</sup> The scheduled allocation of 1 minute for week-day broadcasts in African indigenous languages only took place 6 years later, and the "specific tastes" of South Africans of Asian descent, which had partially been met by a regular programme on Mondays and Fridays from 18h.00 to 18h.20 on Durban Broadcasting from 1932, were restricted by the SABC to a half-hour "Indian Session" on Sunday mornings. As reported in the *SABC* bulletin of the 31 January 1953, the "Indian Session" was broadcast in five languages, namely Hindu, Tamil, Urdu, Telegu and Gujerati.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **SOUTH AFRICAN RADIO DRAMA**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Two forms of colonial-era white power strongly influenced the development of South African broadcasting in general, and SAE radio drama in particular. The following account of the formative years and subsequent development of SAE radio drama illustrates the negative effects of British Imperialism and Afrikaner Nationalism, which together with other identified factors, contributed towards the art form's demise.

A brief account of early international developments in radio drama in Section 4.1 is followed by a series of comparative accounts of the formative years of radio drama in English, Afrikaans and Zulu. Divided into relevant broadcasting eras, these linear accounts complement and give further substance to the information on broadcasting outlined in Sections 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5. Each section is preceded by and presented in tandem with details of those socio-political events and cultural issues that mark the passage of white supremacy throughout more recent SA history, and offer insight into the effect of ideologies on the development of South African radio drama.

As stated in Chapter 3, the global reach of the English language and literature exercised a dominant influence on broadcasting during the formative years of South African radio. Adaptations of existing plays, novels and short stories from the literary canon, together with scripts specifically written for radio drama, provided a wide choice of texts available for broadcast. Local productions of original and imported texts were supplemented by recorded and imported drama, serials and comedy series, further easing the SAE radio drama producer's workload. In contrast, the new art form presented a particular challenge to early practitioners working in indigenous languages: despite the rich oral culture and literary traditions of the African languages, and the emergence of a significant body of work by Afrikaans authors in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, relatively few written texts in these languages were available or suitable for dramatization on radio.

The researcher also faces a difficult task, largely due to the ephemeral nature of radio drama itself. Crook (2001:7) cites BBC producer Lance Sieveking's description of this phenomenon in the first chapter of *The Stuff of Radio* (1934) as the "[g]hastly impermanence of the medium". In common with other international broadcasting organisations, including the BBC, the majority of early plays broadcast by the SABC, and its predecessors, "have not survived as mechanical records" (Crook 2001:7). Former organiser of Afrikaans radio drama, Robert Young (2007:135), states that the scarcity of local archival material is due to the fact that the SABC sound archives was only established in 1963. Young attributes the instigation of this important step to "B" programme producer, announcer and actor, Thys van Lille. However, Tony Ulliyatt (1987:1) confirms that radio plays were written and broadcast in South Africa as early as 1925, eleven years before the SABC assumed control of broadcasting in South Africa. Proof of this assertion is to be found in some of the daily logs from this period, preserved on microfilm at the SABC archives, but no details of author, title, or producer is given under the entry "Play". As English initially dominated the airwaves, the majority of these plays would be written in that language, but no indication is given as to whether they were produced from imported dramatic texts, adaptations, or original work by South African playwrights. Later lists of Afrikaans plays exhibit similar shortcomings, providing the title and date of broadcast, but failing to acknowledge the author, producer or cast. As suggested by Crook (2001:36), "sound artists not documented by existing texts or surviving evidence may well have succeeded in advancing the art of sound expression".

The close association formed between the SABC and BBC, and subsequent ease of access to imported scripts and recordings will also be demonstrated. Contrast is drawn between the privileges enjoyed by English language radio drama practitioners, and the initial difficulties experienced by their Afrikaans and Zulu counterparts, who were obliged to produce new work, adapt existing original material, and translate canonical literature in order to entertain their audience. Evidence is presented which indicates that Afrikaans radio drama was allocated a minimum of air-time on the Afrikaans service of the SABC until after 1950, when the results of the National Party's 1948 election victory and concomitant changes in policy-making at the SABC began to take effect. As stated by Keuris (2000a:1), the National Party government identified and actively promoted certain objectives, such as "the use of Afrikaans in the media and the development of an Afrikaner culture". The benefits thus derived "led to the

establishment and growth of a strong and vibrant Afrikaans radio drama tradition” (p.1). By contrast, the strictures introduced preventing cross-cultural interaction taking place at an artistic level, and the subjection of SAE radio drama scripts to stringent censorship, relegated the English language art form and its listeners to a cultural limbo, remote from the multi-cultural reality of South African life.

The early years of Zulu radio drama, as pioneered by King Edward Masinga, and conceived by apartheid ideologues as “an instrument to be used, along with other Zulu language programmes, to shape and control the mindset of its listeners” (Gunner 2000:223), are also outlined and discussed (Section 4.4.3). The very different ways in which the Afrikaans and Zulu language radio drama practitioners overcame the disadvantages initially experienced, and exercised their talents and ingenuity to create indigenous South African sub-genres of this art form, will be shown. Eventually the hegemonic influence of SAE radio drama was addressed and reversed: the developing world status of English, having been the early SAE radio drama practitioners’ ally, assisting them in the development of the medium, and motivating the high standards of production achieved, played a part in SAE radio drama’s demise.

The difficulties involved in delineating the ideological encumbrances borne by English, Afrikaans, and Zulu radio drama, each formed in different configurations by socio-political, cultural, linguistic and historical issues, are acknowledged. An attempt has been made, however, to give some sense of the significant role played by these divergent ideologies in the respective survival, success, and demise of Afrikaans, Zulu and SAE radio drama.

#### **4.1 EARLY EXTERNAL INFLUENCES ON SOUTH AFRICAN RADIO DRAMA**

The anonymous early SAE radio drama practitioners referred to in the introduction to Chapter 4 were undoubtedly motivated and influenced by the even earlier rapid developments in the art form taking place in Britain and the United States. The introduction of broadcasting to South Africa in 1924 followed closely behind that in other countries, but significant external progress had already been made in the development of radio drama. British experiments in the medium of “sound art” took place as early as 1917, with the wax phonograph recording of a “propagandist and

popular drama" (Crook 2001:33) entitled *The Great War*, and written by Major A.E. Rees. Possibly the earliest surviving audio-phonetic play, this 3 minute 28 second play featured a large cast and a wide range of realistic sound effects (p.33). Crook states that Lord Asa Briggs's "formidable" history series of the British Broadcasting Corporation records that extracts of Shakespearian classics such as *Julius Caesar*, *Henry VIII* and *Much Ado about Nothing* were broadcast on the 16 February 1923, while the first abridgement for radio of an entire Shakespearean play was *Twelfth Night*, transmitted on 28 May 1923, and *A Comedy of Danger*, by Richard Hughes, broadcast by the BBC on 15 January 1924, is generally regarded as the first play specifically written to be heard over the air. In the same year the Sydney station 2FC broadcast a direct transmission of the Royal Comic Opera Company staging *A Southern Maid*, and on the 21 March 1925 the Melbourne Station 3LO produced and broadcast the first radio play in Australia, a "melodramatic production of the myth of *Sweeney Todd, The Barbarous Barber*" (p.6). American radio history records that in 1922 General Electric's New York station WGY in Schenectady broadcast "the first dramatic series...and the first sound effects were used in *The Wolf*", a two and a half hour play on the same station" (p.5). Crook (2002:5) also cites Maltin's (1997:13) reference to the 27 October 1923 edition of the American *Radio Digest*, which comments that

[t]he radio play, a new form of dramatic interest, is increasing rapidly in popularity...scenes and acts from current plays are often broadcast, but many eastern stations now have their own theatrical groups and give plays especially adapted for Radio use.

All these, and many more experimental developments in radio drama worldwide, shaped the work produced by fledgling local practitioners. Transcriptions of early plays and serials recorded and broadcast in Britain, America, Australia, and Canada were made available to South African broadcasters at relatively little cost, ensuring that fees paid to local drama practitioners were kept to a minimum. Radio drama had become a business, but one in which artistic gratification far exceeded any financial reward.

#### **4.2 THE REGIONAL STATIONS ERA: 1924-1927**

Political and social tensions existing between English and Afrikaans speakers affected all aspects of the new medium, including the development of radio drama. The stirrings of Afrikaans nationalism were soon felt in the aftermath of the Anglo-Boer war. Afrikaans was a relatively new language, considered a Dutch dialect until the end

of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, while English and Dutch held the status of official South African languages. Organisations were formed such as the Afrikaanse Taalgenootskap in Pretoria in 1905, and the Afrikaanse Taalvereniging in Cape Town in 1906, which sought the acceptance of Afrikaans as an official language (Roberge, P. In: Deumert, A. & Andenbussche W., 2003:30). The conviction grew, particularly amongst the Afrikaner intelligentsia and petit bourgeoisie, that an autonomous language with the international stature of English and Dutch was essential to the development of the Afrikaner people's cultural identity. In 1906 the Afrikaans-Hollandse Toneelvereniging was formed with Gustav Preller, editor of *Land en Volk*, and founder member of the Afrikaanse Taalgenootskap, as director. Preller was convinced that the theatre could be used to convince Afrikaners "that Afrikaans was their natural and spoken language" (Fletcher 1994:137).

The effect of the Anglo-Boer war on Afrikaner identity and all literary forms is immeasurable: in a doctoral dissertation entitled *Postkolonialiteit in die twintigste- en een en twintigste-eeuse: Afrikaanse drama met klem op na die sestigers*, Anna van der Merwe (2003:52) focuses on theatre as she posits a potentially different situation, as follows:

Indien die oorlog nie plaasgevind het nie, en Preller se ideologie nie 'n stempel op Afrikanernasionalisme sou afdruk nie, sou die Afrikaanse teater nie ontwikkel het, soos dit die geval was nie<sup>32</sup>.

As Van der Merwe further argues, "[h]ierdie geskiedenis sou in die daaropvolgende dekades die identiteitsmerkers in die Afrikaanse teater word"<sup>33</sup>. The language movement impacted on the beliefs and work produced by the most illustrious Afrikaans writers: the "Father of Afrikaans Literature", C.J. Langenhoven, wrote his short early plays in Cape Dutch, but later changed to Afrikaans (Fletcher 1994:138)<sup>34</sup>. As editor of *"Het Zuid-Western"* (1912), Member of the House of Assembly (1914), and Senator from 1921, Langenhoven figured prominently in a movement which sought, and succeeded in achieving, the acceptance of Afrikaans usage in elementary education in 1914, and the recognition of Afrikaans as an official language, together with English

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<sup>32</sup> If the war had not taken place, and Preller's Afrikaner nationalist ideology had not been stamped upon theatre, it would have developed differently to the way it turned out.

<sup>33</sup> This history would become the identity markers of Afrikaans theatre in the following decades.

<sup>34</sup> In May 1911, following a packed performance of Langenhoven's *Familie Zaak*, it was reported 'that the author was dedicated to the promotion (of Afrikaans) which up till now had been regarded as a "rubbish" language.' "The production of *Familie Zaak* proved that to be wrong. Afrikaans was on the move". Fletcher cites this comment by I.W. Binge (1969) *Ontwikkeling van die Afrikaanse Toneel*, J.I. van Schaik Pretoria, p.24-52.

and Dutch, in 1925 (Roberge 2003:30). However, in common with Dominee S.J. du Toit (“Totius”)<sup>35</sup>, who believed that performing for money would “desecrate the Afrikaans culture”, Langenhoven expressed his strong opposition to the performance of plays in professional theatre (Fletcher 1994:139). This conviction may account for the apparent absence of adaptations of Langenhoven’s plays on radio during the very earliest years of broadcasting, prior to his death in 1932.

Professional Afrikaans theatre was, however, introduced by Hendrik and Tilla Hanekom in August 1925, at a time when touring English theatre companies played to enthusiastic audiences in cities and small country towns. It was a courageous move on the part of the young couple. Fletcher (1994:139) cites Hermien Dommissie as stating in the *Helikon* (December 1951) that for Afrikaans speakers there existed “no theatres, no theatre-conscious public, no trained actors, hardly any Afrikaans plays and no theatrical organisation”. As Gwen Ffrangçon-Davies, the English/South African “grande dame” observes in an *Outspan* article (July 30, 1943:11,41) “The Afrikaans theatre has been forced into professionalism by the fact that there is no possibility of importing companies from overseas, and an indigenous theatre is the result”. Afrikaans radio drama practitioners, for whom there was also no alternative but the painstaking development of an indigenous form, encountered similar difficulties.

In the year following the formation of the Union of South Africa, the ruling South African Party under Jan Christaan Smuts passed the 1911 Mines and Works Act, prohibiting strikes by black workers. The founding of the ANC took place in the same year, “in response to the threat of what became the 1913 Land Act” (Kariuki, S. & Van der Walt, L. 2000:19), which initially restricted African land ownership to African reserves that made up less than 10% of South Africa’s land surface (p.19). Unable to purchase or lease land outside the reserves (Van der Westhuizen, C. 2007:19), black people were forced to seek work on mines and in urban areas in order to survive (p.21). The Native Affairs Act of 1920, which “instituted separate administrative structures in the reserves and advisory councils for black people in the urban areas” (p.19), completed an iniquitous trio of laws that provided a basis for the policy of apartheid, and would be further extended under National Party rule.

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<sup>35</sup> S.J. du Toit (“Totius”) was the first Hertzog Prize winner in 1915 with his poetry collection *Trekkersweë* (*Trekkers’ Grief*), as listed by Die Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns. Hertzogprys. (Poësie).

The victory of J.B.M. Hertzog's National party in the 1924 General Election, following the formation of a pact with the Labour Party, brought about changes that favoured the use of Afrikaans in public life. The election loss by the SAP was influenced by the aerial bombing of the white working-class suburbs of Benoni and Germiston during the 1922 white miners' strike, a violent insurrection which erupted in response to a perceived easing of the colour bar by mine bosses after the black miner's strike of 1920 (21)<sup>36</sup>. Smuts's use of "disproportionate force" in order to end this conflict helped Hertzog convince disaffected white voters that the Prime Minister and the SAP did not have white interests at heart. Once elected, Hertzog encouraged bilingualism in the civil service, and, as noted earlier, Afrikaans was finally given equal status with Dutch and English as an official language in 1925.

The new regional broadcasting stations in Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban were launched in the year that Hertzog's Pact government came to power. It was a time when professionals such as dominees, teachers, and journalists, whose positions depended on the status of Afrikaans, promoted the language intensively to "build a nation from words" (Van der Westhuizen, C. 2007:22<sup>37</sup>). Radio's potential contribution to this goal was identified, and the development of Afrikaans radio drama as a literary form eventually became part of the overall nationalist strategy.

Little attention has been drawn in the past to an interesting, if not important, aspect of early broadcasting in South Africa. Each station – Durban, Cape Town, and Johannesburg - developed its own particular ethos, based on the cultural and language differences of that region's listeners. To expand on this theme is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but, in broad terms, the Durban station reflected a strong British influence, while Cape Town featured programmes in Afrikaans from its inception, and the drama broadcast from that station benefited from the influence and input of local Afrikaans writers and performers.<sup>38</sup> Johannesburg eventually enjoyed the advantage of a wider range of actors and writers, drawn to the city by greater opportunities in theatre, and, much later, television. As radio drama developed, a healthy sense of

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<sup>36</sup> The slogan "Workers of the world unite and fight for a white South Africa" was paraded at meetings during the strike.

<sup>37</sup> Van der Westhuizen cites Giliomee (1987), in Barber (1999: 90).

<sup>38</sup> It can be argued that the ancestral roots of comedy broadcast from the Cape studios lie in Stephen Black's "Ach sis" dramas (circa 1908), reflecting as they do the diverse Cape dialects (see Fletcher 1994:132-136), whereas much of the comedy broadcast from Natal was British in nature and origin. An exception to this was the popular, but arguably racist, series *Applesamy and Naidoo* featuring Dusty Cracknell and Ray Rich, broadcast from the regional Durban studios.

rivalry grew between the three regions, with the frequency, content, and even the *quality* of plays and serials broadcast, forming the subject of debate amongst practitioners and the more dedicated listeners. These anomalies continued to exist long after the unifying introduction of the SABC's "National A" and "Uniaal B" services in August 1950, and strands of each region's ethos continue to influence certain SABC evening regional broadcasts, and community radio, even today. A further observation, one of particular relevance to this study, is that the nature of the radio drama selected for broadcast tends to reflect something of the "Zeitgeist" of its station.

#### **4.2.1 ENGLISH RADIO DRAMA**

The original JB programme schedule drawn up by Theo Wendt, General Manager and conductor of the station's orchestra, prior to the first broadcast on July 1 1924, presumed a white, English-speaking audience. Music featured prominently in the proposed programme, but Rosenthal (1974:51) confirms that radio drama was mentioned amongst Wendt's suggested plans for Wednesday evening broadcasting sessions, which read as follows:

(A) Miscellaneous Programme (Light).

Later on this might be reserved for broadcasting of opera etc., and plays.

An item entitled "Humorous Monologues" is included in Wendt's original proposed programme schedule (p.51). Relatively unsophisticated productions such as monologues, humorous recitations, and the reading of stories by well-known performers or members of staff took place at the JB studios in Stuttafords Buildings, Rissik Street, proving extremely popular with listeners during the station's brief existence. Rosenthal (1974:77) provides some idea of the technical challenges that faced pioneer broadcasters in both English and Afrikaans in a reference to the popular broadcaster, Dudley Cassel, who describes his impersonation of leading Jewish comic, Julian Rose, during those early days of radio:

There were no means of providing sound effects...unless one found one's own. We did just this when aboard an imaginary aeroplane, flying from Paris, the din of the instrument that made wind-effects was mingled with the kettle-drums, while the listening audience heard more of the effects than they did of me.

Cassel wryly adds that JB was “never asked to broadcast that performance again” (p.77). Announcer and actor Lago Clifford enjoyed “great success in *The Solo Violin*, a story about a broken-down artist and his fiddle”(p.75). Interviewed by Rosenthal, Iris Johnson, employed from the outset of broadcasting by JB, and later by the ABC, relates that the station was inundated with demands for repeat performances of this story and other popular items.

As discussed above, the SABC radio archives fail to provide details of radio drama broadcast on the early regional stations. It is not known how many of these plays featured original texts, but local productions of imported scripts undoubtedly took place. Iris Johnson also confirms that it was her task to arrange for drama copyright, “a rather casual matter in those days” (p.75). A phone call to MacKay Brothers, then agents for French’s Editions, secured permission for the production to be broadcast. Johnson adds that JB would then buy “sufficient copies of their one-act plays for the whole cast, unless there was only one, when I had to type out the extra ones” (p.75). Old Time Radio enthusiast and historian, Frans Erasmus, having been privy to the memories of many ageing radio practitioners, has recorded their recollections for posterity. Erasmus (2002b:1) confirms being told of an adaptation of J.B. Priestley’s *The Dark House* broadcast as early as 1925. It may not be co-incidental that *The Dark House* was also the first play chosen for broadcast by Lux Radio Theatre on Springbok Radio in 1950<sup>39</sup>.

No details exist of plays broadcast on the Durban Municipal station, in either English or Afrikaans. However, stories were told during Children’s Hour, presented by Isobel Alexander when, once a week, “youngsters brought along their mothers and they themselves gave recitations and told stories and the like” (Rosenthal 1974:98). Stories and recitations for children were also broadcast from Cape Town, presented by Gladys Dickson as “Aunty Lex”, with her friend and colleague, Queenie Fagan, presenting *Lentepraatjie* in Afrikaans once a week (p.128)

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<sup>39</sup> Recorded conversation with Frans Erasmus in 2003.

#### 4.2.2 AFRIKAANS RADIO DRAMA

Children's programmes featuring 40 minutes of fairy tales told in Afrikaans by a young teacher, Susanna Jacomina (Lulu) Brewis (Rosenthal 1974:128-129)<sup>40</sup>, were also broadcast once a week from the Cape Town station. In August 1925, JB organised two Afrikaans radio competitions, one for a "recitation", and another for a one-act play (p.129). The winning entries were possibly broadcast on the half hour this station allocated to Afrikaans on Friday evenings, but no record remains to indicate details of these or other productions. However, in *Afrikaans radio drama in South Africa*, Marisa Keuris (2000a:4) cites Fuchs (1946) as stating that "the first Afrikaans radio drama which was broadcast was a Bible play (without any music or sound effects)". Keuris adds that "a few one-act plays followed (written by C. Louis Leipoldt, J.F.W. Grosskopf and Marie Linde)" (p.4). It may be that these early productions were broadcast from the Cape Regional station, where Rosenthal suggests that the planners were more thoughtful towards Afrikaans listeners. Efforts made by the Johannesburg station to provide occasional items in Afrikaans are attributed to the bilingual singer and entertainer, Tommie Beckley, one of the first performers enrolled on JB in 1924 (Rosenthal 1974:128).

In September 1925, JB broadcast a speech made in Afrikaans by the Prime Minister, General J.B.M. Hertzog, as he laid the foundation stone of the Helpmekaar Hoërskool in Johannesburg. The magazine *Radio* described the speeches as being "of outstanding interest, particularly to our Dutch-speaking listeners-in, and many appreciative messages have been received" (1974:129). A year later a leader in the *South African Wireless Weekly* raised the emotive question: "Afrikaans Programmes – Why Not?" (p.129).

#### 4.2.3 ZULU RADIO DRAMA

On the 17 January 1927, the Zulu Versatile Company initiated the introduction of "occasional programmes for African listeners" (Rosenthal 1974:97) on the Durban Municipal station from 21h30 to 22h.00. Although these first performers are described as "a Black variety combination that attracted many white listeners" (p.97), it is

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<sup>40</sup> Later Lulu Jonker, a well-known literary figure, wife of Abraham Jonker, and stepmother of the poet, Ingrid Jonker.

unclear as to whether their contribution was purely musical or included humorous dialogue or sketches. It would be another thirteen years before the needs of black listeners would receive even token recognition.

### 4.3 THE ABC ERA: 1927-1936

In 1927 the South African government granted I.W. Schlesinger's African Broadcasting Company Ltd. authority to introduce a national broadcasting service, incorporating the three regional stations. A giant figure involved in many aspects of the South African economy, I.W. Schlesinger was also "the presiding genius of a vast group of companies and, by reason of his control of a chain of cinemas and theatres, the tycoon of the entertainment business throughout the country" (Rosenthal 1974:36). Schlesinger's achievements in the South African film industry were considerable: these included the establishment of Killarney Studios, and the world-wide distribution of films, a process facilitated by frequent and wide-ranging world travel, and offices overseas<sup>41</sup>. Rosenthal attributes Schlesinger's "special affection for the Afrikaner" (p.129) for the increase in Afrikaans programmes once the ABC assumed control of all three regional stations. This popular perception of Schlesinger is due in part to his production of an Afrikaner Nationalist propaganda film entitled *De Voortrekkers*. During "an extraordinary run of productions" (De Waal 2002:1), forty-three films were produced between 1916 and 1922, including a highly partisan account of the Anglo-Zulu wars entitled *Symbol of Sacrifice*. De Waal cites Keyan Tomaselli's (1988) description of these Schlesinger films as being "rooted in the ideological outlook of the present, with Boer and Briton standing together under the flame of unity and civilisation against barbaric hordes" (2002:1). A film may not necessarily reflect a producer's personal convictions, but evidence strongly suggests that Schlesinger shared the white supremacist views of his time, and was, indeed, sympathetic to Afrikaner nationalist aspirations.

The National Party, having split with the Labour Party, won the 1929 General Election with an enlarged majority "on the back of Hertzog's *swart gevaar*<sup>42</sup> campaign" (Van der Westhuizen 2007:22). The effects of the Great Depression in the early 1930's

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<sup>41</sup> Rosenthal records that South African-born Harry Adler was recalled from London, where "he handled the complicated overseas interests of African theatres" (1974:119) to take up the post of General Manager of the ABC.

<sup>42</sup> black peril.

exacerbated the economic difficulties of the Afrikaner people. In an online article, *South Africa – the Great Depression and the 1930's*, the U.S. Library of Congress (1996) quotes the 1931 Carnegie Commission on Poor Whites as concluding that “almost one-third of Afrikaners lived as paupers, whereas few English-speaking whites lived below the poverty line” (p.1). Difficulties experienced by white farmers and miners, who formed a large part of the NP’s constituency, had a negative effect on Hertzog’s popularity with the electorate. In a successful bid to avoid losing the 1934 election, Hertzog formed an alliance with his former opponent, Jan Smuts, in 1933. The following year the NP and the South African Party merged to form the United South African National Party, or United Party (UP). After this new “Fusion” party won the 1934 General Election, Hertzog continued as Prime Minister with Smuts as deputy, while Cape NP leader, D.F. Malan, led a break-away from the NP, forming the Gesuiwerde National Party. Malan’s opposition to British Imperialism led him to mistrust Smuts and Hertzog’s less extreme forms of racist ideology and nationalist ideals. As a means of alleviating the problem of poverty amongst the Afrikaners, D.F. Malan and the Broederbond encouraged the development of an Afrikaner economic movement. The Volkskas was founded in 1934, at the same time as exclusively Afrikaner trade unions “which espoused a Christian-National ethic combining devout Calvinism with ethnic nationalism” (U.S. Library of Congress 1996:1) were established. The Broederbond also worked closely with insurance companies Sanlam/Santam to invest in “new economic opportunities for the *volk*<sup>43</sup>” (p.1).

The cultural life of white South Africans was also affected by the Great Depression. English theatre, in particular, having already lost audiences to “talking pictures”, now endured a marked slump in audience support. As detailed by L. Wright (2002) online in *Shakespeare in South Africa: The earlier twentieth century*, this eventually led to the closure of several theatres, including the Opera House in Cape Town, Scott’s Theatre in Pietermaritzburg, and Malone’s Theatre Royal in Durban (p.2). Visiting theatre luminaries and theatrical companies, having sustained the English-speaking South African audiences taste for British theatre - and British culture – made fewer tours than in the past. However, a visit by Sybil Thorndike in 1929, before the full impact of the Depression was felt in this country, caused a stir that was felt across cultural boundaries. This doyenne of British theatre “was memorable for the energy she committed to developing South African theatre for all races, including visits to schools”

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<sup>43</sup> “people”.

(p.3). A young dramatist, H.I.E. Dhlomo, sought permission with a friend to attend a performance of Thorndike's at the City Hall. The actress later spoke at the second conference on *Native African Drama* organised by the British Drama League in 1933 (p.3). Dhlomo went on to write a play entitled *The Girl Who Killed to Save*, which was performed in 1935 at the Volksteatervereniging (People's Theatre Society) in Pretoria, and earned the distinction of being the first published English play by a black playwright (Vandenbroucke 1977:45). Another Dhlomo play *Dingane*, was "first performed by students at the University of Natal's Medical school (non-European section) in May 1954, 20 years after composition" (Kruger 1999: 78). Following a further revival at the Durban City Hall in August of the same year, *Dingane* was described as a "milestone in the indigenous theatre of this century". Herbert Dhlomo was also the first Zulu announcer at the Durban studios of the SABC in 1941, assistant editor of *Ilanga lase Natal*, and writer of a "defiantly nationalist epic poem", *The Valley of a Thousand Hills* (Gunner, L. 2000:217).

Despite Hertzog and Smuts's rejection of the ethnic nationalism of Dr. Malan, the UP differed only slightly with the National Party in the adoption of policies affecting black South Africans. In 1936 the United Party government introduced legislation that would remove Africans from the common voters' roll in the Cape, limit them to electing white representatives to Parliament, and create a Natives' Representative Council that had advisory powers only (U.S. Library of Congress 1996:1). The ANC, however, under the conservative leadership of Pixley Seme since 1930, "concentrated on advising Africans to try to better themselves and to respect their chiefs" (p.2), rather than engage in a confrontational approach towards the government's policies. Dissatisfied ANC members met with representatives of Indian and coloured political organizations in Bloemfontein to form the All-African Convention (AAC), and protest against segregation and the proposed new laws. The leaders of the AAC continued to avoid a confrontational approach, in that loyalty to South Africa and to Britain was stressed, and a call was made, yet again, for "the British Parliament to intervene to ameliorate the condition of blacks" (p.2).

In 1935 and 1937, Nicolaas Petrus van Wyk Louw, a leading figure in the group of Afrikaans writers referred to as "Die Dertigers", and described by J.C. Kannemeyer in *Geskiedenis van die Afrikaans Literatuur* as "een van die heel grootste digtersfigure

van die Afrikaanse letterkunde"<sup>44</sup> (1984:443, cited by Van der Waal 2005:1), published two ground-breaking texts, firstly *Alleenspraak*<sup>45</sup>, and two years later, a poetry collection entitled *Die Halwe Kring*<sup>46</sup>. Van Wyk Louw's contribution to the formation and support of a national literature for Afrikaans forms an important part of the distinguished writer's legacy. Van der Waal (2005:2) also cites Gerrit Olivier's observation in *N.P. van Wyk Louw* that "Louw se siening van 'n nasionale letterkunde het in baie opsigte die intellektuele legitimering gebied vir die opbou van 'n Afrikaanse letterkunde" (1998:617).<sup>47</sup> Louw later made a significant contribution to the development of Afrikaans radio drama as author of numerous radio plays, nine of which have been published<sup>48</sup>.

#### 4.3.1 ENGLISH RADIO DRAMA

The launch of the ABC Dramatic Company took place in 1928 with the production of a play by Alfred Sutro entitled *The Marriage Will Not Take Place* (Rosenthal 1974: 120-121). Regarded by SABC officialdom as the first radio drama broadcast in English, a new recording of Sutro's play, produced by Jack Mullen, was broadcast by the SABC in 1987 as part of the corporation's 50 year Celebration of Broadcasting in South Africa, and warrants a mention in the SABC's (1996) commemorative publication, *The Voice – the Vision: The Sixty Year History of the SABC*. Rosenthal (1974:121) merely notes that the ABC Dramatic company was "occasionally augmented by the orchestra", and became "a hugely popular department". Prior to ABC's head office move in 1935 to new studios in Broadcast House, Commissioner Street, the ABC operated from studios in Connaught Mansions, Bree Street. Both English and Afrikaans performers worked in this "ramshackle" building, inadequately protected from traffic noise by flimsy beaverboard walls, and prey to interruptions from inebriated passers-by (p.117). Margaret Safferty, who joined the ABC in 1934, and took part in drama broadcast from the Bree Street studios, describes the lengths that sound engineer, Bill Hilarius, together with his technical staff, went to in order to procure sound effects for a bus crash in *Friday the Thirteenth*, a play described as being "imported from overseas"

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<sup>44</sup> One of the greatest poets in Afrikaans literature.

<sup>45</sup> Monologue.

<sup>46</sup> The half circle. (semi-circle)

<sup>47</sup> "Louw's ideas about a national literature offered in many ways the intellectual legitimization for the development of an Afrikaans literature".

<sup>48</sup> Keuris (2000b:3) lists *Dias* (1952), *Kruger breek die pad oop* (1964), *Die vonnis* (1964), *Die Eerste voortrek* (1964), *Die Lewenslyn* (1962), *Dagboek van 'n soldaat* (1962) *Die held* (1962), *Blomme vir die Winter* (1974) *Die val van 'n regvaardige man* (1976) as having been published.

(p.145). Bruce Anderson's production of *Chu Chin Chow* - a play based on the tale of *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, and a long-running success in Britain and America from 1934 - also tested the ABC technical staff's talents for improvisation, due to the need for resonance in the cave, and the lack of an echo chamber (p.145).

Little is known of English radio drama broadcast by the ABC from the Cape Town station, other than the fact that Cecil Wightman, the comic genius who devised the legendary *Snoektown Calling*, joined the staff in 1935, shortly before the SABC took over in 1936, and, as Rosenthal observes, "almost overnight he was a national figure" (1974:144).

Details of plays broadcast from the Durban regional studios of the ABC remain largely dependent on hearsay, but memories of a vibrant radio drama tradition being established, as recounted by prominent Durban actor and businessman, Harold Freed, deserve to be treated with respect.<sup>49</sup> The Durban ABC's studio staff formed an extraordinarily talented group: Bruce Lezard, founder of the Johannesburg Repertory Players with Muriel Alexander, shared announcer duties with Captain C.J. Parker, author of the successful Basutoland novel, *Blanket Boy's Moon* (1974:123). A young Noel Langley, destined for international fame as a prolific writer for both stage and screen, not only did duty as an announcer, but also illustrated the children's birthday book, and is credited with "wonderful renderings of poems for children" (p.58) by Children's Hour presenter, Isobel Alexander. Arguably the most distinguished achievement of Langley's screen playwriting career, which began as the ABC retired from broadcasting in 1936, was his role as co-writer of *The Wizard of Oz*, an iconic film which won several Academy awards. Langley also wrote 15 successful plays, several novels, and a number of best-selling stories for children, including the classic *The Land of Green Ginger* (1936)<sup>50</sup>. He also worked on other major film scripts, such as *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1951), *Scrooge* (1951), *Pickwick Papers* (1952), *Ivanhoe* (1952) and *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1952). Given Langley's prolific output as a playwright of international standing, it is reasonable to suggest that his earliest plays were written for and broadcast by the Durban studios of the ABC. Veteran radio actress, Merle Wayne, has early memories of performing in the children's programme broadcast from

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<sup>49</sup> Informal conversations between Harold Freed and the author, chiefly held at the Jewish Club during rehearsals for a 1966 NAPAC production of Noel Coward's *Hayfever*, and in the Old Fort Road SABC canteen and studios during the seventies.

<sup>50</sup> Langley's achievements accessed online on Wikipedia.

studios above the organ loft in the Durban City Hall, and taking part in plays broadcast from the converted warehouse in Aliwal Street<sup>51</sup> which later served as studios for the ABC and, eventually, the SABC.

More recent evidence exists which indicates that transcriptions of both plays and serials recorded in Britain, Australia and America were broadcast by the SABC. Miss Moran, a former teacher at Durban Girls' High School, describes herself as "an avid listener to radio drama from an early age"<sup>52</sup>. She recalls a popular radio serial entitled *Master of the Gobi* that engaged her youthful attention "from 1931 or so". *Master of the Gobi* was not a local production, but OTR expert, Frans Erasmus, confirms this serial is listed in the *Old Time Radio History of the USA: 2001* as having originally been broadcast on the NBC Blue Network on 3 July, 1929.<sup>53</sup> I would suggest that as the new "sound art" of radio drama developed rapidly in the United States since the beginnings of broadcasting in 1922, it is probable that the American founder of ABC, I.W. Schlesinger, had access to imported recordings of radio plays and serials such as *Master of the Gobi*, with ABC listeners benefiting as a result.

#### 4.3.2 AFRIKAANS RADIO DRAMA

The time allocated to Afrikaans programmes broadcast by the ABC eventually increased from only 30 minutes from Johannesburg on Friday nights, and an hour on Wednesday evenings from Cape Town, to "3 news services a day, a drama or feature programme of 45 minutes on Wednesday evenings, a book review programme of 15 minutes on Mondays and, perhaps twice a week, talks of 15 minutes each, one of these being the Radio Doctor" (Rosenthal 1974:147), before the SABC assumed control. Despite the limited nature of these improvements, they met with opposition from English speakers who formed the majority of the listeners<sup>54</sup>, and succeeded largely due to the determined pressure of bilingual members of staff, working with Afrikaans cultural groups in Johannesburg and Cape Town.

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<sup>51</sup> These details emerged during informal conversations with former colleague, Merle Wayne, in the drama studios of the SABC in the 1980's.

<sup>52</sup> Miss Moran is also a former teacher of the author. She agreed to answer questions on her early radio listening experiences and share her early memories (2002).

<sup>53</sup> Conversations with Frans Erasmus, Kevan Mardon and Henry Diffenthal (2002).

<sup>54</sup> *The Voice – The Vision*, (1987:27), states that 80% of the listenership was found to be English speakers when the SABC assumed control in 1936.

Accounts of developments in Afrikaans radio drama in Johannesburg during this period are scanty. Rosenthal relates that the broadcasting time for Afrikaans programmes increased from the initial half-hour to two hours, generally on a Friday evening between 8.00 and 10.00 p.m. How often radio drama formed part of the entertainment offered is not known, but during this time "serious radio drama was pioneered by Andre de Wet with *Die Noodlot*<sup>55</sup> and other productions" (p.134). ABC employees Hester Roux and Pieter de Waal, both former teachers and members of the Transvaalse Onderwysersvereniging, attended meetings of a committee specially formed to promote Afrikaans in broadcasting. Others who attended these meetings were academics, teachers, or members of the Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniging (1974:132). A similar group assembled in Cape Town to deal with the language problem in broadcasting. Sarah Goldblatt, secretary to C.J. Langenhoven and the writer's literary executrix, recalls her membership of a special radio sub-committee formed within the "Skakelkomitee" established by Dr. F. Bosman of the University of Cape Town. It was the task of members "to influence the Radio authorities to allow more Afrikaans" and "see that the Afrikaans items were of a sufficient standard" (p.131).

As stated by Keuris (2000b:1), it is generally accepted that *Witwatersberg*, a play written by P.W. Botha, and broadcast in 1932 during the ABC era, is the first real radio drama in Afrikaans to be broadcast in South Africa. Cape Town announcer and producer, Herman Steytler, presented plays and sketches each Wednesday evening in the one hour allotted to Afrikaans (Rosenthal 1974:130). Steytler also read the news, translating directly from Reuters telegrams in English into Afrikaans (p.132). Earlier experience on stage with distinguished actors such as Paul de Groot, Stephanie Faure and Andre Huguenot, together with Steytler's journalistic experience with *Die Burger*, fitted him for the difficulties of both tasks (p.132). The Schlesinger organization budgeted £5 for the one hour allotted to Steytler's various dramatic presentations, with the result that performers "eager to make Afrikaans known as a language, and to show that its literature need not take a second place" (p.132), accepted fees as little as one shilling and sixpence. On an evening devoted to readings of C.J. Langenhoven's work, the performers reluctantly agreed to the proposal put forward by the writer's literary executrix, Sarah Goldblatt, that their entire fee be donated to the Langenhoven Memorial (p.131).

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<sup>55</sup> Destiny.

In 1935 the Cape regional station of the ABC employed Carl Douglas Fuchs to replace Kowie Marais, barely a year before the SABC assumed control of broadcasting. Fuchs, who had played a major role in Maeterlinck's *Die Indringer*<sup>56</sup> (p.146), and later produced the first SABC Afrikaans play, *Liefdesdroom*<sup>57</sup> in 1937, proved himself well suited to the post, which included the production of the Afrikaans drama and feature programmes broadcast on Wednesday evenings. He recalls that during this period, despite the limited time available, "works of considerable merit were broadcast including plays by Grosskopf, Leipoldt, H.A. Fagan, D.F. Malherbe and Langenhoven" (p.147). Translations and adaptations of plays in other languages also took place, as did poetry readings "on particular topics, for example, *Eensaamheid*<sup>58</sup> and *Die Liefde*<sup>59</sup>" (p.147). Gideon Roos, appointed Director-General of the SABC after the Nationalist Party election victory in 1948, also began his broadcasting career in Cape Town, assisting with productions at the ABC. He describes the difficulties faced by early Afrikaans broadcasters, due to the lack of ready-made broadcasting material for their programmes, as a handicap that, once overcome, had a positive effect on the medium. This was "an exciting period for the Afrikaans language in broadcasting, and the foundation laid in Cape Town and elsewhere was to be invaluable when the SABC was formed" (p.147). As Roos himself comments, the Afrikaans broadcasters "were obliged to use their initiative and ingenuity to a far greater extent, something from which the Afrikaans service still benefits" (p.134).

#### **4.3.3 ZULU RADIO DRAMA**

No record exists of Zulu drama broadcast by the ABC.

#### **4.4 THE ENGLISH SERVICE OR "A" PROGRAMME (1936-1986) AND AFRIKAANS SERVICE OR "B" PROGRAMME (1937-1986) ERA**

The Broadcasting Act, No. 22 of 1936 became law on 1 August, 1936, when the newly-formed South African Broadcasting Corporation not only took immediate control of the airwaves from the African Broadcasting Company Limited, but became liable for the

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<sup>56</sup> The intruder.

<sup>57</sup> Love's dream.

<sup>58</sup> Loneliness

<sup>59</sup> Love.

payment of £150 000 to Schlesinger's organisation, as determined by independent arbitration (Rosenthal, 1974:159). The popularity of "listening to the wireless" had grown, with 750 000 listeners (approximately 80% of whom were English-speaking) and 150 000 licensed radio sets in existence at the time of take-over, but the corporation had no funds with which to pay the substantial sum owing to the ABC. The Suid-Afrikaanse Lewensassuransie Maatskappy, the life insurance company known as Sanlam, advanced the £150 000 owing to the ABC on behalf of the SABC (p.159).

Bonds of a different nature were forming between large Afrikaans financial institutions, including Sanlam, and the Gesuiwerde National Party led by D.F. Malan. As described by Christi van der Westhuizen (2007:28), Malan had "the backing of nascent Afrikaner capital in the form of Sanlam and Nasionale Pers (owner of *Die Burger*), as well as large wine, fruit and wool farmers in the Cape". The new party motivated a *volk* movement, forming extra-parliamentary alliances with organisations such as "the Afrikaner Broederbond (founded in 1918), and the Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut, representing big business" (p.27). Malan's vision, as expressed in a 1942 Parliamentary motion, was to make South Africa safe "for the white race and its civilisation in accordance with the colonial [trusteeship] principle" (p.25). He strove for "volkseenheid"<sup>60</sup>, but Malan's "volk" had only two "volksdele", that is, the "Afrikaans-speaking and English-speaking Afrikaners" (p.25).

The newly-formed SABC had only one long-wave, seven medium-wave, and four short-wave transmitters in service, but with the proposed launch of the Afrikaans-language "B" station in 1937 the long-wave installation was promptly converted to medium-wave in that year, and 18 transmitters in all were installed by 1939. Despite these improvements in reception, country listeners "were dissatisfied with the service they were getting" (*The Voice – the Vision* 1996:38).

In 1938 the Voortrekker-Eeufees, which began with a symbolical ox-wagon *trek*, followed by several days of commemorative activities and celebrations, provided the emotive impetus needed to advance the political ambitions of the National Party, and its policy of furthering Afrikaner nationalism. N.P. van Wyk Louw's *Die Diepe Reg*<sup>61</sup> was specifically written for the festivities at the behest of the pageant mistress and play's

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<sup>60</sup> Unity.

<sup>61</sup> The Deep Justice.

director, the legendary actress and “first lady” of broadcasting, Anna Neethling-Pohl. The author of this allegorical verse drama is described by Anna van der Merwe (2003:51) as “op soek na ‘n metaforiese regverdiging vir die voortbestaan van die Voortrekkers in die land wat hulle verower het”<sup>62</sup>. Years later, in spite of Van Wyk Louw’s loyalty to his people, and a commitment to the formation of a national literature which evolved from “‘n geestelike groeiproses voortspruit en aan ‘n volk die reg gee om as afsonderlike groep voor die wereld na vore te tree”.<sup>63</sup> (Olivier 1998, cited by Van der Waal 2007:2), the writer was taken to task by the then Premier, H.F. Verwoerd, who objected to the outcome of *Die pluimsaad waai ver*<sup>64</sup>. Anna van der Merwe (2003) describes this public rebuke as “a moment of truth” for Van Wyk Louw, and a watershed moment for Afrikaans literature. Of particular significance to this study is Van der Merwe’s (2003:57) observation that “[t]wintig jaar na die eerste opvoering van *Pluimsaad*, in 1986, word die drama oor Radio Suid-Afrika uitgesaai”<sup>65</sup>. In this singular instance, Van Wyk Louw joins the company of English-language writers such as Athol Fugard, whose plays were only broadcast by the SABC from the mid-eighties onwards, once the corporation’s stringent, apartheid ideology-based ban on the broadcast of “controversial” or “radical” material was eased, and eventually lifted.

In 1939 Hertzog resigned as Prime Minister following a debate in parliament in which his proposal advocating neutrality in the war between Germany and Britain was defeated in favour of a bid by Smuts for the country’s participation on the side of the Allied Forces. The Hertzogites within the UP formed the Afrikaner Party, which later fused with the NP, and facilitated the party’s victory in the 1948 election. As Van der Westhuizen observes, “Hertzogite nationalism was superseded by Malan’s cultural nationalism, sharply focused on the Afrikaner” (2007:27).

*The Voice – the Vision* (1996:25) states that the SABC Board considered 1939 to be “an excellent year for the development of Afrikaans on the airwaves”. Staff received special training, which finally resulted in operas and operettas being broadcast for the first time, and “the Afrikaans language was finally heading for equality with its English counterpart” (p.25).

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<sup>62</sup> Searching for a metaphorical (defence) exposition for the presence of the Voortrekkers in the land that they had “won over”.

<sup>63</sup> “a spiritual growth process that gives the right to a nation to present itself as an autonomous group to the rest of the world”.

<sup>64</sup> The plumed seed blows far.

<sup>65</sup> Twenty years after the introduction of *Pluimsaad*, in 1986, the drama was broadcast on Radio South Africa.

War between Great Britain and Germany was declared on the 3 September 1939. The SABC followed the government's stance in support of the Allied Forces, but endured pressure from groups of South Africans who were against the war effort (p.24). Co-operation between the SABC and the BBC intensified during this period, with broadcasts relayed from the Daventry transmitter in England, and the transmission of "graphic details of events such as incidents of the Finnish campaign, the Nazi invasion of Norway, Denmark, the Low Countries and France" (pp.25-26). Request programmes, such as the BBC's "Songtime in the Lager" in which white South Africans serving in the forces sent messages to loved ones, replaced normal programming. One can only speculate on the effect the daily broadcast of real-life drama had on the development and potential popularity of all forms of radio drama during wartime. *The Voice – The Vision* (1996:28) cites an extract from the SABC's 1943 Annual Report, noting that

The studio was no longer the preserve of the paid artist and the "expert". The voice of the soldier sending his greetings from the Libyan desert; the "evacuee" child speaking to parents overseas, the spontaneous laughter and applause of a soldier audience – these are typical of the material which helped to make up the Corporation's programmes during 1943.

The outbreak of war also signalled the need for the introduction of a "Bantu" service for Zulu, Xhosa and South Sotho speakers, a move which had originally been mooted by John Reith, who advised the introduction of "special programmes for Non-Whites and Asiatics to suit their particular taste" (Rosenthal 1974:154) in his original report on broadcasting in South Africa. The first transmission of African languages to various black residential areas by means of telephone lines took place in 1940. *The Historical Background and History of Development of Black SABC Radio Stations*, researched and compiled by the SABC's M.J. Louw (1986), confirms that "at the end of that year a number of points were administered to various places: Johannesburg 115, Natal 63, Bloemfontein 2, Cape Town 12, Eastern Cape (Port Elizabeth, Grahamstown and East London), 11<sup>66</sup>. *The Voice – the Vision* states that 203 points received the broadcasts, introduced as a "war time measure" (p.75). An article in *Radio* (1950b:28-29) entitled *Bantu Broadcasting in the Union: Coverage improving rapidly* records that, in order to

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<sup>66</sup> Information confirmed in *The Voice – the Vision* (1996:75).

“help disseminate reliable information” about World War II, programmes were fed through these landlines to compounds and locations. Half an hour was originally allocated to this task, which was confined to broadcasting war news and various Government announcements. Also described in this article is the distinguished, if intermittent, career in broadcasting begun by the legendary Henry Nxumalo (“Mr. Drum”) in the early years of the war. Nxumalo not only served as a sergeant in the Native Military Corps, which he wryly admits almost “ruined his voice shouting commands” (1950:29), but also assisted Cape Town’s Pearl Aschman in producing the “Bantu” troops’ version of the South African Forces Programme, then broadcast from Cairo” (p.29). Local broadcasts in Zulu began in 1941 at the instigation of ethnomusicologist, Hugh Tracey, Regional Manager of the Durban studios of the SABC, who “had persuaded his superiors at Durban SABC that airtime in Zulu was essential as a means of ensuring that rumours in the black community of an imminent Nazi victory...were quashed” (Gunner 2000:218). Tracey initially hired the writer, Herbert Dhlomo, and Charles Mpanza, on a “fairly unofficial basis” to fulfil this task. Gunner states that “fragments of radio drama in Zulu began to make their appearance soon after air space was first given to programmes in Zulu in April 1941” (p.216), but Dhlomo left this post after barely six months. In December of the same year Tracey appointed a former school teacher, King Edward Masinga, whose talent and dedication exerted a profound influence on the development of Zulu radio drama, as will be discussed in section 4.4.3.

The defeat of National Socialism and fascism by the Allied Forces in 1945 was not popular with all sections of the white community. Certain elements within the proto-fascist organisations, Ossewa Brandwag and Nuwe Orde, had been interned during the war for committing or supporting acts of violence against the government. Van der Westhuizen (2007:34) observes that “among the detainees were BJ Vorster, who became prime minister a couple of decades later, and Hendrik van den Bergh, head of the Bureau of State Security (BOSS) during Vorster’s reign”.

The SABC shared the airwaves with two pirate stations during the war. Radio Freedom supported the war effort, but a broadcast from the Vryburg district opposed it. Recorded in the SABC’s *The Voice – the Vision* (1996:27) we find that “[t]he broadcasts of these two stations were so well planned that not one of them could be traced” (p.27). The extremes of white supremacism, which led to the “systematic

murder of Jews and other marginalised minorities such as gypsies, homosexuals and the mentally disabled" (Van der Westhuizen 2007:37), motivated the adoption of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the Western World. Despite this development, in 1948 the white minority electorate of South Africa voted the overtly racist National Party into power.

The balance of power between the two white groups was to change with the National Party election victory. The racist policy of the British, which completely excluded black South Africans from direct representation in the Union, was entrenched and developed further by the new government to legislate divisions between white and black South Africans as "separate development", and white supremacy became legalised and enshrined in the South African Constitution. The change in government also heralded large-scale changes in the administration and ideology of the SABC. Veteran broadcaster Major Rene Caprara retired as Director-General in the same year, leaving his successor, Gideon Roos, with the task of completing an investigation into the viability of a "C" (commercial) station in order to generate funds to cover the corporation's escalating expenses (*The Voice – the Vision 1996:30*). The introduction of Springbok Radio on May 1 1950 led, in time, to an increase in the popularity of radio drama in both English and Afrikaans, providing actors, producers and scriptwriters of both language groups with a new outlet for their talents. While a wide choice of radio drama, comedy shows, and novel readings was available to English listeners on the B.B.C. Overseas Service, the "A" programme, the new commercial Springbok radio, and, occasionally, Lourenco Marques radio, listeners to the "B" programme were less fortunate. The corporation relied heavily on music programmes for both services in the early years. The variety of music played is described in *The Voice – the Vision* (1996:22) as follows:

In 1937 alone it [the SABC] transmitted 251 recorded symphonies, regular doses of chamber music, many outdoor concerts in the Summer months, organ music, Indian music, military brass bands, South African music and several operas.

In an article entitled *SABC NEWS – Transcription Services*, an *SABC* radio bulletin dated 2 October 1952 reveals that the corporation subscribed to "no less than six overseas transcription services", which are likened to "something in the nature of a circulating record library". Each of these libraries consisted of "4 000 to 10 000 numbers of different types of music"(p.3), which were continually kept up to date. Programme

schedules reveal that the widest possible range of music was provided, under different guises, on both the English and Afrikaans Service. This reliance on music continued, particularly on the “B” service, until incentives offered from the highest level brought forth a new generation of writers, and “the establishment and growth of a strong and vibrant Afrikaans radio drama tradition” (Keuris 2000a:1).

The change in the balance of power was soon felt at the SABC. It not only led to changes in personnel, but eventually affected relationships within the organisation. The rapid rise to senior management of certain members of staff reputed to also be members of the Broederbond led to dissatisfaction amongst English-language staff, as did the political bias of the news, and regular “Current Affairs” programmes which followed the evening news. In a recorded interview (19 February 2005) former SABC English Service announcer from 1962, John Bryan, refers to Current Affairs as a “brain-washing programme”. He comments that “they really went out of their way to attack people they didn’t like, like Hurley<sup>67</sup>. They had a special staff to do it - political staff”. Bryan adds that the Broederbond were “very much entrenched. The chairman of the Board was Piet Meyer, who was commonly known to be the Head of the Broederbond, had his office in the building. He must have had other offices elsewhere. You couldn’t ignore the man”. In the same vein, Ulliyatt (1992:15) cites Wilkins & Strydom (1978:11-12), who write:

In South Africa...there are a large number of semi-State corporations, all of which have powerful Broederbond representation in their top echelons. In terms of *political influence* the most important of these is the State-controlled South African Broadcasting Corporation, which holds a jealously-guarded monopoly of radio and television. (Ulliyatt’s emphasis).

Ulliyatt also refers to Umberto Eco’s observation that “[t]oday a country belongs to the person who controls communications” (1987:135).

Certain largely unwritten strictures concerning language, plot and religious or cultural references were also introduced by the apartheid-era SABC, with the result that radio drama scripts were subjected to strict censorship. I will argue that, under the guise of decency and consideration for listeners of all ethnic groups and religious persuasions,

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<sup>67</sup> Archbishop Dennis Hurley.

the creativity of SAE radio drama scriptwriters, and the medium's potential to develop as a unique sub-genre of the art form, were laid to waste.

#### 4.4.1 ENGLISH RADIO DRAMA

It continues to be difficult to gauge the popularity or frequency of early radio drama broadcasts even after the SABC assumed control in 1936. Actors were traditionally obliged to leave scripts in the SABC studios after recordings, to be disposed of by the cleaners. Recordings in the archives were allegedly lost or destroyed in the move from Broadcast House to Auckland Park, while precious archival material was sold or given to other organisations, and tapes were re-used by private recording studios to cut costs. The worldwide lack of interest in the preservation of radio drama, particularly by bureaucratic institutions such as the SABC, prompts Crook to ask: "If the script does not survive and there is no permanent recording, how are we to evaluate the artistic experience?"(2001:7). The SABC archival database provides valuable information such as titles of plays broadcast in English, including details of author, producer, actors, musicians, duration and date of broadcast, but information is incomplete prior to 1960. An early photograph of a young Anne and Harold Freed with other members of the cast of *On the Spot*, recorded in the Durban studios in 1939, appears in the SABC's *The Voice – The Vision* (p.19). This serves as an example of these omissions: no details of the play, and any other productions broadcast in English from 1936 to 1943, are provided. The SABC Sound Archives database provided the small but interesting list of plays broadcast between 1943-1949 which follows, demonstrating the wide variety of SAE radio dramas broadcast, and the options available to producers and programme organizers at the time:

- *The Plot to Overthrow Christmas* by iconic American radio dramatist, Norman Corwin. Produced in the Johannesburg studios by Marie Ney and broadcast on Christmas Day 1943, the cast included well-known Johannesburg radio and theatre personalities Taubie Kuschlik, Nan Munro, Jan Jordaan, Bruce Meredith-Smith and Frank Douglas. Musical interludes provided by The Leslie Buckingham Quartet were conducted by Jeremy Schulman with Richard Cherry as accompanist.

- *Story of an African Farm*: In 1946, I.E. Cameron-McClure, later to become first station manager of Springbok Radio, was responsible for the lyrics of a lengthy (102.15) musical adaptation of Olive Schreiner's famous novel. The original production was re-broadcast on the English Service 36 years later, in 1982.
- *My Redeemer Liveth*: Written and produced by I.E. Cameron-McClure, for the Easter holiday period, this 34.45 min. play was broadcast on the 19 April 1946. Members of the cast were Pat Rosevear-Lowe, Philip Burgess, Cedric Messina, Hugh Evans, and Dewar McCormack. Musical arrangement by Richard Cherry with Jeremy Schulman as conductor.
- *The Man on Whom it Rained*: A 45 minute drama by Harold Shearer, produced by Jack Bligh in the Johannesburg studios and broadcast on the 13 October 1946. Cast members listed are Robert Boyd, Bruce Meredith-Smith, Arnold Rayner, Elaine Godfrey and Harold Lake.
- *Exhibit "A"* by Joyce Miller: Produced by Jack Bligh and broadcast on the 17 October 1946. Cast: Marjorie Gordon, Frank Douglas, Arnold Rayner, Elsie Libertas, Billy Matthews, Ernest Montgomery, Maurice Horwood, Harry Charles. Duration: 42.46 mins.
- *Margaret Lovelace* by John Wiles: Produced by I.E. Cameron-McClure on the 24 October 1946, little is known of this play, which featured Henry Howell and the "first lady" of South African English theatre, Margaret ("Peggy") Inglis, with Helen Braithwaite, Anita Coleman and John Fleming also in the cast.
- *Candida* by George Bernard Shaw: Broadcast on the 6 March 1947, this play ran to 72.50 mins, and featured Gwen Ffrangçon Davies, Smith le Roux, Cecil Williams, Henry Howell, Philip Wade and Sybil Seeker in the cast. The producer, however, is listed as "unknown".
- *Aaron's Field*: Written by English dramatist D.G. Bridson, and broadcast on the 4th of May 1947, this play was produced in the Johannesburg studios by Bridson himself. The cast is listed as Henry Howell, Philip Wade, Arnold Raynor, Ronald Morse, Robert Boyd and Arthur Stewart. Distinguished British composer

and pianist Norman Fulton was responsible for the composition of the music for both the South African and original production broadcast by the BBC in 1939. Although Edgar Cree is listed as a member of the cast, his part would have been that of conductor of the SABC's Radio String Quartet. Described in Crook (2001:205) by John Drakakis (1981:9) as a "highly politicised verse Morality play", *Aaron's Field* was written in 1939 for broadcast by the BBC as Britain stood on the brink of World War II. Unless placed in context, this production may seem a curious choice for a South African audience, but patriotic sentiments for Britain still ran high amongst the majority of English speakers after the Second World War, and the opportunity of working with Bridson himself would have been a valuable and memorable experience for the actors and musicians concerned.

- *The Great Trek*: Another production written and produced by D.G. (Geoffrey) Bridson, who was possibly on sabbatical from the BBC, where he was employed from 1939-1975. This play was broadcast on the 1 June 1947, featuring a musical score by composer Richard Cherry, and Edgar Cree conducting the Radio String Quartet. Thirteen men and two women are listed in the cast, as follows: Henry Howell, Ronald Morse, Eugenie Hauptfleisch, Jan Schutte, Hester van Niekerk, Frederick Burgers, Jan Jordaan, Gideon Roos, Paul Bothma, Bruce Meredith-Smith, Izak Dormehl, Philip Burgers, H.P. Hamman, Thys van Lille, and Maurice Horwitz. This list is remarkable in that it provides an instance in which a local setting was featured and called for a cast of both English and Afrikaans speaking actors. (Duration: 76.16 mins)
- *The Cherry Orchard*: An adaptation of Chekov's classic play, produced by Paul Vernon in the Johannesburg studios, was broadcast on 12 August 1947, featuring English actress, Gwen Ffrangçon-Davies, South Africa's Helen Braithwaite, Ronald Morse, Arnold Rayner, Henry Gilbert, Cyril Wentzel, Morris Horwitz and Stanley Raphael. Despite international fame and success, Ffrangçon-Davies invested a great deal of her time and talent in the development of South African theatre, a passion she shared with her close friend and colleague, South African born actress Marda Vanne<sup>68</sup>. A tradition of

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<sup>68</sup> Margaretha ("Scrappy") van Hulsteyn, daughter of Sir Willem and Lady van Hulsteyn, briefly married to South Africa's fifth Prime Minister, J.G. Strijdom. (Wright, L.2002. *Shakespeare in South Africa*, p.4)

visiting British actors and directors working in South Africa had long been established, and was to continue for many years, being later facilitated by invitations from the provincial Performing Arts Councils. It was standard practice for the SABC's regional radio drama producers, who worked with a relatively small pool of local talent, to invite visiting actors to perform in local productions<sup>69</sup>.

- *Adventure Story*. Written by well-known British playwright Terence Rattigan, this play was produced in the Durban studios by Cedric Messina<sup>70</sup>, and broadcast on 7 December 1949. Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies also performed in this production, with Tom Meehan, Naomi Rutherford, Ian Brett and Tom Kelly.

Two of the eleven plays listed above feature a local setting, that is, 18.18%. This trend continued into the 1950's, with the work of playwrights such as Arthur Miller, George Bernard Shaw, Turgenev, John Osborne, and Louis MacNeice finding favour with local producers. It will also be seen from five of the eleven plays listed above that small orchestras formed an integral part of many radio dramas, linking scenes with brief musical interludes in the absence of recorded "mood music". The SABC continued this practice as late as March 1959, when Nico Carstens and Stephen O'Reilly provided the music for Jean Anouilh's *Point of Departure*. A year earlier radio veteran, musician and conductor Jeremy Schulman, provided the musical accompaniment for the Cedric Messina production of *The Day of Good Hope* by Mary Renault. An impressive cast of eighteen actors, including Harold Lake, Hugh Rouse, Robert Laing, Simon Swindell and Bruce Anderson were assembled for this production. British born and educated Renault, who immigrated to South Africa from Britain in 1948<sup>71</sup>, had already gained international recognition as an author of Ancient Greek novels. Messina produced an earlier play by this distinguished writer, entitled *The God of the Crossroads*, broadcast on the 20 September, 1956. Stephen Gray describes Renault as a writer "whose best-selling novels set in Ancient Greece peculiarly represented the shutdown of democracy in apartheid South Africa" (1999:129). Despite Renault's personal commitment to anti-apartheid activism, her unique contribution towards SAE radio drama might pass

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<sup>69</sup> Many visiting celebrities, including prominent BBC radio actors, had difficulty in delivering a polished, professional performance in the limited time available.

<sup>70</sup> Cedric Messina made a valuable contribution to the high standards achieved by SAE radio drama, acquiring a fine reputation in the process. In the later 1960's, he left Durban for London, where he achieved fame as a BBC radio and television drama producer, working with Laurence Olivier, Ralph Richardson, and other great Shakespearean actors of the time.

<sup>71</sup> Renault settled in Natal, and was an active member of the Black Sash in the 1950's.

unnoticed without Gray's analysis. The theme of *The Day of Good Hope* is unknown, but it is probable that Renault's work as radio dramatist also benefited from the novelist's aptitude for exposing issues of prejudice and repression, lightly veiled by history. The ground-breaking work of Zulu announcer/dramatist, King Edward Masinga, couched in legends and historical accounts as expounded in the traditional *iintsomi* and *izinganekwane* of oral literature, also spoke to listeners through a similar technique.

In considering the potential growth of broadcasting in South Africa, Sir John Reith's report had proposed the setting up of a network of transmitters to cover the length and breadth of the country, and "drew attention to the growing possibilities of retransmitting overseas programmes" (Rosenthal 1974:154). Improved technology and increased collaboration between the BBC and SABC, following the formation of the Public Broadcaster, made it possible for South Africans to listen to the "B.B.C." General Overseas Service in the evenings from 6.00 p.m. to shutdown at 1 a.m. The B.B.C. World Service began as the Empire Service in 1932, "as a means of linking the colonies with the mother country", and "[a]imed at expatriates rather than the colonized, its programmes were heavy on sentiment and nostalgia" (Barnard, S. 2000:239). Programme details of this service and those of the Regional (Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban) and National A and B programmes are printed in early editions of the SABC's *Radio* magazine.

An analysis of one week's radio schedules from the 30 June 1950, reveals that certain items were duplicated on the BBC and SABC programmes, such as reports from Wimbledon Tennis Championships, the Third Edinburgh International Festival of Music and Drama, and the popular British comedy programme *Much Binding in the Marsh*, episodes of which were broadcast by the BBC on Thursday at 7.30 pm, by the Durban Regional station at 8.p.m. the same evening, and again by Springbok Radio on Sunday at 10 p.m. Not only serials and plays, but BBC musical programmes such as *Variety Bandbox* were broadcast on regional stations of the SABC. The output of dramatic fare broadcast by the B.B.C. Overseas Service was prodigious: in one week three half hour serials (*Jane Eyre*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Love from Leighton Buzzard*), a half hour comedy (*Much Binding in the Marsh*), a fifteen minute book reading (*The Story Teller*)

and two new ninety minute plays (*The Passport* by Lewis Grant Wallace and *Caesar's Friend* by Campbell Dixon and Dermot Morrah)<sup>72</sup>.

During the week all three Regional A programmes (Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban) broadcast a morning novel reading and an afternoon serial, but evening programmes differed slightly. On a typical week-day evening, such as Thursday 6 July 1950, *The Island* by Lester Powell was broadcast to Johannesburg listeners in Thursday Theatre, while Cape Town heard excerpts from the Monckton & Talbot's musical comedy *The Arcadians*, and Durban listened to the British comedy, *Much Binding in the Marsh*. Given the plethora of dramatised novels, plays, comedy series and book readings which fell under the ambit of the SAE drama department and were available to the English-language speaker, it is, perhaps, understandable that this radio audience developed an attitude described by Ulyatt (1986a:15) as a form of "cultural snobbery", one "which asserts that "local" is inferior to "imported", especially imported from home". It is worth quoting Ulyatt's observations in full, as he elaborates on his initial analysis of this phenomenon, as follows:

It has its roots in the white, English-speaking colonial mentality, in what has been called "the cultural cringe" that colonies and ex-colonies display towards the traditions of England. This cultural snobbery also helps to explain why so many radio plays set in England, reflecting English society and social mores, and making use of culturally-rooted English traditions continue to enjoy such favour with the English-speaking South African listening public. (p.15)

All radio drama practitioners were subjected to the SABC's apartheid-era segregation of actors, and the imposition of censorship, based on stringently Calvinistic and politically-biased restrictions as to the subject matter and language used in the creation of a script. Certain "sensitivities" of the ruling party were paramount: no "political" issues, no use of expletives (hell, damn, bloody, etc), and no blasphemous references that might offend any one of any religion were permitted. Ulyatt (1995:26) spells out the dilemma and risks facing the radio drama producer:

He may find himself in conflict with the organisational ideology and may be liable for some form of disciplinary action. He may find himself in legal difficulties if he uses contentious political, social or religious issues. He may find himself unpopular with his listening

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<sup>72</sup> A South African recording of *Caesar's Friend* was broadcast on Radio South Africa almost forty years later, on 30 August 1988. Condensed to 59.32 mins, the play was produced by Brian O'Shaughnessy, with Sean Taylor, Percy Sieff, Michael Drin, David Butler, David Dennis and Gordon van Rooyen in the cast.

audience because he challenges them at [a] level they would prefer to remain unchallenged, if unthinking...he may find himself in conflict with the radio dramatist if he tampers with the play to make it ideologically acceptable for broadcasting.

Ulliyatt adds that “these things may occur within the context of an organisation, which by its very bureaucratic nature, discourages the concept of innovation in the first place” (p.26).

Yet, ironically, history, myths, religion, national pride and family values provided the emergent Afrikaans radio drama scriptwriter with a ready source of uniquely South African themes acceptable to the SABC’s political masters, influencing and enhancing, as they did, the listener’s sense of identity, while the imposition of restrictions stifled the creativity of English-language radio drama practitioners. The social conscience of many talented playwrights, who saw apartheid as the burning issue of the times, precluded them from offering plays for broadcast, while gifted scriptwriters employed by the SABC feared the censor’s red pencil, and avoided those issues which might invoke its often irrational use. Unlike their Zulu-language counterparts, few SAE radio drama writers resorted to myths and allegories<sup>73</sup>, choosing rather to set their stories in some unidentifiable white space, leaving this sub-genre – and its listeners – perpetually rooted in a quasi-European state of limbo, which bore little relationship to life experiences in the “real” South Africa.

If a tenuous link does exist between the different approach adopted by the Afrikaans and English Services in dealing with the restrictions imposed on drama and documentaries, it may be found in some of the work produced by Cecil Jubber, winner of the first IDEM award in 1980 for his fine production of Herman Charles Bosman’s *Stone Cold Jug*, first broadcast in 1969<sup>74</sup>. In 1993 this award-winning adaptation of Bosman’s classic was produced and broadcast as part of a double billing on RSA’s

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<sup>73</sup> The work of Mary Renault, as discussed above, and an IDEM Award-winning play entitled *Day of the Trolleys* by Nigel Vermaas may be seen as remarkable exceptions.

<sup>74</sup> N.P. van Wyk Louw’s *Germanicus* was adapted and produced by Cecil Jubber in 1961. He also translated, adapted and produced Eugene Marais’s posthumously discovered manuscript *Die Skepbekertjie* for broadcast on the English Service in 1969, and later repeated on Radio South Africa in June 1994. Entitled *Eloquent Silence*, this unique documentary is described in an SABC programme schedule (June 1994: 1994 as “an imaginative sound picture of bird life on the farm Witklip on the great Bronkhorstspruit plains, with music evocatively composed by Stephen O’Reilly”. Narrator Gabriel Bayman plays two parts, that of naturalist Marais himself and a sceptical farmer who “cannot quite believe in the natural marvels described in highly confectioned prose”. Jubber’s 1961 adaptation of Marais’s *The Soul of the White Ant* received the 1962 Suid Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns award for English radio drama. This production has also attracted the attention and acclaim of Old Time Radio enthusiasts worldwide.

Monday Night Playhouse, together with Jubber's own tribute to Bosman, entitled *Hoopoe*. A preface to details of the production listed in the SABC Sound archives provides the following insight:

Cecil Jubber's adaptation of *Stone Cold Jug* seizes and fixes reality in the past, as opposed to reality in the present which is the substance of most actuality documentaries. (p.99)

The missed opportunities created for SAE radio drama by the stringent restrictions imposed by the SABC may be better appreciated when contrasted with the less robust - albeit often irrational - nature of the censorship exercised on other forms of South African literature. In *Socialist explorations in South African fiction*, critic Martin Trump (1988:25) states that "[t]he major South African literary works from at least 1948 have, almost without exception, illustrated and in various ways critically opposed the repressive forces in the country". He further alludes to Barbara Harlow's (1987:xvi) account of resistance literature, citing her following comment:

The struggle for national liberation and independence...has produced a significant corpus of literary writing, both narrative and poetic, as well as a broad spectrum of theoretical analyses of the political, ideological, and cultural parameters of this struggle.

In closing this *Staffrider* (Vol.7 No.1 1988) article, Trump concludes that "[t]he set of works that has characterized South African literature since the 1940s has been remarkably sympathetic to oppositional thinking and practice within the country" (p.31). One can only speculate on the interesting developments in sound art that might have taken place had "the forbidding presence of South African oppression" (p.25) not exercised its iron control on material broadcast by the SABC.

A parallel may also be drawn between SAE radio drama and much professional theatre during the apartheid era, which was largely supported by the government and provincial art councils. In the same edition of *Staffrider*, editor Andries Oliphant and actor/associate director of the Market Theatre, John Kani, discuss the subject of the gulf between art and society, certain artists and the community, and the effect on the "communicative relationship between the actors and their audiences" (1988:56). Kani's observations on the theatre of the time are as relevant, I would argue, to SAE radio drama. He comments that

[t]he stagnation which many of the officially supported theatres find themselves in is the direct result of pursuing work which has no relationship with the everyday experiences of theatregoers. A theatre which separates itself from its audience and by implication, the community, is bound to wither and die.(p.56)

Similarly, SAE radio drama suffered from the public broadcaster's "Calvinist and Nationalist-rooted ideological stance" (Ulliyatt 1995:22), which resulted in "an output of predominantly bland, unoffensive [sic], politically neutral radio dramas that never question[ed] or challenge[ed] the prevailing ideology of the SABC". It may also be argued that the cultural boycott, which began in 1963 and gained momentum in the 1970's, placed an additional constraint on the development of both theatre and radio drama in South Africa. While politically expedient, the boycott undoubtedly precluded theatre and radio audiences from exposure to new work and current ideas. Eminent theatre practitioner, Ralph Lawson (Interview, 11 October 2002), has argued that the boycott created a gap in theatre audience education that has had repercussions on attendance levels even today. The effect of the boycott on SAE radio drama is discussed in more detail under the Springbok Radio era in section 4.5.

A degree of rivalry existed between Afrikaans and English radio drama practitioners, particularly during the height of the apartheid era, with rumours of more generous recording and editing time at the Afrikaans producers' disposal, and higher fees for actors. By the mid-1980's, Afrikaans radio drama had undoubtedly overtaken its English language counterpart, not only in popularity, but frequency of broadcasts. Mariza Brooks (1991:9) cites an (untitled) article in *The Sunday Star* (1986:9), which somewhat unconvincingly attempts to demonstrate that complaints that the Afrikaans Service featured more radio drama than the English Service were unfounded. Brooks states that the article supplied figures to justify this claim, namely that 9% daily (or 10 hours per week) were devoted to serials, plays and documentaries on the English Service, compared to 11,4% on the Afrikaans Service. The discrepancy of 2 hours broadcasting time each week between the broadcast of drama on each service represented less work for free-lance English-language actors and writers, and did not go unnoticed as the process of down-sizing SAE radio drama and relegating productions to off-peak listening times began. The closure of Springbok Radio in 1985, the advent of television, increased popularity of films and video, and easy accessibility to audio books, proved to be an immense challenge for an art form which, for the greater part of its existence, had failed to establish a uniquely South African identity,

and, as such, offered its listeners “more of the same”<sup>75</sup>. It should be borne in mind, however, that the introduction of the first truly bilingual broadcasting service, Springbok Radio, in 1950, did produce a limited number of local plays and series which, through certain compromises, achieved a rare projection of the white South African identity, successfully capturing the interest of listeners across all cultures.

#### 4.4.2 AFRIKAANS RADIO DRAMA

One of the first undertakings of the newly introduced Afrikaans Service was the launch of a radio drama competition. The winning entry, Helene Pienaar-de Klerk's *Liefdesdroom*, was produced by Carl Fuchs, enacted by Wena Naude, Reynder Pretorius, Piet Cilliers and Kitty de Villiers, and broadcast on the 15 December 1937 (Young 2007:134). A list provided by the SABC sound archives reveals that on the 5 January 1938 a 50 min. drama, *Rekordvlug*<sup>76</sup> was recorded, followed by the lengthy (74.18 mins) *Die Goeie Hoop*<sup>77</sup> on the 13 January, 1938, and later, on the 20 September, by a 20.22 min. drama, *Don Kisjot*<sup>78</sup>. Only one episode of the first Afrikaans serial, broadcast in 1937, remains in the SABC sound archives: Hendrik Brand's *Tamboere in die nag*<sup>79</sup> featured Wena Naude, Andre Huguenet and Hendrik Hanekom in the cast (Young:135). *The Voice – the Vision* describes an adaptation for broadcasting of Dirk J.J. Mostert's *Petaljes van Oom Bart*<sup>80</sup>(1934) as “another early soap”. This serial included stories from Mostert's classic series, entitled *Moleste in die Moot*<sup>81</sup>(1936) and *Spektakels en Debakels*<sup>82</sup> (1939), which are described<sup>83</sup> as telling “the adventures of Oom Bart who lives on the farm Verdwaalvlakte”. They “reveal the life styles and interest of the Afrikaans farmer during the 1930s in a gently humorous way”. In 1948 a literary prize was presented to J.P.J. van Rensburg in the newly-introduced Nedbank-Akademieprys vir Vertaalde Werk-Drama for a translation of *The Trojan Women (Die Vroue van Troje)*, which was broadcast by the SABC on the

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<sup>75</sup> The benefit of future research leads me to argue later that the art form might have survived these difficulties had the SABC not ignored its public service mandate in its pursuit of SAfm's new image as a “News and Information” service.

<sup>76</sup> *Record flight.*

<sup>77</sup> *The Good Hope.*

<sup>78</sup> *Don Quixote.*

<sup>79</sup> *Drums in the night.*

<sup>80</sup> *Escapades of Oom Bart.*

<sup>81</sup> *Trouble in the valley.*

<sup>82</sup> *Spectacles and debacles.*

<sup>83</sup> Iziko Museums lists this description in the online section entitled “One hundred highlights from the social history collections”. This section describes the stories of Oom Bart as featured in a book entitled *Marionettes* by Estelle van der Merwe, 1930s – depicting Oom Bart, Tant Soesen and Ta Estelle. Mention is made of the fact that Mostert's stories were also broadcast on radio.

Afrikaans Service on the 27 March 1946. The sound archives list of early Afrikaans plays provides very few details other than the title, date and length of broadcast, but thirteen plays are listed as having been broadcast between 1937 and 1949, as follows:

- *Liefdesdroom*. ("Radioteater". Duration: 38.30 mins. Recorded: 15 December 1937.)
- *Rekordvlug*. ("Meesterdrama". Duration 50.00 mins. Recorded 5 January 1938.)
- *Die Goeie Hoop*. ("Meesterdrama". Duration: 74.18 mins. Recorded: 13 January 1938.)
- *Don Kisjot*. ("Meesterdrama". Duration: 20.22 mins. Recorded 10 September 1938.)
- *Die Verlangende Hart*<sup>84</sup>. ("Meesterdrama". Duration: 32.00 mins, Recorded 5 July 1942.)
- *Die Heilige Johanna*<sup>85</sup>. ("Meesterdrama". Duration: 66.00 mins. Recorded 7 December 1945.)
- *Koning Oidipus*<sup>86</sup>. ("Radioteater". Duration: 72.00 mins. Recorded 24 July 1944.)
- *Die Vroue van Troje*. ("Meesterdrama". No duration given. Recorded 27 March 1946.)
- *Piet Retief*. ("Meesterdrama". Duration: 35.45 mins. Recorded 1 October 1946.)
- *Die Eensame*<sup>87</sup>. ("Meesterdrama". Duration: 44.00 mins. Recorded 1 November 1946.)
- *Kersgeskenke*<sup>88</sup>. ("Kleiintheater". Duration: 31.20 mins. Recorded 19 December 1947.)
- *Maria en Prins Neuk*<sup>89</sup>. ("Radioteater". Duration: 49.45 mins. Recorded: 25 December 1948.)
- *Die Mymerende Oujaar*<sup>90</sup>. ("Radioteater". Duration: 39.39 mins. Recorded 10 December 1949.)

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<sup>84</sup> *The longing heart.*

<sup>85</sup> *The saintly Johanna.*

<sup>86</sup> *King Oedipus.*

<sup>87</sup> *The lonely.*

<sup>88</sup> *Christmas presents.*

<sup>89</sup> *Maria and Prince Nuisance.*

<sup>90</sup> *The meditative Old Year.*

A remarkable omission in this list is N.P. van Wyk Louw's *Dias*<sup>91</sup>, broadcast in 1949, and commissioned by the SABC to celebrate Bartholomew Diaz's voyage around the Cape<sup>92</sup>. A re-recording or repeat of Louw's historical play is later listed as broadcast on the 7 February 1988 in Radio Suid-Afrika's Radioteater. *Dias* was also published by Tafelberg in 1952. Arguably the finest exponent of Afrikaans radio drama, Louw also wrote *Kruger breek die pad oop*<sup>93</sup> (Radioteater 1965), *Die Vonnis*<sup>94</sup> (Kleinteater 1965 and 1982), *Die Eerste Voortrekkers*<sup>95</sup> (Kleinteater 1966), *Die Held*<sup>96</sup> (Meesterdrama 1966), *Lewenslyn*<sup>97</sup> (Original not listed 1959, re-broadcast in Radioteater 1980), *Dagboek van 'n soldaat*<sup>98</sup> (Meesterdrama 1962 and Radioteater 1991), *Blomme vir die Winter*<sup>99</sup> (Meesterdrama 1972 and Radioteater 1991), and *Die val van 'n regvaardige man*<sup>100</sup> (Radioteater 1975), all of which have been published. (Keuris:79-80). The author also bridged the gap between Afrikaans and English radio drama, in that two of his plays, *Blomme vir die Winter*, and *Die Held*, were translated, broadcast, and re-broadcast, on the English Service and Radio South Africa. Robert Young, head of SABC Afrikaans drama from 1980-2005, refers to Dr. Jan Schutte's description of Van Wyk Louw as a dramatist who understood the problems of writing for the medium of radio, and who had "gaandeweg 'n radiostyl-en-tegniek ontwikkel waarbinne hy volkome vry en soepel kon beweeg" (Young 2007:134)<sup>101</sup>. Schutte's own serial, *Die Du Plooy van Soetmelksvlei*<sup>102</sup>, entertained listeners over a period of 18 years from 1949 to 1967, reaching a listenership of 506 000 in 1958 (p.126). The writer's familiarity with the voices and capabilities of the small circle of experienced performers in Afrikaans radio drama enabled Schutte to write the serial without a particular theme or story-line in mind.

Helene Pienaar-de Klerk, Anna M. Louw, Henriette Grové and Gerhard Beukes are identified by Young as the first writers to emerge as dramatists on the Afrikaans Service (p.134). Following Schutte, he describes the plays of Henriette Grové as "die

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<sup>91</sup> *Dias*.

<sup>92</sup> In an article entitled "Die Radio in Afrikaans" featured on RSG's web-site, Robert Young confirms the SABC's commissioning of *Dias* and the radio play's broadcast in 1949 as follows: "Sy [N.P. van Wyk Louw] eerste radiostuk *Dias* is in opdrag van die SAUK geskryf en in 1949 uitgesaai".

<sup>93</sup> *Kruger blazes the trail*.

<sup>94</sup> *The sentence*.

<sup>95</sup> *The first Voortrekkers*.

<sup>96</sup> *The hero*.

<sup>97</sup> *Lifeline*.

<sup>98</sup> *Diary of a soldier*.

<sup>99</sup> *Flowers for the Winter*.

<sup>100</sup> *The fall of a righteous man*.

<sup>101</sup> ..."developed a radio style and technique which he could use freely"

<sup>102</sup> *The Du Plooy van Soetmelksvlei*.

rypste werk wat vir die medium geskryf is" (p.134)<sup>103</sup>. Grové's first piece for radio, *Soos gras is sy dae*<sup>104</sup>, won a prize in a radio drama competition in 1950, and was re-broadcast on Radio Suid Afrika on 5 December 1988 (Sound archives list). Other radio dramas by Grové are *Die Glasdeur*<sup>105</sup> (1957), *Die Masker*<sup>106</sup> (1962), *Halte 49*<sup>107</sup> (1962), *Ontmoeting by Dwaaldrif*<sup>108</sup> (1980) and *Demus en die goggas*<sup>109</sup> (Young:134)<sup>110</sup> As observed by Keuris (2000), plays by N.P. van Wyk Louw and Hertzog prize-winning playwright, Henriette Grové, were "widely published, prescribed and analysed in Afrikaans departments at various universities". In an unpublished paper entitled *Die Radiodrama/Hoorspel*<sup>111</sup> (2000:2), Keuris lists the published Afrikaans radio dramas prescribed for study at University level as N.P. van Wyk Louw's *Dias*, *Dagboek van 'n soldaat*, and *Lewenslyn*, the Hertzog prize-winning *Ontmoeting by Dwaaldrif* and *Die Glasdeur* by Henriette Grové, and Chris Barnard's *Die rebellie van Lafras Verwey*<sup>112</sup>.

It can be shown that substantially more dramatised work was broadcast on the "A" Service than on the "B" Service during the early 1950's, despite the competitions and literary awards offered for original work in Afrikaans. Only 31 Afrikaans plays are listed as broadcast by the SABC during the 1950's, but the actual figure was possibly much higher: as discussed, the unreliability of records compiled before the introduction of an official Sound Archives in 1963 can be demonstrated<sup>113</sup>, and has been acknowledged. However, the weekly programme lists in the official SABC magazine, *Radio*, as published in July and August 1950, confirm that comparatively little drama was broadcast on the "B" Service during this period. In July 1950, at a time when English-speaking listeners to the B.B.C. General Overseas Service, Springbok Radio and SABC "A" Services enjoyed a plethora of drama or drama-related entertainment, very little similar entertainment was available to the Afrikaans-speaking public. In the same month, listeners to the "Afrikaanse Diens" might hear a talk on the "World of Books"

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<sup>103</sup> ... "the most mature work written for the medium".

<sup>104</sup> *Like grass are his days.*

<sup>105</sup> *The glass door.*

<sup>106</sup> *The mask.*

<sup>107</sup> *Halt 49.*

<sup>108</sup> *Meeting at Dwaaldrif.*

<sup>109</sup> *Demus and the goggas.*

<sup>110</sup> *Demus en die goggas* is not shown in the list provided by the sound archives.

<sup>111</sup> *The radio drama/audio play.*

<sup>112</sup> *The rebellion of Lafras Verwey.*

<sup>113</sup> *Blinde Liefde/Blind Love* (1941) and *Die poskoets in die rivier/The post coach in the river* (1941), two early plays by Grosskopf, and referred to by Keuris (2000:77), N.P. van Wyk Louw's *Dias* (1949), Grové's *Demus en die goggas*, and the adaptation of a play by Patrick Hamilton entitled *Angsvolle Nag/Anxious night*, broadcast on the Durban Service on Monday, August 14, 1950, are just a few of the titles omitted from the SABC list.

by Willem van der Berg entitled *Swart op Wit*<sup>114</sup>, on 6.30 p.m. on Sunday, a serial on Ons Roep die Jeug!<sup>115</sup> entitled *Janette*, written by Sita and adapted by Elise Swanepoel, and a prestigious production of *Misdaad en Straf*. First heard by Johannesburg listeners on Friday, 7 July, in Radio-Teater, this adaptation of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* was repeated on the Durban evening service on 10 July, followed by a Cape Town broadcast on 21 July (*Radio*: 30 June 1950).

A marked increase in the number of Afrikaans plays broadcast is shown as having taken place in the following three decades, however, with 213 plays listed as broadcast in the 1960's, 254 in the 1970's, and a remarkable 487 in the 1980's (162 on the "B" Service, and 325 on Radio Suid Afrika, introduced on 1 January, 1986). Dramatized serials are not included in this list. It should also be noted that a substantial number of "repeats" were aired over the years and are included in the figures quoted above: these might take the form of a new production and different cast, or a re-broadcast of the original recording. Translations and adaptations from the literary canon enjoyed popularity with listeners and practitioners alike, but presented a challenge to the writer, one that was recognised by the introduction of a special award for "vertaalde werk" by the Nedbank Akademie as early as 1948. As stated above, J.P.J. van Rensburg's adaptation of *Die Vroue van Troje*, broadcast in 1946, achieved the distinction of being the first recipient of this award.

Some insight into the dedication and intense preparation involved in the production of a play such as *Misdaad en Straf*, (first broadcast from the Johannesburg Regional 'B' service on Friday, 7 July, and, again, from Durban on Monday, 10 July, and Cape Town on Friday, 21 July 1950), is provided by a preview entitled "Radio-Teater", published in the SABC publication *Radio*, 30 June 1950, and written by Clare Read. Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* was translated into Afrikaans from the French by F.P. van der Merwe, adapted for radio by Stephane Audel, and produced by Anna Neethling-Pohl.

The cast is listed as follows:

Raskolnikoff ...	Thys van Lille
Porfier ...	Jan Cronje
Razoumikien ...	P.V. Marais
Sonia ...	Suzanne van Wyk

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<sup>114</sup> Black on white.

<sup>115</sup> We call the youth!

The difficulties of translating, adapting and producing a famous play from the literary canon are described at length. Read comments that “So ‘n roman is ‘n uitdaging vir die verwerker. Wanneer die handeling so drasties moet wees, is die werk van omsetting nie meer joernalistiek nie, maar kuns”<sup>116</sup>. Mme Audel is described as “mistress of her medium”, while the problems of translation are seen as having been successfully overcome by F.P. van der Merwe in Read’s closing remarks, as follows:

Dit mag gevoel word dat deur ‘n verwerking en ‘n dubbele vertaling die geur van die oorspronklike geheel en al verlore is. Maar dit is nie so nie. Dit kan dadelik gesê word (sonder om ons in ‘n moeras van rassielkunde en taalteorie te verloor!) dat die sedelike en godsdienstige atmosfeer van Dostojefski minder oortuigend in Frans as in ‘n nie-romantieke taal soos Duits, Engels of Afrikaans gevoel word. Hoekom dit so mag wees, is buite die omvang van hierdie artikel – ons kan ons eenvoudig verheug dat dit so is.<sup>117</sup> (p.35)

The emphasis Read places earlier in the review on the “Kristelike liefdadigheid en geloof en hoop”<sup>118</sup> manifest in Dostoevsky’s text reflects an interest in the religious theme so prevalent in many of the earliest productions. An interesting example is provided by a preview in the *SABC* (1953:17) of a serial broadcast in *Ons Sondag se Jeugprogram*<sup>119</sup> on 1 August at 4.00 p.m. “*Lig in die Ooste*”<sup>120</sup>, produced by Ken Swart, featured Jan Lombaard as Vader, Marie Schoeman as Moeder, Izak van Niekerk as Raman, Enone v.d. Berg as Asna, and Adriaan Eksteen as Hogab. Broadly translated, the story tells of a typical farm family, with two children, Roman and Asna, living with their parents in the valley of Saron, in the shadow of the mountain of Carmel. This family, like so many other families, go to Jerusalem and come under the influence of the prophet of Galilee, who was teaching in Canaan. In the final analysis, however, it is the story of youthful rebellion and idealism, as fostered by Roman and personified by the young boy, Hogab, who relates his dreams as follows:

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<sup>116</sup> The adaptation of a story such as this is a challenge. When the alteration is so drastic, the work becomes not simply a journalistic exercise, but a work of art.

<sup>117</sup> It may be felt that when a text undergoes a double translation and an adaptation that the essence of the original is lost, but this is not so. It can only be said (without resorting to literary theory) that the religious or god-serving atmosphere of Dostoevsky loses little when translated from French into a non-romantic language such as German, English or Afrikaans. Why this should be is outside the scope of this article – we are simply delighted that it is so.

<sup>118</sup> Christian love, hope and charity.

<sup>119</sup> Our Sunday Youth programme.

<sup>120</sup> *Light in the East*.

Wanneer die son opgaan, sal die lig in die ooste begin skyn- en dan sal die nuwe lewe na die aarde kom en die kennis van die Here die wêreld oordek soos waters die bodem van die see".<sup>121</sup>

The character of Roman gives the following response:

"Nee, dis die swaard wat die vyand sal verslaan, die magtige leërs van Israel wat deur die velde van die vaderland sal opdruk..."<sup>122</sup>

Productions such as these not only sought to inspire youthful idealism, but also echo, I suggest, the parallel frequently drawn by NP politicians, particularly the former dominee (clergyman), Dr. Malan, between the Afrikaner volk and the people of Israel, God's "chosen race". Steyn (2001) cites G.M. Fredricksen's (1981) explanation of the manner in which Christianity itself became racialized through the "very specific form of Calvinism that the Afrikaners espoused" (p.28), with terms such as "Christian" and "heathen" coming to function as categories denoting racial types. The Boers became "a chosen people, who had a special and exclusive relationship with God and a mandate to smite the heathen" (p.29). Steyn observes that historians and social commentators differ on the issue of how literally the Afrikaner *volk* did, indeed, identify with the destiny of the Israelites, but cites S.G.M. Ridge (1987:106), who argues that the Boers "used discourses of Israel's experience to give form to their experience, resurrecting the myth after the event in a way that could sanctify self-interest". Ridge confirms an earlier observation as to the essential difference between South Africa's two white minority groups, as follows:

Unlike their English neighbours, who were also "emigrants", they seem seldom to have thought of "home" as somewhere behind them. Instead they struggled for years to find a new home and a new unity as a people. They used Israelite metaphors to explore what they were doing. (p. 106)

However, some links with Europe, particularly Dutch and Flemish radio, were maintained by the Afrikaans Service of the SABC until the cultural boycott against the apartheid regime introduced a break in relations. A drama series, "with characters from the Bible like Gideon, Solomon and David", was written for radio in the 1960's by W.A. Hickey, author of the popular novel and school setbook, *Twee vir 'n Stuiwer*.

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<sup>121</sup> When the sun goes up, the light in the East will begin to shine – and then will the new life on earth come and the knowledge of the Lord will envelop the world as the waters cover the bottom of the sea.

<sup>122</sup> No, it is the sword that will smite the enemy, the powerful armies of Israel who will press on through the fields of the Fatherland.

These biblical dramas were sold by the SABC to Belgium's Radio Vlaanderen, for broadcast in that country. In a personal letter, faxed 23 May 2002, Hickey's daughter, Beulah, describes the sense of occasion the family enjoyed when her father's first book, *Malisel en die Tweeling*<sup>123</sup>, was dramatized and broadcast as an evening serial on radio:

What excitement, [as] our family and my grandmother who was living with us, gathered round the radio. The two doors of the cabinet were opened. At the exact moment the beautiful sounds of Mozart's *Eine Kluge Nactmusik* filled the room and a lovely voice announced the first episode of the Radiodrama by W.A. Hickey. The characters in the story were so well portrayed on radio, that the classic little farm life stories became more and more real as the days went by. We could hardly wait for the signature tune to start, to be forever in our memories as a reminder of my father's exceptional talent and of those simple joyful evenings around the radio cabinet.

Beulah Hickey's account not only captures the profound sense of pleasure experienced by a playwright's family, and other listeners to radio drama. It also conveys a sense of the time; of warm feelings engendered by the familiar setting, and strong identification with the characters as experienced by Afrikaans radio drama listeners to stories that reflected both their burgeoning culture and day-to-day reality.

#### **4.4.3 ZULU RADIO DRAMA**

One figure looms large in any account of the formative years of Zulu radio drama; that of former herd-boy and schoolteacher, King Edward Masinga. A man steeped in Zulu traditions, with a passionate belief in the need for an African language radio station, Masinga played a pivotal role in the early development of Zulu radio drama. The origins of this new, multi-voiced performance genre lay in the traditional *izinganekwane* (oral fables, folktales, myths, and legends), *izibongo* (praise poems), *izisho* (idiomatic expressions), *amaculo* (songs) and *izaga* (proverbs), which exerted an important influence on the formation of Masinga's identity, and that of his audience.

The first step towards the introduction of Zulu radio drama took place on Christmas Eve, 1941, when Hugh Tracey, ethnomusicologist and manager of the SABC studios in Aliwal Street, Durban, employed Masinga as the first Zulu radio announcer officially

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<sup>123</sup> *Malisel and the twins.*

appointed by the SABC. As noted above, H.I. Dhlomo and Charles Mpanza had earlier filled this post on a free-lance basis for a period of approximately six months. Dhlomo's departure is generally regarded as the result of disparities in the writer's personal beliefs and the corporation's white supremacist ideology, which promoted ethnic divisions and rural identification for black listeners.

Masinga had impulsively, and unexpectedly, presented himself for employment at the studios the day before his employment, insisting on an interview with the manager. His timing was fortuitous. Tracey had earlier convinced his superiors at the SABC that airtime should be allocated to Zulu in order to quash wartime rumours circulating in the black community of an imminent Nazi victory (Gunner 2000:218). Masinga's passion for Zulu traditional music and culture impressed Tracey, who no doubt recognised the opportunities presented for developing his own interest in this particular field of study. The young applicant's knowledge of Zulu history and folklore also appealed to the SABC's regional manager, whose "purist" view of what constituted African cultures bore strong similarities to the "ethnos theory of cultural differences that was to drive the apartheid theorists from the mid-1940's" (Dubow 1989:178, cited by Gunner 2000b:218) Masinga describes that first historical discussion with Tracey in an SABC interview (Appendix 1:26), recorded on 5 March 1970, as follows:

[He] was a man who was very much interested in Zulu history and in Bantu folklore. He gave me a lot of questions. He must have done some of the researches himself in Zulu folklore and Zulu history. He found that in me I was a mine of all that information.

Having proved his ability to play a few records, and translate English into Zulu as he read the news, Masinga found himself employed by the SABC. His dedication to the task of promoting and preserving traditional Zulu music and culture, coupled with the extraordinary achievement of introducing the new aural art of radio drama, earned Masinga the title of "Father of Radio Bantu", a role he believed he was destined to fulfil.

Following a pattern similar to early Afrikaans and English radio drama, brief excerpts from plays, poems and musicals were broadcast soon after the introduction of Zulu language airtime, but the first full-length musical drama to be broadcast was the adaptation of a folktale entitled *Chief Above and Chief Below*. This collaborative piece, written by Masinga and edited by Tracey, was broadcast in 1944, and published in

1945. Maphumulo (2001:38) describes the play as “the first Zulu radio serial drama, a spectacle operetta with a traditional setting”, while Gunner states that this experimental production heralded “a newly evolving genre that has to be analysed as a distinct cultural form” (2000a:225). Told to Masinga by a relative of his, the story was devoid of any political reference, yet, as Gunner observes, “who knows what the multiple messages of its songs may have been in their evocation of cultural space and the possibilities of different kinds of African identity and creativity” (2000:220). Gunner also cogently argues that the “linguistic richness” of the language enabled the scripts of Zulu radio dramatists to escape “the snares of the censor”, (2000a:223), which affected newscasts, talks on current affairs and even popular music (p.225); a view confirmed by A.M. Maphumulo (2001:54) in his study of D.B.Z. Ntuli’s Radio Trilogy.

The harsh climate of apartheid did not deter, but rather spurred on, the determination of Zulu radio drama practitioners to reach out to their community of listeners, deal with anxieties, and provide a platform from which the ambiguities of urban living and traditional, rural practices could be debated. The patience and determination of the Zulu people when faced with hardship and adversity is vividly described by Masinga in a 1969 SABC interview with John Bryan, broadcast in the radio series *The Bantu-Speaking People of South Africa*.<sup>124</sup>, as follows:

The Zulus believe that it doesn't matter how heavy or how hard anything is, but they will lift that article up or that load up, if they just combine together and unite and keep on chanting the working song, they will chant that song and lift up something that you'd have thought that it was very hard indeed – and that, of course, is the power of song.

The power of song forms a recurrent theme in the history of African broadcasting. Gunner (2000b:219) cites Coplan (1985) as noting that in the 1950's, the “heyday of passive resistance and anti-pass campaigns...despite censorship musicians and African broadcasters used recordings to spread the message of inspiration and protest, and heartened the resistance”. In an article entitled *African broadcasting pioneers and the origins of radio drama at Central African broadcasting services*, David Kerr (1995:30) confirms the importance of song in conveying hidden political messages. He relates

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<sup>124</sup> This series received an excellent review from Jon Sylvester in *The Week on Radio* (*Star*, 11 September 1969). He comments that he could have “done with much more of Mr. Masinga and other Zulu speakers in this crisp broadcast”. Sylvester also commends John Bryan, who grew up in Zululand, and Cecil Jubber, the producer, for their “honest, thoughtful work”, and allowing the people to “talk – and sing – for themselves”.

how a song recorded by a British group, the Tokens, called "*The Lion Sleeps Tonight*"<sup>125</sup>, was rapidly decoded by African listeners at a political level. Kerr adds that:

This technique of criticising or satirizing authority through oblique methods of parable, allegory or metaphor, is one which is commonly found in precolonial African culture forms, such as pounding songs, praise poetry and work songs. The African broadcasters found ways of applying that technique to the radio context. (p.30)

In creating a space for Zulu language broadcasting in general, and Zulu radio drama in particular, Hugh Tracey – consciously or unconsciously – also created one which was "ideologically charged", and "clearly marked the culture of radio, particularly African-language radio, as a site of struggle" (Gunner 200a:224). I suggest that Masinga was not an unwitting pawn in this struggle, despite his apparent naivety and enthusiastic endorsement of the character and intentions of his "chiefs" at the SABC, particularly Carl Fuchs, that bordered on the sycophantic<sup>126</sup>. A genuinely good working relationship appears to have existed between the two men, with Masinga not only performing his duties to his superior's satisfaction, but quietly persevering with his own agenda, namely that of restoring the pride of his people, and their ability to "lift up" the heavy burden of apartheid oppression.

Afrikaans and English radio drama producers found Masinga's extensive knowledge of Zulu folk tales and legends extremely useful, with the result that many of his stories were dramatised for broadcast. Having recounted these stories and participated in them as an actor, Masinga resolved to learn the art of script-writing by studying the discarded scripts, later enrolling for formal courses on playwriting at correspondence colleges, both locally and abroad. His first play, *Yayizoshada*<sup>127</sup>, concerned a lost suit, a

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<sup>125</sup> *The Lion sleeps tonight* was originally composed by Solomon Linda and recorded by his group, The Evening Birds in 1939, with the Gallo Record Company. Linda received a one-off payment with no royalties. Pete Seeger of the folk group The Weavers recorded an amended version entitled *Wimoweh*, a distortion of the word Uyimbube that features in the chorus. Seeger explains on one of the recordings that the song "refers to an old legend down there [about] their last king, who was known as Chaka the Lion. Legend says that the lion didn't die when Europeans took over our country, he simply went to sleep, and he'll wake up some day". The Tokens did a successful cover of *The Lion Sleeps tonight* in 1961. In February 2000, after an exposé by Riaan Malan of the music industry's shameful exploitation of the original composer, Linda's heirs reached a legal settlement for an unnamed amount with ABILENE music who had earlier sold the rights to Disney for *The Lion King*. (Information online: 3<sup>rd</sup> Ear Music and Wikipedia. Accessed 7 April 2008).

<sup>126</sup> An affable man of undoubted talent, Fuchs was also a dedicated proponent of the National Party government's policy of "separate development". In his 1969 report, C.J. Fuchs, then Director-General of the SABC, spelt out the government policy on African Language radio stations, stating that "The purpose of "Radio Bantu"...[is] to serve the seven Bantu peoples of this country according to the nature, needs and character of each, and, by encouraging language consciousness among each of the Bantu peoples, to encourage national consciousness" (Gunner 2000b:226, citing Carver 1995:82).

<sup>127</sup> *(She) was going to marry*.

jealous fiancée and a broken engagement. Tales of Zulu history, folk tales, bible stories, educational pieces on road safety, “crime does not pay” serials, and adaptations of Zulu literature followed. Among Masinga’s most memorable achievement is the translation and adaptation of eight plays by William Shakespeare, a process described by him in a 1970 SABC interview (Appendix 1:262-267) as follows:

I thought that there are great white man’s stories which my people have never heard except those people who had the privilege of having gone to them colleges, and that is Shakespeare. I thought Shylock was very good. I started translating Shylock into a play. I put it over the air. Oh, the people loved it a lot. The schools, the hospitals, the secondary schools and the high schools, and the teachers felt as though it was a very good idea to teach Shylock in Zulu. It was encored, and encored every time over the air.

Discussing the method of adaptation used, Masinga reveals that, although the plays were not translated “word by word”, Shakespeare’s “idiomatic” style of speech is similar to that of “a person who knows high Zulu [who] will speak in idioms” (p.264), therefore “it would only take that a person who is good at his language to translate Shakespeare in any other language...One must know his language very well and love it” (p.264).

Teachers played an important part in the early years of Zulu radio drama broadcasts, as they had done in the early phase of Afrikaans radio programmes. Masinga drew the casts of his plays from the ranks of former colleagues, who taught at schools within a radius of about twenty miles from Durban. Those who displayed acting talent would arrive for rehearsals on Friday, study their scripts before performing the play “live” on Sunday morning, and return home that afternoon. A Shakespearean play would be broken into several episodes, taking two or three sessions to record. Contrary to Masinga’s statement quoted above, Leon Bennett, writing in the *SABC* of 6 December, 1952, states that the first Shakespearean play adapted by him was *King Lear*, which was broadcast live in serial form during May and June, 1952. In a somewhat patronising account, Bennett (1952) describes the listeners’ response as follows:

Kitchen boys, washerwomen, cooks and day-labourers were hearing on the air for the first time what they had heard speak of from their educated relatives and friends. In their own language, they could appreciate the beauty that is Shakespeare, and their immediate response to Masinga’s work was ample proof that the series was to be a success.

Masinga's adaptation and translation of *The Merchant of Venice* was broadcast 5 months later, on November 22. Bennett's article records that

[i]n three hours, Masinga wrote the first of three twenty-minute serials on the play, which, in Zulu, is called "*Umtengisi wase Venice*". His procedure is simple, for, backed by more than ten years experience in broadcasting, Masinga can analyse the English version after only a few readings, and then write the Zulu version...where special passages are very well known, he translates them directly and retains the true beauty of the words. (page no. illegible)

*Umtengisi wase Venice* was performed and broadcast in twenty-minute parts, from the 23 November, 1952, and repeated in March 1953. The "well-known Zulu Radio star", Billy Koza, took the part of Shylock (Bennett 1952). Others in the cast included Joseph Manyoni as Antonio, Beatrice Jali as Portia, and Josia Lutuli as Bassanio. Robert Mlaba filled the important role of narrator. An adaptation of *A Comedy of Errors* was expected to meet with even greater success than its predecessors. The reason Bennett gives for this anticipated success is that "The humour and simple logic of the play appeals to the Bantu". *Hamlet*, *The Tempest*, *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Macbeth* followed. When asked in an SABC interview (1970) whether there was an "out-and-out favourite amongst all these Shakespeares?" Masinga's reply (Appendix 1:264) reveals the diverse nature of his listenership, as follows:

The favourite for the schools was *Julius Caesar*. The favourite for the elite class of Johannesburg town folks and Durban was *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Macbeth* was the favourite of the rank and file of the Zulus.

In 1953 Masinga was awarded honorary membership of the Mark Twain society in recognition of his "outstanding achievements in the field of broadcasting". He also travelled to America to lecture on Zulu music and culture at universities and schools throughout the country. Whether appearing on television, or lecturing at schools and universities, Masinga dressed in the traditional Zulu bhesu, or warrior's regalia. Despite being accustomed to wearing a suit for work purposes, he felt no discomfort at the role he was expected to play, expressing only pleasure and pride at the opportunity of displaying Zulu traditional dress to an American audience.

It can be argued that Masinga's decision to "dance to his master's voice" (Gunner 2000:217) detracts from his image as a great broadcasting pioneer. He has been

described as a “complex figure”, one who is “possibly best read through the idiom of the folktale as himself a trickster character, a man of guile, wit and tremendous energy, living between irreconcilable positions” (Gunner 2000a:224). Driven by his love of traditional music and drama, and a belief in the need for an African language radio station, at some point in his career Masinga must have faced an existential dilemma: did he tread the fine line imposed by apartheid-driven censors, or abandon his work, and with it, the ambition for his people to have a voice? Given Masinga’s dedication to the task, I would suggest that his particular – and unique - “struggle” was one that could only take place within the confines of existing political structures; there was no option but to work within the system in order to achieve his objectives.

King Edward Masinga was not alone in his efforts to record music and develop radio drama in the early days of Zulu radio programmes. In 1945 the SABC appointed Hubert Sishi as a second Zulu announcer for the Durban SABC staff. Leon Bennett (1950:29) records that this SABC employee was formerly a “trade union Secretary for Native workers in the catering trade in Natal”, and was eventually appointed Secretary of the Natal Federation of African Trade Unions. As such, Sishi was likely to be aware of the potential offered by radio drama as a medium for the transformation of consciousness. Prior to this appointment, Sishi had originally been involved in broadcasting on a casual, part-time basis, during which time he developed a particular interest in radio drama. Masinga’s focus had been on traditional stories, but new writers would emerge with more topical tales of the hardships of urban existence. In 1948 a play by sportsman and cultural organizer, Dan Twala, entitled *Izinkwa*<sup>128</sup> (Kruger 1999:73, citing Steadman 1985:82) dealt with the economic hardships encountered in the cities. The newly-established genre of radio drama “became a site where the complexities of and ambivalences about ‘tradition’ and urban living could be debated and reviewed through the symbolic forms of aural dramatic narrative”, and “the links between the rural and the urban space could be established” (Gunner 2000a:226).

The establishment of Radio Bantu on January 1, 1960, represented a further step forward for African language broadcasting in South Africa. The new service broadcast alternatively in Zulu, Xhosa and South Sotho, over the medium wave transmitters of the established English and Afrikaans services, for an hour a day. A.M. Maphumulo

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<sup>128</sup> *Bread*.

(2001:38) records that during this period a “traditional action drama” by M.A.J. Blose “appeared under the title *Uqomisa mina nje uqomisa illiba*<sup>129</sup> and was later broadcast as a radio drama”. The half-hourly broadcasts on medium wave on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays continued to be broadcast on the wire-based rediffusion service to Orlando, Jabavu, Dube and Molofo, but this service to the townships was discontinued in 1967 (*The Voice – the Vision* 1996:75). The strictures placed on the development of African language radio drama by the limited time available on earlier services were removed with the introduction of Radio Zulu and Radio Sesotho on January 1, 1962, on the newly introduced FM<sup>130</sup> transmitters (p.75). Masinga’s ambition for a fully-fledged broadcasting service for the black community had finally been realised.

This landmark event in broadcasting was followed by the introduction of Radio Setswana and Radio Lebowa on June 1 of the same year (p.75). The extended airtime available facilitated the introduction of a new form of radio drama, the serialized drama, which was to gain tremendous popularity with listeners. The first serial drama listed in the SABC archives is entitled *uDeliwe*<sup>131</sup>. Written by Mandla Sibiyi, this serial ran for 25 episodes from March 1964 with such success that a 59-episode sequel followed only two months later entitled *Khumbula Deliwe*<sup>132</sup> (Gunner 2000a:227). In December 1964, Hubert Sishi produced a serialized radio drama of C.L.S. Nyembezi’s novel, *Inkinsela yase Mgungundlovu*<sup>133</sup>, which appeared in print two years earlier, and was broadcast over 37 episodes. In the same year, Sishi also wrote and produced *Isiduphunga*<sup>134</sup>, and produced Welcome Msomi’s early work, *Charlie Ntimbane*. Well-known actress and broadcaster, Winnie Mahlangu, who took part in the musical *UNokhwezi*<sup>135</sup>, wrote *Buzani Kubaba*<sup>136</sup> produced by M. Sibiyi in 1965. The early achievements of King Edward Masinga should not overshadow the valuable contribution made by Hubert Sishi to the development of Zulu radio drama. The list compiled by Maphumulo demonstrates Sishi’s commitment as the author of six serial dramas and producer of another 14 in the period 1964-1986. Maphumulo describes Sishi as a “remarkable playwright of Zulu radio drama serial”, adding that his

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<sup>129</sup> *When you are courting me, you are courting the grave.*

<sup>130</sup> Frequency modulation.

<sup>131</sup> *Deliwe* (Name of an individual, ).

<sup>132</sup> *Remember Deliwe.*

<sup>133</sup> *The Rich Man of Pietermaritzburg.*

<sup>134</sup> *Foolish person.*

<sup>135</sup> *Mother of morning star* (Name of a girl).

<sup>136</sup> *You’d better ask Father.*

*Isikhumba Sebhubesi*<sup>137</sup> ran for 80 episodes from February 1968 (p.38). D.B.Z. Ntuli wrote and produced *Indandatho Yesethembiso*<sup>138</sup> in 1966, followed by *Ngiyoze Ngimthole*<sup>139</sup>, produced by B. Kunene in 1967 and *Umcebo Owalahlekayo*<sup>140</sup>, produced by King Edward Masinga in 1968. Alexius Buthelezi, who began his radio career performing as a free-lance actor in Masinga's early productions<sup>141</sup>, and was later employed by the SABC in Johannesburg, produced both M.Kubheka's *ULindiwe*<sup>142</sup>, and M. Xulu's *Ukubuya Kuka Nsakansaka eDayimane*<sup>143</sup> in 1966. As Gunner observes, several names, such as those listed above, appear "time and again" (p.228) amongst the authors and producers of Zulu radio serials. Maphumulo comments that while some of these early productions dealt with issues of crime and feud, the majority featured love themes. This appears to be a natural progression from the early folktale period in radio drama, as "Loving and caring were part of the upbringing of traditional people hence they express it in most radio plays" (2001:42). He adds that "[s]ince these were the first radio serial dramas their reception by radio listeners was very good. The language in which they were written was good, consequently they contributed to the enhancement of the Zulu drama image" (p.39).

In the 1980's a variety of themes emerged, such as witchcraft, feud, rivalry and religion, all of which concerned "the social life of the people" (p.42). During the 1990's, Maphumulo states that "the playwrights ventured into more complicated themes, like prediction of new technology in a new millennium, gays and lesbians, political and detective dramas" (p.42), a trend which "shows that the lifestyle of people has been changing from the traditional to the present life" (p.42).

It would appear that the standards achieved by certain writers and actors have not been of a uniformly high standard, however: Maphumulo (2001:51) refers to N.E. Makosana's *A comparative study of six Xhosa radio dramas* (1991), in which she offers the following critical observations:

- the themes that are broadcast are mainly for entertainment and consequently have little intellectual depth;

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<sup>137</sup> *The skin of a Lion.*

<sup>138</sup> *The ring of promise..*

<sup>139</sup> *I will find him.*

<sup>140</sup> *The lost wealth/ treasure.*

<sup>141</sup> See reference by King Edward Masinga in SABC interview (Appendix 1)

<sup>142</sup> *Lindiwe* (Name of a girl meaning "the one who is awaited for").

<sup>143</sup> *The return of Nsakanansaka from diamond mines..*

- there is a lack of innovation that is shown by the repetition of the same themes;
- the playwrights lack skill as far as plot construction is concerned;
- the plays are devoid of conflict, the absence of which affects characterization, and gives rise to weak antagonists in the dramas; and
- a lack of focus regarding the main character is one of the faults evident in the dramas. Because of the fact that all characters are on the same level of importance, it becomes difficult to pin-point the focal character.

Maphumulo (2001:52) asserts that these criticisms are also applicable to Zulu radio drama, adding that

[t]here is latent potential in the Zulu dramatists and producers. Most of the playwrights are writing for money and not for contribution to the Zulu radio dramas.

Maphumulo argues that Zulu dramatists are “more comfortable with stage drama” due to the technical difficulties encountered in what is a “relatively new” genre in African languages. A further problem is that the majority of plays broadcast since the 1960’s are still unpublished and difficult to access (p.52). He suggests that writers should be “motivated towards research on the subject and consultation with people who are knowledgeable in this sub-genre” (p.52), in order to improve their skills and promote the acquisition of techniques needed in the writing of radio drama. I would add that some of the shortcomings that drew the criticism detailed above are not confined to Xhosa or Zulu radio drama. They could be applied to many other serialized radio dramas in which the playwright is under pressure to produce scripts at short notice, having possibly been awarded the contract based on an opening episode and one relatively sketchy synopsis. This certainly applied to long-running English-language serials broadcast on the SABC’s commercial service, Springbok Radio, however popular they proved with the listeners.

On a more positive note, Maphumulo notes that the genre of radio drama is gradually growing in Zulu, possibly as “the result of the workshops and seminars organized by Radio Zulu in conjunction with Usiba Writers Guild” (p.52). Radio drama writing workshops in English have also taken place more recently in most major centres, encouraging higher standards, stressing the writer’s ethical responsibility to the

audience, and creating an awareness of the broadcasting opportunities on offer for work which meets the required level of interest and expertise. The need for an increased level of moral and ethical awareness amongst radio drama scriptwriters undoubtedly exists, as confirmed by submissions made by the SACP (South African Communist Party) in May 2003 concerning the SABC's Draft Editorial Policies. The content of drama is criticised as follows:

The DEPs commit the SABC not to cover programmes which degrade and undermine women, and promote sexism and gender inequality. Yet almost every SABC Africa-language radio station has drama programmes which promote violence against women and which depict women as witches, etc.

In further pursuit of the matter of shortfalls in the broadcaster's coverage of gender issues, the submission states that "[t]he SABC also falls victim of not covering women sufficiently and reinforcing gender stereotypes [and] continues to project women as welfare cases, passive recipients, vulnerable groups needing protection and as physical objects (beauty queens and models)". It is also noted that many SABC programmes represent men in roles that "reinforce gender oppression and stereotypes".

It is worth noting, however, that in the past the new medium of Zulu radio drama attracted work from some of the language's best writers. Gunner (2000b) cites them as follows: "Muntu Xulu, novelist and short-story writer; the linguist and critic of oral poetry P.M. Msimang; young writers on the cusp of a career such as the poet and short-story writer D.B.Z. Ntuli, and more established ones such as R.R.R. Dhlomo (brother of Herbert Dhlomo) began to offer work to Radio Zulu" (p.222). Adaptation of work submitted by literary writers fell to the responsibility of Alex Buthelezi, a particularly "versatile and prolific" writer himself (p.222), and a valuable process of "reshaping and collaboration between writers and broadcasters who were also writers" (p.222) has remained an established practice prior to production, even today.

The opportunities offered to broadcasters in the formative years of African language radio were many and varied. During the course of King Edward Masinga's three decade-long service at the SABC, he fulfilled many roles: announcer, writer, actor, producer, talent scout, music archivist, roving lecturer, ambassador and television personality. Yet, when asked in a 1970 SABC interview to describe the highlight of his broadcasting career, he replied that "[t]he things [sic] that gave me the greatest

pleasure to do was writing plays for my people". Masinga's vision of the wealth of knowledge his work would offer to future generations is expressed in the following passage, taken from his final interview (Appendix 1:18):

When we go out into the country, and to the hinterland, to record some of those stories and come and keep them here, it is something that my great grandsons, they will have a library here, they will come and say: "My father visited Zululand, visited Pondoland; I have been to East Africa, past Lourenco Marques, collected the history of the Tongas and the Batshopis, whose origin is the Zulu, are the Zulus. My son one day, when he wants to be a Doctor of Literature and something else, will come to the radio, or my grandson, and say "My father once went out for research. I would like to have in the archives some of these things so that I may learn". You see, that is the advantage of the radio for the black man.

In Masinga's own words, his appointment by Hugh Tracey on Christmas Eve, 1941, was "the foundation of all this fire which is burning today, and known as Radio Bantu, which will never get finished anymore" (p.18).

#### **4.5 THE SPRINGBOK RADIO ERA: 1950-1985**

The introduction of Springbok Radio on May 1 1950 represents a significant milestone in South African radio history. Destined to become a legend in the memories of many listeners, this commercial and dual-language radio station provided a familiar aural presence during the 35 years of its existence, not only in private homes, but in public and work places such as cafes, supermarkets, factory production lines, hairdressing salons, and at various fairs, exhibitions and show grounds<sup>144</sup>. Despite an exclusively white English and Afrikaans-speaking management and staff, and a target audience envisaged as predominantly white, the ubiquity of "Springbok" alone ensured a culturally-diverse audience, including those first-language English and Afrikaans speakers categorized as "non-white", African language speakers and immigrants<sup>145</sup>. In contrast to the formality of the "A" and "B" services, the commercial station exuded a

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<sup>144</sup> Comedy programmes such as *Men from the Ministry* and *Father Dear Father* were recorded in front of audiences on luxury ocean liners at sea and in mining towns in South West Africa (now Namibia).

<sup>145</sup> The Riverlea family in Chris van Wyk's largely autobiographical novel, play and radio book reading, *Shirley, Goodness and Mercy* listen to "Springbok", and Thabiso Sikwane on SAfm's *Afternoon Talk* discussed memories of Springbok serials with listeners phoning in. Raeesa Mahomed of Radio Lotus recalls that "Springbok radio was very popular amongst Indians". She adds "I remember my parents listening to their dramas (Squad Cars, Men from the Ministry etc) and I got to listen too (E-mail, 20 September 2006). In *I remember King Kong*, Dennis Henson (2005:45) describes Springbok Radio as having been "never switched off".

familiar warmth and cordiality which listeners experienced as being essentially “South African”, albeit white South African.

In recounting the history of Springbok Radio, the SABC's *The Voice – the Vision* (1996:31) describes the station as “catering for a wide spectrum of listeners”, and as having also made “an early commitment to promoting local music and its ambitious plans included encouraging local talent, large scale radio productions and the continual improvement of broadcasting standards in South Africa” (p.31). Certain homely touches, such as the station's theme tune of *Vat jou goed en trek Ferreira*, and early morning announcer Eric Egan's gravel-voiced greeting of “I love you!” set the tone for a station with wide-spread appeal, serving different functions for listeners of different cultures during this painful era in South Africa's political history.

Research into the possible introduction of a commercial ('C') service began as early as 1945, five years before the station's launch. Sir John Reith's earlier injunction, warning against the “use of a transmitter for the pushing of one's wares or ideas”, (Rosenthal 1979:153) was found to be impractical. Various reasons have been given for the difficulties experienced, including “the inability of the licence fee to finance a separate Afrikaans channel” (Horwitz 2001:59), and the high cost of equipment, salaries and other administrative expenses. Extra funds had to be generated by the SABC, either by raising the listeners' licence fees, or the introduction of commercial radio. The popularity of the Portuguese East African Radio Clube de Moçambique, founded by South African C.J. McHarry in 1934, and broadcasting from Lourenco Marques on a commercial basis a year later, demonstrated the potential success of such a venture<sup>146</sup> (*Popular Mechanics* September, 2004:62). In an interview with the South African magazine *Outspan*, dated 14 June 1946, veteran broadcaster and Director-General of the SABC, Major René Caprara, stated that he had “recommended to the Board of Governors that the SABC should start a chain of commercial stations in the Union for the benefit of broadcasting, listeners and the commercial community” (2004:62).

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<sup>146</sup> *Popular Mechanics* (2004:62) further notes that in 1947, “Colonel Richard L. Meyer, previously associated with the International Broadcasting Company of London (which operated English stations, and Radio Toulouse, Radio Lyons and Radio Normandy in France) took over the management of Lourenco Marques in association with John Davenport and beamed this highly successful commercial radio service into South Africa until 1972, when the SABC acquired control”. Many popular presenters on LM Radio, such as Gary Edwards and Darryl Jooste, were later employed by the SABC and became household names in South Africa.

Caprara's retirement in 1948 led to the appointment of another veteran broadcaster, Gideon Roos, as Director-General of the SABC. In the same year, after a government-appointed Commission of Inquiry "agreed that commercial radio was the next logical step for the SABC" (*The Voice – the Vision* 1996:30), Roos "travelled extensively throughout Europe, the USA, Canada and Mexico to collect information on commercial broadcasting" (p.30). After much intensive research and preparation, Caprara's original vision was realised with the introduction of Springbok Radio four years later. The first South African commercial service heralded the start of a new era in broadcasting, one in which the popularity of radio drama was to reach a pinnacle in the mid-1970's.

Certain changes took place at the SABC following the NP's electoral victory in 1948. The ruling party "began to move Broederbonders into the SABC Board and key managerial positions" (Horwitz 2001:60, citing Wilkins and Strydom), but the public broadcaster continued to respect Reith's original vision and retained "a degree of independence from the state" (Hattingh 1999:2-3). The situation altered, however, following the appointment of Albert Hertzog as Posts and Telegraphs Minister in 1958 (p.3). This appointment was to affect the history of South African broadcasting in that Hertzog's ministerial opposition to the introduction of television played a major role in delaying this process until 1976<sup>147</sup>. He was also "an outspoken opponent of the relaxation of apartheid in the case of visiting black sports teams and individuals" (Van der Westhuizen 2007:87). As such, Hertzog supported a controversial policy that led to South Africa's sporting isolation and a cultural boycott that was to affect SAE radio

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<sup>147</sup> In an article entitled "South Africa: How Long without TV?" published in the *Journal of Broadcasting*, Peter B. Orlik (1970) of Central Michigan University makes the following interesting suggestion: "Even Albert Hertzog's fanaticism may have been little more than financial interest. Before his sacking, a number of SABC staffers had learned (and confided the fact in private) that the former Minister had extensive holdings in the Republic's bioscope (movie house) chains – chains which would suffer significant financial losses should television ever be admitted. Prof. Orlik's reference is an "[I]nterview with a South African ship's purser (name withheld by request), July 10 1968, one which may seem tenuous unless placed within the context of the secrecy demanded at the time at which it was written. A reliable source leads me to believe that the ship's purser concerned was a prolific writer of radio drama known to me, and other radio drama practitioners. In pursuit of this particular strand of information, I was told that the Broeders had connections with the Kavalier and Brigadiers film companies (Vermaas, N., E-mail 11 September 2009). Moreover, former State President C.R. Swart featured in a Brigadiers Film Production *Kaptein Caprivi*, "exhorting (white) citizens to make the supreme sacrifice for South Africa"(South African History Timelines <[www.sahistory.org.za/Pages/chronology/special.../film.htm](http://www.sahistory.org.za/Pages/chronology/special.../film.htm)>) The same source states that "[s]ince 1962 Afrikaner capital had been a significant factor in the industry: the insurance company SANLAM acquired a major interest in Ster films. By 1969 SATBEL (Suid Afrikaans Teaterbelange Beperk) was formed and the financing and distribution of films in South Africa were in the hands of one large company – except for a few cinemas owned by CIC – Warner. (Generous subsidies were given to Afrikaans film makers during the 50's, 60's and 70's, and handsome tax rebates were offered to investors in the SA Film Industry in the early '80's). It is, at least, evident from the above that the threat to Afrikaner capital played a significant part in Hertzog's refusal to introduce television to South Africa.

drama and theatre during the 1970's and 80's<sup>148</sup>. In an earlier move which also affected the direction taken by broadcasting, as new Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, Hertzog offered his friend Piet Meyer the chairmanship of the SABC Board, an appointment which lasted from 1958 to 1980 (Hattingh 1999:3). In 1960 Piet Meyer also became chairman of the Broederbond, and the nepotism which has become a familiar motif of SA politics made itself felt within the corporation, as certain staff members rumoured to also be members of this semi-secret society rose with extraordinary speed through the ranks to senior positions within the organisation. Hattingh (1999:3) states that Meyer outlined his idea of the role the SABC should play in the "life of the nation" to the general council of the Broederbond in 1977, exhorting the Broeders to

harness all our communication media in a positive way in order to gather up Afrikaner national political energy in the struggle for survival in the future... our members must play a leading role!

The preference shown to Afrikaans-speaking members of staff resulted in dissatisfaction, derision, and even resignations amongst their English-speaking colleagues. At the TRC Institutional Hearing on the Media held at the SABC, Johannesburg, between the 15-17 September 1997, evidence was given which confirms this situation, namely that, at the public broadcaster during the apartheid era, "[i]f not Broeders themselves, most of the people in charge were Afrikaners or Afrikaans speaking". The report continues: "A look at management positions over the years shows that career possibilities for English speakers were extremely limited" (pp.2-3).

A significant casualty of Piet Meyer's Broederbond-oriented propaganda campaign was the SABC Director-General, Gideon Roos, who stood as an obstacle to Meyer's plans. A fellow National Party supporter, but a man of high principles who "believed in the Reithian credo of impartiality" (Horwitz 2001:60), Roos objected to the broadcasting of political propaganda. After having his powers "whittled away", Roos finally resigned in 1961 following Meyer's announcement that "the SABC would have its own editorial policy" (Hattingh 1999:3). Another pioneer broadcaster, leading "Broeder" Douglas (C.D.) Fuchs, replaced Roos as Director-General. As someone who shared Meyer's

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<sup>148</sup> Hertzog's "verkrampte" attitude towards many policy-making decisions finally resulted in his expulsion from the Cabinet by Prime Minister John Balthazar Vorster in 1969, when, together with Jaap Marais, Hertzog formed the Herstigte Nasionale Party. (Van der Westhuizen 2007:88)

vision of the SABC as a role player in the "politics of survival" (1999:4), Fuchs expressed his views as follows:

We cannot cast doubt on the rulers of the country. No useful purpose can be served by causing the public distrust of our leaders' policies.

The task of the public broadcaster, according to Fuchs, was "to report on positive achievement, prevent dissension among SA's "different nations" and to counteract the "negative criticism of the English language press and of the outside world" (p.4). Claims of indoctrination of the public were brushed aside, yet when journalist Marshall Lee asked senior SABC political commentator, Alexander Steward, to explain why the news commentary programme *Current Affairs* never deviated from the government line, rather than gaining credibility by occasionally criticising Pretoria's mistakes, Steward replied: "By asking that it shows you do not understand the ways of propaganda. With propaganda you never let up" (p.4).

The popularity of Springbok Radio with listeners and advertisers alike eventually led to major improvements in broadcasting taking place. The increased revenue from the SABC's establishment of this commercial service enabled the erection of more powerful short and medium-wave transmitters, but the reception in rural areas remained unsatisfactory. In 1959, with technical difficulties overcome, a planning committee under the direction of Dr. P.J. Meyer investigated the possibility of establishing a VHF-FM system that would meet the needs of all sections of the population. Once the Government accepted the SABC's proposals and recommendations, a system was devised which made it possible for the English and Afrikaans services to be broadcast nationally or regionally at will (*The Voice – the Vision* 1996:39). The new broadcasting system was finally completed in 1967 (p.40), giving "the overwhelming majority of South Africans of all races ...access to the best broadcasting service that modern radio could offer at the time" (p.41).

The thirty-five years in which "Springbok" held listeners in thrall saw the rise and decline of apartheid, a policy described by Patrick Bond (2007) as "the twentieth century's longest-running crime against humanity". The NP, once in power, introduced a plethora of apartheid-driven legislative "Acts" aimed at the restraint and control of the ever-increasing black majority. The first step was taken with the Mixed Marriages Act in 1949. The rapid implementation of a succession of discriminatory policies

culminated in the era of "Grand apartheid", which finally ended with attempts to either reform or dismantle apartheid controls without surrendering white domination. An anomaly existed between the bland, white-washed existence portrayed as "real life" by SAE radio drama, and the genuine harsh reality and colourful complexities, so rich in drama, of the South African people's everyday life.

Springbok Radio's commercial status ensured that no overtly propagandistic matter, such as that broadcast in "Current Affairs" on the English and Afrikaans Services, was permitted. Advertisers were particularly influential in the early years, when the manufacturers of a product sponsored an entire programme. Mindful of the public's wide-ranging sensitivities, these advertisers and their agencies were reluctant to link their products to a programme that might conceivably offend potential customers. Starting with listeners' requests on "*Sunbeam time*", the first sponsored programme presented on the first day of broadcast, Springbok projected a bright, friendly image which earned it the reputation of being known as "The station that was like part of the family" (Holmes, M: 1987). The following Tuesday morning programme schedule for the 28 July 1953, published in the *SABC* bulletin (25 July 1953), conveys something of the homespun nature of the material broadcast:

## **SPRINGBOK**

**89.4m**

### **6.00 \*Musiek vir Ontbyt**

Eric Egan se opgewekte  
musiek en grappies sal u  
sommer dadelik beter laat  
voel. Die program sluit in:

### **6.45 Bokomo-Weerberig**

### **6.46 Musiekherinneringe**

### **7.00 Gesondheidswenk gevolg deur**

#### **Iets Nuuts**

### **7.30 Musiek deur Massey**

### **7.45 Bayer-Weerberig**

### **7.46 Morester**

Die gewilde sanger Allan Jones sing Cosi Cosa en Rosalie<sup>149</sup>

41.2m

**8.30 Orrelkorrels**

**8.45 Linda's First Love**  
(Palmolive soap)

**9.00 \*Grenade Parade**

**9.15 Doctor Mac**

A very ambitious father will not even consider his son's wishes to become a farmer. He wants him to become a specialist in the medical profession. That youth is so unhappy that he attempts to take his own life. But Doctor Mac prevents this fatality occurring and manages to smooth out all difficulties to the satisfaction of everybody.  
(Kolynos)

**9.30 David's Children**  
(Holsum)

**9.45 \* Sweet and Lovely**  
(Sunsilk)

**10.00 Brave Voyage**  
(Rinso)

**10.15 \* Requests in Record Time**  
(Double Danderine)

**10.30 Frenchman's Creek**  
(Jungle Oats Products)

**10.45 Nutrine Mother's Club**

If you are a mother, chances are that you are very often in need of helpful advice. This is the programme for you

**11.00 Ballet Royal**  
(Royal Baking Powder)

**11.15 Women's Forum**

**11.30 Dangerous Lady**  
(Eyegene)

**11.45 \*Be Bright with Bok**

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<sup>149</sup> The layout of the original *SABC* programme schedule has been replicated, including the use of bold type, capital letters and asterisks, the significance of which is not altogether clear.

Comparisons may be drawn between the programme schedule above and those of the English and Afrikaans Service programmes on the same day:

## ENGLISH

62.3m

6.45 Touch Your Toes

7.00 **THE NEWS**

7.10 Touch Your Toes

7.30 Weather forecast

7.21 **Bright and Early**

7.30 **YESTERDAY IN PARLIAMENT**

7.42 Bright and Early (ctd)

8.00 **THE NEWS. Weather forecast**

8.12 Comparative market prices and reports

8.22 \*Tonic Tunes

8.30 **Curtain Call**

49.4 m

To the Land of My  
Romance; The Joy of Life;  
Give Me One Hour; Life  
and Love; The Doll Dance;  
You are Going to Dance;  
Here in My Arms; Moon-  
beams; Song of the Vagabonds

9.00 **"HATTER'S CASTLE"**  
By A.J. Cronin, Ep. 18

9.15 **\* Listeners Choice**  
Presented by George Moore

9.45 **Ballet Music**  
\* The Hundred Kisses;  
(D'Erlanger)  
Les Sirens (Berners)  
Excerpt from Gayaneh –  
Ballet Suite

(Khachaturian)

- 10.15 Morning Service**  
Conducted by the Rev. W.L. Wellington
- 10.30 Melody for Strings**  
Symphony No. 4 in F  
(Boyce)  
An Eighteenth Century  
Scherzo (Haydn Wood)  
Two Sketches; (Carse)  
Air from Gresserhall;  
(Woods)  
Jig; (Sutherland).
- 11.00 "THE TWO DIANAS"**  
by Alexandre Dumas  
Ep.18
- 11.15 Lean Back and Listen**

## AFRIKAANS

61.3m

- 6.45 Liggaamsoefeninge**
- 7.00 DIE NUUS**
- 7.10 Liggaamsoefeninge**
- 7.20** Weervoorspelling
- 7.21 \*Melodie en Ritme**  
Eugene Pini en sy Tango-orke – Skobbejak  
(Rixner)
- 7.30 Gister in the Volksraad**
- 7.42 Walsies van Allerlei  
Aard**  
Die Walsfees-orke –  
Dansend met Trane in my Oë (Burke/Dubin)
- 8.00 DIE NUUS**  
en Weervoorspelling
- 8.12 \*Instrumentale Brokkies**  
Edwin Fischer (clavier)  
Menuet (Mozart/verw.  
Ischer)

- 8.30 \*Versoekprogramme**  
Jb en Dn: Luistergenot  
Kst: Almal se Uurtjie
- 9.30 Lig en Lewendig**  
Die Langworth Konsert-  
Orkes – Galop van die  
Komediant  
(Kavalensky);  
Die Langworth Simfonie-  
Orkes – Russiese  
Martroosdans uit Die Rooi  
Papawer (Gliere)
- 9.45 BANTOEPROGRAM**
- 10.15 Oggendgodsdien**  
Ds. P.J. de Klerk
- 10.30 VROUERUBRIEK**  
o.l.v. Suzanne van Wyk  
**Trou is nie Perdekoop nie**  
Nr. 6 deur Suna de Villiers  
**Op reis deur Volksmusiek-  
Land Nr. 6** Engeland- deur  
Gunther Pulvermacher
- 11.00 \*Teater-orreliste aan  
die Beurt**  
Quentin Maclean (orrel)
- 11.15 \*Populêre Instrumentiste – Arthur  
Rubinstein (Klavier) –  
Polonaise Nr. 1 in C-Kruis  
Mineur (Chopin); Ginette  
Neveu (viool) met Gustaf  
Beck (klavier) – Varia-  
sies op 'n Tema van  
Corelli (Tartini)**
- 11.38 Die Minnesangers**  
o.l.v. Bosman de Kock –  
Die Wewerskantate  
**(Volkslied/verw.Rickstat)**

Springbok Radio's claim to "Brighter Broadcasting" seems justified when set against the Eurocentric bias and elitist appeal of the English and Afrikaans services. Despite the NP's strongly anti-Imperialist, anti-capitalist stance during this period, both the "A" and "B" service programmes were modelled on a format developed by the BBC, a

broadcasting service seen by many as a purveyor of cultural imperialism and a capitalist ideology “built on a belief in the primacy of work” (Barnard, S. 2000:221). In contrast, Springbok Radio was seen as favouring an “American” approach. As stated by Horwitz (2001), the launch of the commercial service “introduced an uneasy mix of American and British models of broadcasting to the SABC” (p.60).

In the examples above, all three stations allocated more than half the morning air-time available to music programmes, but the content and presentation differed. Springbok Radio was enlivened by popular light music, with intermittent wisecracks, jokes, entertaining anecdotes and other light-hearted patter from the announcer on duty. It was also interspersed with the inevitable advertisements and infectious jingles, many of which remained emblazoned on the listeners’ memories, to be recalled decades later<sup>150</sup>. Those who chose to listen to music on the “A” and “B” programmes tended towards quieter listening pleasures, and a more impersonal style of presentation. However, as the day progressed, classical music on these stations would generally be followed by a far wider and lighter range of music than shown in the examples above.

It is also apparent from the first schedule that the commercial station’s morning programme was designed to appeal to the average housewife, not only offering advice on household and family matters, but providing a form of escapism from domestic drudgery. Despite a scarcity of locally-produced serials in the early “Springbok” years, 25% of the morning programme detailed above was devoted to dramatised stories and serials, the majority of which were imported productions, as were the two BBC serials broadcast on the English Service. Although not featured on this particular morning, novel readings were popular on the Afrikaans Service<sup>151</sup>. Items such as *Yesterday in Parliament/Gister in die Volksraad*, (later followed at 7.55 p.m. *Today in Parliament/Vandag in the Volksraad*), and *Comparative Market Prices and Reports*, although of interest to a minority, lacked popular appeal. Broadcast from Johannesburg on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, the morning *Bantu programme/Bantoeoprogram*, and the *Zulu programme* transmitted from Durban, attracted a huge listenership,

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<sup>150</sup> OTR expert Kevan Mardon, whose lectures on Springbok Radio are much in demand, reveals that audience members who are strangers to the “Springbok era” express amazement at former listeners’ ability to sing or recite the popular jingles of the past, and ask whether the station “brain-washed” its listeners.

<sup>151</sup> For example, in *Vrouerubriek*, (SABC bulletin, Monday 6 July 1953), Anna Neethling-Pohl read ep.10 of *Die Klok in Die Voorkamer* (*The Clock in the front room*) by Servaes Kieser. As discussed, unlike its English-language counterpart, the Afrikaans Service was totally dependent on locally produced plays and serials, which initially limited the station’s output of dramatic productions.

largely amongst Zulu, Xhosa, South Sotho and Venda speakers. The popularity of these half-hour programmes, which featured music, news, plays and details of sporting fixtures and results – famously delivered at break-neck speed by Henry Nxumalo<sup>152</sup> – did not translate into a multi-cultural audience for other programmes on the same station, nor was it expected to. Each race had its space. The Broadcasting Act was changed in 1960 to make provision for “Bantu” programmes, and steps were taken towards creating more space for African language speakers with the introduction of Radio Bantu.

The TRC Media Hearings Report (1998:4) states that a 5-member “Bantu programmes” control board, “composed entirely of white members and chaired by the chair of the SABC board” was introduced. A “totally separate structure, headed by thirty-five white supervisors” was also put in place to provide “Bantu” programmes. The launch of Radio Sesotho and Radio Zulu took place on 1 January 1962, followed by Radio Setswana and Radio Lebowa on June 1 of the same year<sup>153</sup>. The TRC Media Hearings Report (1998:4) also reveals that, according to the SABC’s 1962 annual report, from the beginning programmes were “designed to stimulate the Bantu to appreciate their own cultural heritage, both in his[sic] homeland and in the urban areas where he[sic] worked”. The black services thus fulfilled their role as enunciated in the 1976 Broederbond *Master Plan for a White Country*, which, according to the TRC report (p.4), states that

The mass media and especially the radio will play important parts.  
The radio services for the respective black nations must play a giant role here.

The needs of a burgeoning black listenership were beginning to be met, but, ironically, the racial stratification of broadcasting, in accordance with the Verwoerdian doctrines of “separate development” and “ethnic self-determination”, had also begun.

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<sup>152</sup> In the SABC’s publication, *Radio*, dated August 11 1950, p. 29, Leon Bennett describes Nxumalo’s “witty and humorous style”, adding that “he gives his longest broadcast when reading the [sports] results on Tuesday – a matter of three minutes for wading through some 2,000 words”. Henry Nxumalo’s sports talk was adjudged by many listeners to be the most popular item in the Bantu programme. The Sesotho version of his sports talk was given by announcer and influential Afro-European jazz enthusiast, Percy Hlubi, immediately afterwards.

<sup>153</sup> In 1960 Radio Bantu was established, broadcasting for an hour a day alternatively in Zulu, Xhosa, and South Sotho over the medium wave transmitters of the English and Afrikaans Services. This was in addition to the half hour broadcasts on medium wave on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays on the rediffusion service. In 1962 Radio Sesotho, Radio Zulu, Radio Setswana and Radio Lebowa were established on the newly introduced FM transmitters. Radio Tsonga and Radio Venda were introduced in 1965. Radio Swazi and Radio Ndebele were only introduced in 1982 and 1983 respectively. (*The Voice – the Vision* 1996:75)

Other ethnic groups were apportioned a similarly small amount of dedicated air-time in the early years of broadcasting. A half-hour weekly programme, on Sunday from 9:15 to 9:45AM, was broadcast from the Durban transmitters to meet the needs of South Africans of Asian descent, a diverse community in which different languages such as Hindi, Tamil, Urdu, Telugu, and Gujarati are spoken. The majority of the 160 000 "Asiatics" living in the Durban Magisterial District in 1953 were "diligent followers of the Indian session" (Bennett, L. *SABC*, 31 January 1953:6). To meet the different needs of this "naturally religious race", the SABC broadcast accounts of 13 religious festivals each year. A wide range of traditional music was also recorded in the Durban Indian studios and sent as far afield as Frankfurt, while the most ambitious drama attempted by staff was *The Merchant of Venice*, translated into Tamil by S.M. Pillay in 1949 (p.6). However, a large number of the South African Indian community also speak English as a home language, and their life-style frequently reflects a strong Western influence. The enthusiastic support of request programmes and comedy shows on Springbok Radio by members of the Indian community drew attention to the needs – and commercial potential - of this rapidly-growing and influential section of the population. With the introduction of Radio Lotus in 1983, followed by Radio Ndebele, the cultural stratification of South African broadcasting was finally complete<sup>154</sup>.

#### 4.5.1 SPRINGBOK RADIO DRAMA

Despite the SABC's commitment to a predominantly local content on Springbok Radio, the station was heavily dependent on imported productions during the first few years of broadcasting. As a library of local radio drama was still to be developed, plays and serials were bought by the public broadcaster from ARTRANSA (Australian Radio Transcription Service). Gifted actor and voice artist, Michael Mayer (2004:3), confirms that "the legendary John Walker" had the franchise for ARTRANSA, adding that Walker brought them across from Sydney, Australia,

hundreds of 1", 15" and then (also) the huge 18" and even 20" or was it 21" LPs which were duly dubbed on to tape ready for the Ampex tape machines in the Springbok Studio. Shows like "Mary Livingstone MD".."Dr Paul".."Hop Harrigan".."The Fat Man".."Night Beat" ..and many more..

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<sup>154</sup> In 1984 two black TV channels were introduced, and "the officials in charge of SABC programmes for black listeners and viewers comprised eighty-five senior employees: six black and the rest white and almost exclusively Afrikaans speaking" (TRC Media Hearings Report: 4).

Mayer adds that “MOST of the Artransa shows were excellent I thought...but the bad were pretty bad” (p.3). Although memorable for many older “Springbok” listeners, Mike Mayer (2004:3) nominates the ‘formula’ teen adventures and early evening serials such as “Captain Silver and the Sea Hound”, sourced from ARTRANSA, as being amongst the “worst” productions broadcast on Springbok Radio<sup>155</sup>.

As noted by the anonymous “Pumamouse” on the Pumamouse website, many of the Australian serials broadcast in South Africa were adapted from material originally broadcast in the United States of America. These included the popular *Superman*, which held youngsters spell-bound from 1950-1967, and other children’s serials such as the American *Lone Ranger* and *Hopalong Cassidy*. Australian imports *Front Page Lady* and *Sincerely Rita Marsden* were the first of many serials enjoyed by housewives in the 1950’s, followed by *Mary Livingstone MD*, *Portia Faces Life*, *Dr. Paul*, *Mary Lane* and *Nurse White*. Evening programmes, including the original *The Creaking Door* series broadcast from 1952<sup>156</sup>, were also imported. Monday evening’s play-hour, originally entitled *Lux Radio Theatre*<sup>157</sup>, and Wednesday’s *Radio Playhouse*, were both heavily indebted to American and Australian plays during this period. A *Reader’s Digest* article published in 1980, and cited in *South Africa’s Yesterdays (Popular Mechanics, September 2004: 62-63*<sup>158</sup>), estimates that initially more than 60% of all drama programmes on Springbok Radio were imported, mainly from Australia. The figure given includes the initially small number of Afrikaans plays and serials that were, of necessity, locally written and produced. Early Springbok Radio programme schedules indicate that the percentage of imported English-language productions was substantially higher. Although experienced actors and producers were ready to meet the challenges offered by the new service, the shortage of experienced local radio drama writers presented difficulties which South African producers and private production houses overcame by the purchase of imported scripts – and, at times, the thinly disguised plagiarism of overseas productions. Veteran broadcaster Tom Meehan

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<sup>155</sup> Mike Mayer (2004:3) nominates the “best” of Springbok as being any of Mike McCabe’s dramas. He adds “God gave McCabe a gift that was quite electric..In the beginning the “old guard”, Hugh Rouse, Douglas Laws, Helen Braithwaite, et al, thought McCabe to be (possibly) “tricksy” and maybe a bit indulgent with his thrumming pauses that he wanted and “walking silently across a room..so that it could be ‘felt’..” He would use powerful smack-in-the-face “dead cut” and “jump-cut” edits which REALLY wound up the tension and excitement of shows..and his often Pinteresque and totally natural dialogue was quite superb”.

<sup>156</sup> A local version of this popular series was broadcast between 1966-1968.

<sup>157</sup> Broadcast throughout Springbok Radio’s 35-year existence.

<sup>158</sup> By arrangement with Heritage Publishing (Pty) Ltd.

(2002:1) claims that “Springbok Radio couldn’t have started without the input of overseas scripts obtained by Mike Silver, Charles Berman, and others”.

Both the growing tension in the SA political situation, and the SABC’s initial reliance on British and Australian transcriptions, affected the direction taken by SAE radio drama in the ‘50’s. The often out-dated imported productions developed the predominantly white English-speaking audience’s taste for well-modulated voices and mono-cultural settings, and similar fare was expected from local productions<sup>159</sup>. *Brave Voyage*, the first full-length “local” serial to be broadcast on commercial radio, serves as an interesting example. Adapted from a Canadian script by Yolande d’Hotman, *Brave Voyage* was produced by Cedric Messina in the Durban studios of the SABC, and featured the Standard English accents of Yolande d’Hotman, Tom Meehan<sup>160</sup>, Merle Wayne and Ian Brett. An *SABC* programme schedule, dated 14 February, 1953, extols the “excellence of this presentation”, and refers to the fact that “certain alterations had to be made because the original story had a Canadian setting”. Obvious Canadian references were excised, but the difficulties of transforming the script into a multi-cultural South African setting were not addressed. The format of a mono-cultural<sup>161</sup>, “neutral” setting of SAE radio drama was already securely in place. A further collaboration between d’Hotman, Messina and Meehan took place in 1953, when advertising agency Lintas commissioned d’Hotman to adapt Leslie Charteris’s *The Saint*, and Tom Meehan was cast as the eponymous lead (Smart 2003:1). Other programmes produced locally but derived from American or Australian series were Michael Silver’s *Epic Case Book* in which *Inspector Carr Investigates* (1950-85), *Consider your Verdict* and *Medical File* (Pumamouse: *History of OTR* online). No difficulty was experienced in referring to place-names when presenting drama set in Britain or America, but – with a few notable exceptions – locally-written radio dramas, such as the popular, long-running serial *From Crystal – With Love*<sup>162</sup>, were set in some

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<sup>159</sup> Regrettably, the tentative steps taken by the English service to produce plays set in SA were abandoned, to be revived again in the mid-80’s.

<sup>160</sup> Tom Meehan’s autobiography relates how he consciously rid himself of an English provincial accent, and was thus able to enter the world of broadcasting as, first, a free-lance actor, then as producer and proprietor of his own Tom Meehan Productions (Pty) Ltd.

<sup>161</sup> A prerequisite for an aspiring radio actor is the ability to play different characters, using a wide variety of accents. Producers of SAE radio drama followed the established BBC tradition of denoting the “class” of a character by the use of a particular accent and style of speech. A Cockney or provincial accent indicates a working-class character, for instance, even in the English translation of a classic Russian or French play. The use of accents to portray characters of various nationalities, such as American, German, French, etc., was also commonplace, particularly in plays broadcast, but the term “mono-cultural” is used in the sense that the vast majority of both imported and local scripts reflected and promoted white cultural norms.

<sup>162</sup> Written by the prolific Delphine Lethbridge, and produced by Yolande d’Hotman.

unidentifiable No-Man's Land. Although high standards of acting and production were generally achieved, the writing of both "imports" and local serials would often disappoint. In particular, many of the long-running morning serials broadcast to housewives simply provided a comforting auditory presence for the listeners, and enlisted criticism for their "puerile" content by cast members, whose task it was to "lift the words from the page".

Michael McCabe, whose *Suspense* and *Beyond Midnight* series were arguably amongst the finest work broadcast, confirms a general impression that only Sonovision's long-running *Squad Cars* (1967-1985) and his own *General Motors on Safari* featured South African settings (2002:2). Comedy proved the exception, however. Several of the best-loved shows such as Cecil Wightman's *Snoektown Calling* in the 1950's, followed by *Next Stop Makouville* with Pip Freedman and Piet Pompies, and *The Pip Freedman Show* (Erasmus 2002a:1), were essentially South African productions, drawing on local situations and racial stereotypes to fuel their phenomenal success. Tom Meehan imported comedy scripts from a number of BBC productions, such as *Men from the Ministry* (1969- 1985)<sup>163</sup>, *The Navy Lark* (1973-1985), *Father Dear Father* (1974-1985), and *Friends and Neighbours* (1976-1985). The popularity of these imported programmes, broadcast in front of strictly segregated audiences<sup>164</sup> at the Durban SABC studios in Old Fort Road, led to the deployment of local script-writers in order to prolong the shows for years beyond the original 12 or 24-part series, as broadcast by the BBC<sup>165</sup>.

Afrikaans language programmes played an important part in the development of Springbok Radio, but were largely restricted to musical items during the earliest years, due to the absence of imported broadcasting material<sup>166</sup> and an existing radio drama infrastructure. Old Time Radio archivist, Frans Erasmus (2002a), states that the first

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<sup>163</sup> A further 12-part series was broadcast over Radio South Africa in 1987.

<sup>164</sup> I was personally involved in these recordings, both as an actor (Margaret Milner-Smyth) and writer (Terry Miller), throughout their duration. "Black" (largely Indian) and "White" audiences were invited to attend the recording of two shows on alternate Thursday evenings. Any "Black" guests accidentally invited to a "White" performance were asked to sit in the gallery above the rest of the audience. Eventually members of the cast protested at this humiliating practice and it was dropped, without the expected reprimand from the SABC's Durban branch manager.

<sup>165</sup> Both *Men from the Ministry* and Joe Stewardson's *Taxi* (the story of a New York taxi-driver, with George Korelin as Chuck, Tony Jay as Red, and Patricia Saunders as Myrtle, were made into feature films, but without great success. The actors lacked experience in the film medium, and both plots were unconvincingly set "elsewhere". The lack of resonance in SA society escaped unnoticed on radio, but seemed glaringly obvious on film.

<sup>166</sup> A similar problem was to affect SAE radio drama two decades later, with the imposition of the anti-apartheid cultural boycott by traditional sources, such as the BBC.

Afrikaans serial to be broadcast was *Liefdeslied*<sup>167</sup>, which was such a resounding success that it ran for 1094 episodes from 1953 to 1959. Two famous and well-loved broadcasters, Esmè Euvrard and Jan Cronje, played the leads throughout the run of this serial. Many other popular serials followed, such as *Die Volmaakte Uur*<sup>168</sup> (1967-70), and *Wie die liefde nie het nie*<sup>169</sup> (1966-69), *Die Wildtemmer*<sup>170</sup>, *Uit die Skatkis van ons Skrywers*<sup>171</sup>, *Wolwedans in die Skemer*<sup>172</sup>, *Die Vrou van Shangetti*<sup>173</sup>, *Die Mannheim Saga*<sup>174</sup>, *Bruid vir 'n Gestorwe Man*<sup>175</sup>, and *Snip en Rissiepit*<sup>176</sup>. Listeners still recall the popular *Lood Landdroster*<sup>177</sup>, featuring Jan Pohl, Dana Niehaus and Paul Fouche's characterization of "Duifie", who translated everything literally from English into Afrikaans<sup>178</sup>. *Stiefvader*<sup>179</sup>, written by Cyril Chosack, has the distinction of a listing in the *Guinness Book of Records* as the world's longest-running Afrikaans radio serial (*Popular Mechanics*, September 2004: 63), but the work of other talented writers such as Frieda Viljoen, Monica Breedt, Louwtjie Fourie, Dricky Beukes, C.F. Beyers-Boshoff, Willie van Rensburg, Lerina Erasmus, Leon van Nierop will also be long remembered by members of the "Springbok" audience.

Once actors, writers, producers, recording studios and commercial sponsors recognised the huge potential offered by the new commercial station, the local content of Springbok Radio increased. The need for locally written scripts and productions escalated with the introduction of a cultural boycott which began in 1963, and later enjoyed the support of British actor's union, Equity. The opening of the "whites only" Johannesburg Civic Theatre in 1962, and the performances of major plays, one by Harold Pinter and one by Robert Bolt, led Athol Fugard to pen an open letter to British playwrights, asking them "to make it a condition in granting the rights to their plays that all audiences be non-segregated" (Fugard 1997:xi). Despite Fugard's altered stance on the subject, expressed publicly and in a letter dated 3 May 1968 to Mary Benson, pressure mounted for writers to join the cultural boycott.

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<sup>167</sup> *Love's song.*

<sup>168</sup> *The perfect hour.*

<sup>169</sup> *Those who have no love.*

<sup>170</sup> *The animal tamer.*

<sup>171</sup> *Out the treasure-chest of our writers.*

<sup>172</sup> *Wolves dancing in the dusk.*

<sup>173</sup> *The woman of Shangetti.*

<sup>174</sup> *The Mannheim Saga.*

<sup>175</sup> *Bride for a dead man.*

<sup>176</sup> *The minx and the shrew*

<sup>177</sup> *Lood Magistrate..*

<sup>178</sup> See the Pumamouse OTR web site.

<sup>179</sup> *Stepfather.*

Eventually the majority of British and American writers<sup>180</sup> banned the use of their work in South Africa, with the result that both the English Service and Springbok Radio were restricted to texts that were out of copyright<sup>181</sup>. The extra work created by this situation benefited local scriptwriters in particular, and actors, producers and production houses in general. However, SAE radio drama practitioners differ markedly in their opinions as to the effect of the boycott on the art form. Producer Don Ridgway (2002:2) states that the cultural boycott “helped to destroy standards (literary)”, adding that “[t]o withdraw salutary and civilising ideas from the people who need them most has always struck me as stupidly counter-productive”. In Tom Meehan’s (2002:1) opinion, English radio drama “rose to the challenge and in fact became a force which could not be ignored”. Writer and producer Michael McCabe (2002:2) expresses the view that the “highest good” came from the boycott, which, together with the late arrival of TV, helped radio drama reach “a standard that was on a par with anywhere else in the world”. Nigel Vermaas (2002:1) comments that

the boycott had a great effect. Aside from having limited access to major English play-wrights and to BBC material, the whole SABC psyche encouraged writers to write about anything but the country except in “patriotic” propaganda RSA (External service) programmes”.

In contrast, Robert Young (2002:1) asserts that the Afrikaans radio drama department “never had any problem with BBC scripts, nor any European country”. My sense is that the state of limbo created by the boycott deprived practitioners from the progressive influence of new developments in radio drama. It also left the listeners’ tastes in the art form lagging behind, as – particularly on the English Service - period plays and novels were revisited and revived<sup>182</sup>.

Independent production houses played a significant role in the development of local radio drama on Springbok Radio. These privately owned businesses generally worked

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<sup>180</sup> With the notable exception of Tom Stoppard, who had personal experience of the negative effects of censorship and cultural boycotts in Eastern Europe.

<sup>181</sup> Frans Erasmus (2002) states on the Pumamouse web site that the BBC officially did not sell material to commercial stations, but overcame this restriction by channelling sales through Radio Luxembourg (Old Time Radio Program description).

<sup>182</sup> The negative aspect of a cultural boycott is vividly illustrated by another instance, cited in the *History of SA Media – Broadcast*, when the British actor’s union, Equity, banned the sale of British television programme material to the SABC between 1977 and the early 1990’s. I would suggest that the SATV’s subsequent reliance on old American TV series, including crime series, “soaps” and comedy shows dependent on canned laughter (rather than witty dialogue) for audience response, aided Hollywood’s cultural imperialism in its formative influence on a generation of young South Africans.

on a very fine profit margin: the risks taken were great, and the contribution to radio drama, particularly during the cultural boycott, was inestimable. In an interview with Mike Holmes of *The Star* (27 February 1987), CRC studio's prolific radio drama producer and writer, Michael Silver recalls the difficulties experienced in the early years of broadcasting when radio dramas were recorded on 16 inch (40cm) acetate discs. This meant that "if anyone fluffed his lines you had to begin all over on a new disc, and the cost of the disc itself was the difference between a profit and [a] loss".

Although the SABC was indebted to the entrepreneurial spirit and creative drive of these production houses and recording studios, the public broadcaster entered into competition with their suppliers and allies by deciding to set up its own "in-house" production units. Radio drama practitioner, and former station manager of RSA and SAfm, Jack Mullen (2002:5), explains that this decision by the SABC "was motivated by a need to make more cost-effective use of its own studios – drama studios, particularly". The reduced studio rental costs proved extremely attractive to those smaller production houses and advertising agencies that had been reliant on the recording facilities of the larger, independent recording studios. Veteran broadcaster Tom Meehan (2002:1) of Tom Meehan (Pty) Ltd., describes his own use of the SABC studios as a decision that "made sense", yet adds that the role played by independent production houses during the Springbok years was "immense". He also observes that the private production houses "did very well until the SABC decided to open their own commercial houses. Faced with the additional competition from studios that offered sponsors programmes at absurdly low prices, the private ones soon lost their viability. The closing down of Springbok finished them off" (p.1). In fact, the final blow was delivered to private production houses early in 1986 with the launch of Radio South Africa and Radio Suid Afrika, following the broadcaster's extraordinary attempt to coerce these private studios into producing "Springbok Radio-type" serials for broadcast at no additional cost to the SABC. The debacle that followed culminated in the closure of many privately owned recording studios, as will be discussed more fully in section 4.5.2.

Evening listenership to Springbok Radio dropped substantially following the introduction of television in 1976. In April 1985 the SABC announced that transmission time would be reduced from 19 to 13 ½ hrs. daily from 1 July 1985. Programmes such as *Inspector Carr Investigates*, *Squad Cars*, *Radio Theatre* and *Playhouse* were

cancelled, while other evening programmes were re-scheduled for broadcasting during the day. The music request programme which followed at 18 30 p.m. drew strong support from members of the Indian community. This unexpected response confirms the view still held by many former radio practitioners that the decision to close this popular station was based on inaccurate, incomplete or race-oriented listenership figures, which reflected an all-time low at 800 000 daily in 1985 (Gordon, D. & Hamman H. 1986:5).

Once the reduction in transmission time was announced, a sense of uncertainty concerning the future filtered through the industry. Rumours were rife until September 1985, when the SABC announced the closure of Springbok Radio on the 31 December 1985. The reason given was that both listenership and advertising revenue had been drastically reduced by the introduction of television in 1976, leaving the public broadcaster no option but to close the station. All those whose livelihoods were about to be affected by the station's closure condemned the decision. Some posited that the AMPS and RAMS surveys had underestimated both the popularity of Springbok Radio and the station's listenership ratings with a "Whites only" approach to their research. Others expressed the rather more sinister view that the decision-makers in dark suits, deferentially addressed as "Meneer", resented the disproportionate representation of English-language programmes, and had long felt that the very existence of a dual-language station represented an anomaly in a country in which cultural divisions were legally entrenched. A more pragmatic approach was adopted by those who believed that the ailing channel might be resuscitated by an innovative change of direction. Shortly after the station's closure, an article in the *Sunday Times* (1986:5) confirms the rumour that David Gresham, disc jockey and co-owner of South Africa's biggest independent record company, had attempted to convince the SABC that he could modernize Springbok Radio with American programming ideas, and bring it back into top listenership. The same article (1986:5) also confirms that the financial situation was not as dire as that presented by the SABC management, stating categorically that

[t]he SABC's decision to close Springbok is not related to the station's advertising revenues. In 1985 Springbok Radio earned R14-million on commercials. This was a strong recovery from a low of R11.1 million in 1979, according to the advertising AMPS survey, Adindex.

According to M. Brooks (1991:8), however:

Springbok Radio earned between R10 million and R12 million a year, but cost R15 million. The old English and Afrikaans services cost about R30 million a year, but generated no income.

Whether one accepts the figures quoted by *The Sunday Times* or Brooks, it is evident that, while retaining Springbok Radio would require relatively little subsidization on the part of the SABC, the cost of maintaining the non-commercial Afrikaans and English Services had become onerous. Springbok Radio's commercial sponsors and their advertising agencies, excited and challenged by the introduction of television, stated their intention to increasingly focus on television rather than radio. The final paragraph of the *Sunday Times* (1986:5) article gives some hint of the influence wielded by advertisers and their agencies, and their attitude towards the proposed changes. Although it was

too early to determine the reaction of the advertisers...Mr. Len van Zyl, chairman of ad agency, Lindsay Smithers FCB, was quoted as welcoming the changes. "With the mass communications medium of TV1 and TV4 there was no longer a market for Springbok Radio", he said".

Faced with advertisers determined to remove their sponsorship from radio in order to allocate a greater portion of their budget to the production and flighting of television commercials, and the unwieldy financial burden anticipated as a result of this change of allegiance, the SABC remained obdurate in its decision to close Springbok Radio. It was expected that the revenue that had been derived from advertising on Springbok Radio would flow into the re-vamped Afrikaans and English Services, to be known respectively as Radio Suid Afrika and Radio South Africa, while small business would take advantage of the cheaper rates available to advertisers on the newly introduced regional stations. The SABC's true intentions, therefore, were centred on shedding the financial burden involved in the provision of non-commercial public service broadcasting, rather than re-vitalizing the old stations. By offering the most popular Springbok radio programmes on Radio South Africa and Radio Suid Afrika, the SABC would provide listeners with "the best of both worlds", while shedding the exorbitant cost of operating two radio stations without advertising revenue.

Little thought appears to have been given to the long-term effects the closure of Springbok Radio would have on SA radio drama and its practitioners. Prof. Tony Ulyatt

(1986a:11-12) provides an accurate assessment of the situation as it existed in 1985.

He states that

In South Africa, the SABC is the only broadcasting organisation owned (in the bureaucratic sense) by the government. There can be little doubt about either its organisational ideology or its highly centralised authority. The consequences for radio drama arising out of this situation – which is not peculiar in Africa but must appear unusual, if not intolerable, by European or American standards – are, first, that entire services, such as Springbok Radio (which, although controlled by the SABC, did offer considerable outlet for one-off radio plays, serials, adaptations in both English and Afrikaans) could be closed down with apparently little notice being taken of listeners' requirements or the drastic effects such a course of action would have for actors, writers, or producers. In many ways, the damage caused by this bureaucratic decision seems irreparable.

The closure of Springbok Radio was an occasion marked by hugely emotional farewell parties on New Year's Eve at SABC studios in all the main centres<sup>183</sup>. The English and Afrikaans Services were also "shut down", only to be re-introduced to listeners as Radio South Africa and Radio Suid Afrika on the 1 January 1986.

As an exclusively white radio station broadcasting to a multi-cultural society, Springbok Radio was neither "neutral" nor "a-political", yet it succeeded in creating this impression in the memories of former listeners drawn from different racial groups and social backgrounds. Radio drama producer and writer, Michael McCabe (2002:2) describes the drama broadcast on Springbok Radio as reflecting "the best and worst" of SAE radio drama. He also wryly reflects that

English Radio Drama was of no interest at all to "the new order" [at the SABC]...it was all white, white, white.

The "white space" created by much of the drama broadcast re-affirmed a sense of "European" superiority amongst the white audience, yet many former black, coloured and Indian listeners to Springbok Radio have described the Springbok serials as providing them with an imaginative "escape", into a "neutral" space of laughter, adventure and intrigue. How was it, then, that listeners of different backgrounds and cultures were successfully "blinded by the white"?

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<sup>183</sup> Many radio drama practitioners refused the invitation as an act of protest.

A distinction may be drawn between the apparent neutrality of the “whiteness” depicted over the air, and the far harsher reality of “whiteness” experienced by South Africans on the ground. As with its English Service counterpart, the majority of English-language plays, comedies and serials on Springbok Radio featured settings outside South Africa. Particularly in the early years, but throughout its existence, the station was also heavily reliant on material recorded and broadcast in Australia, Canada, Britain and North America. Unlike South Africa, the histories and demographics of these countries have led to the acceptance of whiteness as the invisible norm; a matter of concern for a few academics, writers and politicians, and those minority groups relegated to the margins by an accident of birth. Steyn (2002: xxvii) explains the “invisible” nature of whiteness as follows:

That whiteness achieved this normative invisibility...reflects the centrality of Western ideological constructs in the modern world as we inherited it. Indeed, the notion of whiteness...[and] the social formations it engendered have been so ubiquitous and so powerful that they come to be taken as common sense, the way things are.

The whiteness described above is the whiteness of nations such as America, Britain, and even, ironically, other deep-settler societies such as Australia, New Zealand and Canada, that is, the whiteness of a majority: bland, “neutral”, seemingly innocuous. It is also the whiteness of SAE radio drama. But it is not the whiteness of a minority exercising absolute power over a black majority. It may be argued that a unique configuration of whiteness emerged from South Africa’s colonial/apartheid political past, with the racial divisions scoured into the nation’s psyche leaving whiteness highly visible to all. Sarah Nuttall’s *Subjectivities of Whiteness*, discussed in Section 2.2, alerts us to the heightened state of awareness of the white self in relation to the not-white other, as revealed in the writings of certain “exceptional” South Africans. This “state of awareness of the white self” is not the prerogative of a few highly literate and compassionate individuals but a condition familiar to and affecting all white South Africans. The exceptional nature of these writers’ achievements lies partly in their having actively resisted and challenged the false belief in white cultural supremacy, which this common “state of awareness” historically offered a privileged minority.

Conversely, it may also be argued that the condition of black South Africans, if not their physical presence, became “invisible” to the majority of whites during the height of apartheid. Steps taken by the SA government in order to insulate the electorate

from a full realization of the repressive nature of the regime, and the extent of black resistance, led to a particular mind-set amongst white South Africans, which William Beinart (1994:186-187), cited by Van der Westhuizen (2007:99), seeks to capture as he writes that “[m]ost whites were unable to see black South Africans during this critical period [1960-1970s]...Homelands, passes, group areas, social amnesia and power ideologies put them out of sight, literally and metaphorically”. The censorship exercised over material broadcast by the SABC, including the content of plays and serials produced by the drama departments, formed part of an overall strategy, one described by Van der Westhuizen as devised in order to maintain the “arrogance and ignorance [which] cocooned white society” (2007:99). The racial segregation observed in recording studios contributed towards the radio writers’ reluctance to use local settings or black characters in their scripts. Producers had little choice but to excise black South Africans from the predominantly white listeners’ imaginations.

Yet what was the alternative? Exceptions did exist, but were rare. Michael McCabe, who introduced a new level of naturalism into SAE radio acting and writing, now states that he can only recall his own African series, and the long-running series, *Squad Cars*, as being set in South Africa (2002:2). The latter, a legendary and long-running Springbok radio series, is still remembered with affection by older listeners. *Squad Cars* warrants attention, in that this “iconic”<sup>184</sup> series was devised under the aegis of the South African Police force, and broadcast under its watchful supervision. As such, it illustrates the ethical difficulties of producing “local” radio drama during the apartheid era. A copy of the script of the episode under discussion is attached as Appendix 2.

The first Friday-night episode of *Squad Cars* was broadcast on the 30 August 1968<sup>185</sup>, following a two-month Sunday evening trial period from the 29 June. A weekly, half-hour series aired at peak listening time, it exhausted writers but not listeners until the closure of Springbok Radio’s evening programme in 1985. One of the longest-running series broadcast on Springbok Radio, *Squad Cars* was also one of the few SAE radio dramas with a recognizably South African setting. In part, this may account for the fact that it is also the series remembered with the most affection by former Springbok Radio listeners. Broadcast during the years of Grand Apartheid and beyond,

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<sup>184</sup> Bruce Millar’s reference to Springbok Radio’s *Squad Cars*, as broadcast on SAfm, Sunday 25 May 2008, 9.55 a.m.

<sup>185</sup> A few episodes were broadcast prior to this, on Sunday evenings, from 29 June 1968. Such was the success of these trial episodes that the series was moved to peak listening time at 7.30 p.m. on Friday evenings.

"*Squaddies*" served to promote the image and activities of the South African Police force as they went about their duties, protecting the interests and safety of a small sector of society. The popularity of the series amongst Springbok's multi-cultural but predominantly white audience may be likened to today's "Reality" TV shows, prompting conversation on public transport, over dinner, and in offices, canteens and school playgrounds.

*Squad Cars* featured true stories drawn from actual crimes committed within the apartheid police state, but the full truth of police activities emerged only years later<sup>186</sup>. The listeners to the series were therefore privy to a partial reality only, while "the men of...*Squad Cars*" became heroes in imaginations burdened by fear: fear of conscription, miscegenation, crime, township unrest, boycotts, the "swart gevaar" and the "rooi gevaar"<sup>187</sup>. Democracy has since altered and extended the horizon of expectations of most South Africans, inviting a new reading of the first and, therefore, defining episode of this long-running radio series.

In this discussion I place the "*Squaddies*" series within a historical/political context, and attempt to gauge the extent to which the series reflected the society and ideology that spawned it. I hope also to shed light on the dilemma facing SAE radio drama scriptwriters and producers throughout the '60's, '70's, and early '80's. Working with the spectre of the SABC censor in mind, they had, with few exceptions, four choices. They could

- produce South African plays and serials representing an a-political, "whites only" version of everyday reality; or
- create specially-written stories set in some unrecognizable "white space"; or
- resort to the broadcast of adaptations of novels and plays from the literary canon; or
- broadcast ageing BBC programmes<sup>188</sup>.

The majority of SAE radio drama practitioners chose the last three options. In doing so, they relieved themselves of the ethical obligations referred to by Hanson as "the

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<sup>186</sup> The Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings laid bare many, but not all, acts of extreme brutality and murder committed by certain members of the SAP.

<sup>187</sup> The "red danger".

<sup>188</sup> This last option was largely due to the cultural boycott of South Africa, which began in the '60's but gained momentum in the '70's and '80's.

strictures and obligations that properly bind us" (1998:204), while successfully entertaining their audiences, and providing them with an imaginative refuge from brute reality.

*Squad Cars* emerged during an eventful decade which saw the end of the Treason trial, the tragic events of Sharpeville in 1960, the Rivonia Trial in 1963, the assassination of the "architect of apartheid", Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd, the installation of his successor, the former Minister of Police, J.B.Vorster, in 1966, and the abolition of the last four Parliamentary seats reserved for white representatives of coloured voters in 1968 (Van der Westhuizen, 2007:49). The series was recorded at David Gooderson's Sonovision studios, with SABC's Colin Fish as producer and Beverley Peirce as scriptwriter. After the first five years Peirce found his various writing commitments too pressing, and other writers, such as Adrian Steed<sup>189</sup> and Anthony Fridjohn, took over the task, keeping the original format unaltered<sup>190</sup>. In spite of many changes in writers and cast, *Squad Cars* retained its popularity and, along with other radio and TV series based on the "cops and robbers" format, has achieved cult status. However, the success of *Squad Cars* is more remarkable, inviting closer attention than, for instance, the British *Z Cars* and American *Dragnet*, in that the South African series enjoyed popularity during a painful period in this country's history, a time when the SAP were not only "crime-busters" but foot-soldiers of a totalitarian regime. As such, they were tasked with the control and repression of the disenfranchised black majority and the implementation of apartheid laws, including the iniquitous "Immorality Act". Bear in mind, too, the death in 1977 of the thirty-year old political activist and leader of the SA Black Consciousness movement, Steve Biko, from injuries sustained while in police custody. Biko was the twentieth person to die in detention over an eighteen-month period. His death outraged many South Africans across cultures, but famously left the Minister of Police, Jimmy Kruger, "cold". Operating out of the farm Vlakplaas<sup>191</sup>, police colonel Eugene de Kock and his askaris planned and executed the assassination of political activists<sup>192</sup>, while a team of scientists under the supervision of Dr.Wouter Basson, Project officer of Project Coast, SA's chemical and biological

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<sup>189</sup> The Pumamouse OTR (Old Time Radio) recording of the first Friday-night episode of *Squad Cars* attributes the writing to Adrian Steed. No credits were given after each episode had been broadcast to preserve the sense of listening to actual events, as recorded in the SAP's case file.

<sup>190</sup> As referred to earlier, the creativity of a writer of a popular series is often outstripped by the stamina of a South African audience.

<sup>191</sup> Headquarters of the Counterinsurgency Unit of the South African Police.

<sup>192</sup> Information that emerged during the TRC Hearings held from 1996-2000.

warfare (CBW) programme, refined their deadly expertise<sup>193</sup> (Gould & Folb, 2002: 47), and Johan Botha, information officer of SA's Special Forces, "eliminated" hundreds of political prisoners by various means, which included dropping drugged victims from an aircraft into the sea<sup>194</sup> (p.54).

The first episode of *Squad Cars*, entitled *Never too old to die*, was introduced by the Divisional Commissioner of the Witwatersrand Division, South African Police, Brigadier J.P.D. Vorster, as follows:

It is always a pleasure to introduce any new means of promoting the fine work done by the South African police. This is why I welcome the appearance of *Squad Cars* at this popular listening time. A series such as this will increase awareness of our work in a compelling new way, and, as it entertains, I know it will also bring home to you the vital role played, not only by our mobile police, but by every member of the South African Police force.

In an interview in October 2004, writer Beverley Peirce recalls how Colin Fish, then head of the SABC's English Service drama department, approached him with the suggestion that he write a script based on the long-running BBC television crime series entitled *Z Cars*. This series had initially alarmed the British Police Federation by reflecting the activities of the Merseyside police in a candid, even critical fashion, depicting policemen as fallible human beings capable of gambling, drinking, and even wife beating. The South African *Squad Cars* series differed in approach. Each script was subject to scrutiny by both the SABC censor and the SAP. The series served as a public relations exercise for the latter, one that sought to sanitize police activities, reassuring listeners that their safety was assured due to the constant vigilance of the SAP. In an interview with the author, Peirce (2004:1) describes the response of Colonel Stoffel Buys of the Witwatersrand Command when approached for permission to adapt actual cases of crimes committed for the series, as follows:

When he read the script he went bananas about it, he said: "This is the best recruitment thing we could have, and I will give you whatever assistance you need", and he was absolutely true to his word. He did. So much so that he wrote to every police station in the country, and asked the members of the force, from the lowliest constables upwards, to send in ideas for scripts to

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<sup>193</sup> In *Project Coast: Apartheid's Chemical and Biological Warfare Programme*, Gould & Folb refer to Wouter Basson's involvement with the SAP, particularly Gen. Lothar Neethling, the SAP's forensic chief (2002:47-49).

<sup>194</sup> Information that emerged in 2000 during the Pretoria High Court trial of Wouter Basson for alleged human rights abuses. The former information officer of the South African government's Special Forces, Johan Theron, confessed to his involvement in the deaths of more than 200 anti-apartheid political prisoners between 1979 and 1987. He claimed the deaths were merely part of his job (Boston, J. An Offensive and Deadly Force in *truTV.com*.)

him, based on real cases, and...to get a brief outline of what the case involved and how it was solved. And then he picked out the best of these and gave them to me, and I incorporated them into the scripts for *Squad Cars*.

Permission for the use of each script was obtained from the SAP, but although Peirce has no recollection of scripts being altered by this censorship, certain restrictions were placed on the writing. During the 5-year tenure of Peirce as scriptwriter and possibly beyond, all villains were portrayed as white characters, while black characters featured in subservient roles such as domestic servants, waiters and gardeners. Black criminals featured in later episodes, fuelling growing fears of the "swart gewaar" amongst white South Africans. Although a junior black constable features in the very first Friday night programme of the series, Peirce cannot now remember introducing black members of the police force into the script. Of particular interest is his comment that the SAP asked for black characters to be omitted altogether: exclusion is, after all, the most effective form of discrimination. However, it proved impractical and unrealistic to elide characters of other cultures altogether. Peirce refers to the SAP's initial concern that blacks should not feature as criminals in *Squad Cars*. He explains that "[t]he bad guys were all English speakers...there were [also] Afrikaners who were bad guys, but never a black because they [the SAP] didn't want the perception to get out to the viewers [sic] of what the crime situation was really like; that 90% of the crimes were committed by blacks, the violent crimes especially"(p.2). Such manipulation of the facts seems hard to believe. Sport, theatre, business, politics, and even beauty contests were the preserve of South African whites in this era, but crime? The listeners' acceptance of this subterfuge can perhaps be accounted for by the even stranger phenomenon, identified by Beinart, and referred to above: the mental erasure of blacks from the white imagination.

Racially segregated radio drama studios and mono-cultural casts also presented difficulties for writers and producers of South African radio drama. If a script called for a black character, the part was kept small, enabling a white actor to "double" in guttural tones. Producer, writer, and actor, Jack Mullen (2002:1-2), sums up the situation as follows:

It was as though there were no Black people in this country at all. Was there ever a Black or so-called Coloured in a "Squad Cars" script, for example? When 'local' entered into the picture it was White local, a totally 'sanitized' version of reality; a South Africa where the only black person in a cast would inevitably be called "Philemon" or "Sixpence" and would be played by a white

actor. And either "Philemon/Sixpence" was a figure of fun, or a "Yes, baas" part of three lines – each line being "Yes, baas", or "Ja, baas". We lived and worked in a complete fantasy South Africa, a quasi-colonial milieu where the blue pencil and the editing tape determined the final product.

Mullen ruefully adds:

Perhaps there were brave writers, directors and actors who determinedly pitched their work (in vain, of course) against the regime. I never met one. I was too cowardly to be one myself, I'm ashamed to say.

Former listeners pride themselves on remembering the final announcement of *Squad Cars*:

They prowl the empty streets at night, in fast cars<sup>195</sup>, on foot, living with crime and violence, these men are on duty 24 hours out of every 24, they face dangers at every turn, expecting nothing less. They protect the people of South Africa, they are the men of... *Squad Cars!*

Few, however, remember the name of the sponsors and the introduction to the programme. The familiar siren wail, squealing brakes and gun shots preceded the dramatic announcement "*Squad Cars*", followed by suspenseful music appropriately selected from De Wolfe's mood music series entitled "*Z Cars*", and the sponsor's introduction:

**ANNOUNCER:**

General Motors and the dealer organisations throughout Southern Africa proudly bring you the drama, the danger, the thrills and the facts, when the long arm of the law travels in *Squad Cars*.

Although derived from and inspired by *Z Cars*, the first episode in the series reflects the influence of several other crime-fighting series. Certain similarities exist between the South African series and the American *Dragnet* series, which was originally broadcast on radio from 1949-57, and later transformed into a popular TV series<sup>196</sup>. In the first scene of *Never too Old to Die* the lead character is reminiscent of Constable

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<sup>195</sup> Why were the streets "empty"? Because of a curfew imposed on black people. Maids and gardeners were expected to be confined to their "kaias" or rooms by 9 p.m. Visitors would have to return to the townships or their own "kaias" in time to be off the streets by this time, or risk arrest or the wrath of the home owner.

<sup>196</sup> The series was credited with being responsible for improving public opinion of police officers, despite dealing with issues such as racial segregation and corruption within the Los Angeles Police Department. (Wikipedia online)

George Dixon in the British TV *Dixon of Dock Green* series (1955-76), with its rosy view of the kindly copper. Warrant Officer Roos patiently waits outside the Johannesburg Magistrate's court for an elderly tramp to emerge after being found "Not Guilty" of shoplifting. Roos and his wife have kindly made up a parcel of clothes and a blanket to keep the old fellow warm during the cold highveld nights. Old Joe is overcome by the policeman's generosity, but questions his motivation:

**JOE:**

Why are you doing this for me?

**ROOS:**

Because we have a little more than you, and even after we've given these things to you, we'll still have enough.

**JOE:**

I've never known such kindness. Why?

**ROOS:**

I've just told you.

**JOE:**

There's got to be some other reason. You think I was hard done by?

**ROOS:**

I never believed you stole from that store. I thought the store detective was making a mistake, and the manager was determined to lay charges against you.

**JOE:**

I don't blame you.

**ROOS:**

I know you didn't. But I felt bad all the same.

**JOE:**

No, it wasn't your fault at all. I never thought for a moment it was. I'm not one to bear grudges.

**ROOS:**

Anyway, we've decided to keep an eye on you. Watch your progress. I'm glad you got off.

**JOE:**

Yeh, good magistrate that. He knew I never stole them things.

Although the Warrant Officer's role as Good Samaritan is firmly established in this first scene as a nod, perhaps, in the direction of Colonel Stoffel Buys and Brigadier J.D.P. Vorster, this initial exchange between Roos and old Joe fails to ring true. Such acts of kindness did take place - not all policemen and women shed their humanity in donning the SAP uniform - but the point seems unduly laboured, and the apology unlikely<sup>197</sup>. Given the local setting, it seems inappropriate that the character of Joe is played with a strong Cockney accent, mentally placing the old fellow within the sound of London's Bow Bells, rather than the traffic hum of Joubert Park. In fairness to the writer, it is not clear that this was intended. Joe's dialogue is peppered with South African idioms: in assuring Warrant Officer Roos of his ability to pay for the allegedly stolen goods, he explains: "I forgot, man, I had money". This term is frequently repeated by Joe in subsequent scenes, together with other uniquely South African expressions such as "skelms" and "babbelaas", but the BBC-borrowed convention of linking Cockney and provincial English accents with "working class" characters was so entrenched in SAE radio drama practice that the opportunity of creating believable South African characters was overlooked in this first episode of *Squad Cars*. Further, the mellifluous tones of Warrant Officer Roos conjure a character more akin to James Bond than a senior member of the SAP. References to place names apart, it is left to the occasional grunts of the black constable and the villains' accents to remind the listener that the story is set in South Africa. Later episodes featured South African English and Afrikaans accents more frequently, although so-called "cod", or comic, exaggerated accents,

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<sup>197</sup> The languid pace of the entire first scene of *Never Too Old to Die* invites speculation that producer Colin Fish had warned actors from the start that the majority of scenes in this half-hour drama called for increasing urgency and pace of delivery, and that the possibility existed that the script would "run short". Actors would then be instructed to deliver lines at a slower pace when the action allowed. This may account for the drawn out delivery of lines that called to be tossed away. However, most "padding" or "ad-libbing" by actors to extend or reduce the timing of a script would normally take place towards the end of the story, as a recording "runs short". Occasionally a dangerous practice, in which the writer's intentions are undermined or altered by thoughtless or playful ad-libs from the actors!

were frowned upon<sup>198</sup>. However, when questioned on this issue, Peirce (2004:2) replied:

We had Afrikaans accents, Stoffel didn't mind that at all. He said: "But you don't show Afrikaners in a bad light, you use Afrikaans accents because the majority of members of the force are Afrikaners."

A music sting introduces the first scene, followed by the terse, clipped tones of the narrator:

**NARRATOR:**

August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 8.43 p.m. Warrant Officer Roos and his partner, Sergeant Trudeau, have stopped their squad car at the scene of an accident at the corner of Bok and Claim Street. They are in the process of trying to extricate the injured from the smashed vehicles involved, when Officer Roos feels a tug on his sleeve.

The flat delivery of the narrator conveys a good deal of the action. It also links each scene, and seems to emphasize the factual aspect of each case. Reasons for the appeal of the series to the imagination begin to emerge. The accident scene is placed in a setting familiar to many listeners, and the urgency of the situation is well portrayed, as Roos and Trudeau heroically engage in a life-and-death struggle to save the victims of a motor accident, and an inquisitive crowd rapidly forms.

Additional chatter from the small cast bolsters the recorded crowd sound effects, adding a convincing auditory dimension to the scene. Amongst the spectators is the tramp, Joe Leight, who drunkenly pushes his way through the crowd to speak to Roos. In a befuddled attempt to repay his debt to the policeman, the old man informs him of a plan to murder an elderly couple. An irritated Roos arranges a meeting with Joe for the following evening. The story that unfolds is one that may have been spine-chilling in the 60's, but seems somewhat commonplace today: two "ducktails", apparently members of the Sherry gang, plan to murder and steal money from a couple living on an isolated plot in the Northern suburb of Craighall. Shortly before the crime is due to take place, Roos, Trudeau and a "native" constable, "Thousands" Sithole, arrive at the

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<sup>198</sup> Actor Frank Graham recalls that, when playing the part of a constable in one *Squad Cars* episode during the 70's, he was asked to use his "normal" voice, rather than the marked South African accent that won him laughs as a comedian or "raconteur".

property described by Joe, to be greeted by a large German Shepherd<sup>199</sup>. The dog makes friends with the two white policemen, but when Roos orders the black constable to follow their example, the result is quite different, as follows:

**ROOS:**

Make to pat the dog.

**SITHOLE:**

Eh, he'll bite me, sir.

**ROOS:**

How can he bite you, man? There's a wire fence between you.

**SITHOLE:**

Here, dog.

**FX: DOG SNARLS, ATTEMPTS TO ATTACK CONSTABLE SITHOLE**

**ROOS:**

That's enough. That's enough, Thousands!

**FX: DOG QUIETENS DOWN.**

**ROOS:**

There you are. This dog would be useless against tonight's visitors. He likes Europeans. You stay here, Thousands, while we get the dog locked up.

The genial Warrant Officer Roos adopts an authoritative, almost contemptuous, tone when addressing the subservient "Thousands", who is also referred to as "the police boy" or simply "the boy".<sup>200</sup> The use of this demeaning<sup>201</sup> term causes a little unseemly hilarity between the elderly white couple, as they question the policemen as to the reason for their unexpected visit:

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<sup>199</sup> Referred to as an Alsatian in the script.

<sup>200</sup> Even the would-be murderers later claim to have "killed your boy", referring to Constable Sithole.

<sup>201</sup> In commonplace use at the time.

**RINA:**

Goodness gracious, what's all this?

**WILKENS:**

It's the police.

**RINA:**

Yes, I can see that, but what do they want with us?

**ROOS:**

Nothing to be alarmed about, Mrs. Wilkens. I'm Warrant Officer Roos and this is Sergeant Trudeauux.

**RINA:**

Is it our boy<sup>202</sup> you're after?

**ROOS:**

Oh, no, no.

**RINA:**

I was going to say, he's a good boy, he never gives us any trouble.

**WILKENS:**

He's too old! (The elderly couple laugh at their joke).

Re-assured that the police presence is due to nothing more serious than the possible arrival of chicken thieves, the couple retire to their bedroom. Constable Sithole takes up his position at the kitchen door, according to instructions from Roos:

**ROOS:**

Now listen, this is what we do, Thousands, put your chair behind the kitchen door. I think that's the way they'll come. Even though the old folks keep it locked and bolted, it doesn't look very secure to me. A couple of good shoves, it'll be in. So put your chair behind the door. Go on.

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<sup>202</sup> Meaning "servant".

**SFX: CHAIR PUSHED BEHIND DOOR**

**ROOS:**

That's right. You sit down. That's it. When they come, when they open the door, I want you to close it quietly and then get down on the floor to stop them opening it again. Do you understand?

**SITHOLE:**

Yes, sir, I get it. Like a doormat, sir.

**ROOS:**

(Pleased chuckle) Yes, that's it. That'll keep you out of trouble. That's all I want you to do. Close the door quietly, lie down on the floor so they can't open it again. That'll keep them in. You'll also be out of the line of fire.

**TRUDEAUX:**

And us? What do we do?

**ROOS:**

Well, we'll take our chairs...

**SFX: MOVING CHAIRS**

**ROOS:**

Come on. And we'll park them in the pantry. (Effort made by Roos and Trudeauux.)

**TRUDEAUX:**

Is this headquarters?

**ROOS:**

That's it. Centre of operations. Sit, Paul.

**TRUDEAUX:**

It's now...twenty to ten.

**ROOS:**

Let's hope they pitch up on time. You settled there, Thousands?

**CONSTABLE:**

Yes, sir.

**ROOS:**

And for goodness sake, when they come, you keep your head! You don't panic. You do exactly as I told you!

**CONSTABLE:**

Yessir.

The conduct of the "Bantu" constable, "Thousands" Sithole, has been impeccable up to this point, yet the tone in which Roos addresses him is harsh and imperious. The Warrant Officer obviously expects the constable to make a mistake at a critical moment, and is not disappointed. Sithole's nervousness is hardly surprising; contrary to the assurance given by Roos that he is being "kept out of trouble" and "out of the line of fire", the constable has been placed in the most dangerous position, directly in the line of fire after the burglars use force to open the door. Yet even the narrator lays the blame for the failure of Roos's plan directly on Sithole: despite his superior's explicit instructions, we are told, in his nervousness the hapless constable forgets to close the door quietly behind the two intruders. The intruders see him, and in the fracas that follows one burglar is killed, and another paralysed. Sithole not only suffers a severe beating at the hands of the intruders, but is hit in the stomach by a bullet that ricochetes off the wall. The scene is convincingly performed, with suitable sound effects, and much effort on the parts of the actors, but there are moments in which the dialogue borders on the comic. The noise rouses the old man, who enters the kitchen to be greeted by Roos nursing a broken shoulder, and a state of chaos in the room.

**WILKENS:**

(Off) Hello. Let me put the light on. Good gracious me, what's all this?

**ROOS:**

Nothing to be alarmed about, Mr. Wilkens.

**WILKENS:**

I thought I heard people clapping their hands or something.

**ROOS :**

There's been some shooting.

**WILKENS:**

I say! They are in a mess, aren't they?

**TRUDEAUX:**

The constable's been hit.

**ROOS:**

Where?

**PAUL:**

In the stomach.

**ROOS:**

He's not dead?

**CONSTABLE:**

No, sir, I am not dead.

Comedy trespasses even further on tragedy as the old woman enters, cheerfully berates the policemen for "making a mess" in her kitchen, offers them tea or coffee, and returns to bed. She appears oblivious to both the dead body and two critically injured men lying on the floor, and the plot to kill her and her husband. Wilkens offers to take the injured constable to hospital in his car, suggesting that they "put the boy in the back", but before leaving, Roos notices a slight movement on the part of one of the intruders.

**ROOS:**

Hm. One of these monkeys is still alive.

**TRUDEAUX:**

Yes, his eyelids are fluttering.

**ROOS:**

I can't see any wound on him.

**BURGLAR 1:**

(Groans) My back.

**ROOS:**

Can you move at all?

**BURGLAR 1:**

I can't feel my legs.

**ROOS:**

He's paralyzed. Must've got him in the spine.

**BURGLAR 1:**

No hard feelings. You mustn't feel badly about it. You see – I would have killed you.

Even the dramatic delivery of the exchange cannot save the sense of anti-climax. The final line, in particular, comes across with the impact of a damp squib and is saved only by the music sting. Fortunately the narration also assists in rescuing an otherwise weak ending, imparting further dramatic information as follows:

**ANNOUNCER:**

The Bantu constable, "Thousands" Sithole, had been hit in the stomach by a bullet fragment, which had travelled round his ribs and lodged in his back, just under the skin. It required a relatively minor operation to remove it. The Bantu constable made a rapid and complete recovery. One of the two murderers had died immediately. The bullet that struck him travelled the length of his thorax, went up through his neck and

came to rest in his brain. The other man, paralysed from the neck down, eventually died in hospital some months later. Mr. Wilkens and his wife Rina never knew that they had been potential murder victims.

Innocuous as the first episode of *Squad Cars* sounded when broadcast, the story presents a whitewashed version of South African reality in the '60's. It also reflects and reinforces existing racial prejudice, and, in so doing, re-affirms the white supremacist beliefs of the ruling minority. The entire series of "real-life stories" were tailored to suit the authorities and enhance the image of the SAP. None of the episodes dramatized the *real* "real-life" stories, such as the brutal torture and interrogation of prisoners, or the so-called "joy" rides as helpless minor offenders locked in the back of a police van were thrown from side to side, or the "suicides" of anti-apartheid activists detained as "terrorist suspects", who allegedly leapt from the infamous tenth floor at John Vorster Square. Double<sup>203</sup> censorship of the scripts ensured that no core dramatic event or focal point in the narrative would draw the listeners' attention to the unjust system that prevailed, inviting condemnation of the racist regime. As Brigadier Stoffel Buys predicted, the popularity of the series attracted recruits for the SAP. Many school-leaving youngsters chose to do National Service with the police force in preference to the SADF. Few would emerge from either experience unscathed<sup>204</sup>.

The contention that a popular radio drama series became an ally of the apartheid propaganda machine is a serious one. In defence of the scriptwriters, I will enter yet another familiar debate with respect to the author's intention. Certain parameters have historically been put in place by the SABC concerning the production of radio drama scripts. These must be observed, but alter according to the ideologies and idiosyncrasies of government as different ruling parties gain control of the "Public Broadcaster"<sup>205</sup>. The apartheid era produced particular difficulties for English language radio drama, such as political issues being taboo, studios segregated, casts mono-cultural and so on, but most writers who opted to work within these parameters were simply pragmatic individuals, rather than proponents of apartheid ideology. A plot

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<sup>203</sup> That of the SAP and SABC.

<sup>204</sup> Research into the brutalising effect on the young South Africans – largely white and "coloured" - who did National Service during the apartheid era, but returned to civilian life without trauma counselling, needs urgent attention. The effect on families also deserves research. Even now a policeman or policewoman in need of counselling is afforded only 3 sessions with a clinical psychologist by the SAPS medical aid.

<sup>205</sup> I refer to the fact that British Imperialism was followed by Afrikaner Nationalism, which has, in turn, been followed by African Nationalism. I would argue that all three ideologies have impacted on and restricted the creative development of SA English radio drama.

centred on police brutality, the detention of prisoners without trial, township unrest, or suspected assassinations by BOSS – all issues exposed by local or overseas press – had no chance of acceptance. These limitations presented insurmountable difficulties when the work represented the writer’s “bread and butter”. Most, if not all, radio drama practitioners - including the writers of *Squad Cars* - are not motivated by ideology, but the work itself, and the need to earn the small fee involved.

Similar claims of political neutrality have, however, been attributed to Leni Riefenstahl, filmmaker and director of the historical documentary of the 1934 Nuremberg Rally, *Triumph of the Will* <sup>206</sup>. Arguably the best-known example of art infected by ideology, the film is cited by Devereaux (1998:227) as an example of the conjunction between evil and art. I would not elevate a low-budget radio drama series to the aesthetic heights reached by this multi-award winning film, or suggest that *Squad Cars* plumbed the evil depths of fascist ideology, but similarities do exist. Briefly, *Triumph of the Will* is a work of propaganda, promoting National Socialism by falsifying its true character (Devereaux 1998:241). *Squad Cars* also served as propaganda, promoting an enhanced image of apartheid South Africa’s police force. The popularity of Riefenstahl’s documentary contributed to the mobilisation of the German people in the 1930’s (p.241), while the popularity of *Squad Cars* also attracted young recruits into the police force. Finally, the narratives of both productions reinforce existing prejudice and confuse moral understanding by “connecting moral principles, concepts and emotions to dubious particulars”.

The stories of *Squad Cars* have largely been forgotten, but former listeners still recall the final announcement, repeating it as a mantra even today. Impressed on their consciousness is the somewhat dubious message that the police of that era were heroes who risked their lives to “protect the people of South Africa”. It cannot be stated with any certainty that this radio series played a part in the deformation of the listener’s consciousness, or contributed to the white electorate’s overwhelming endorsement of the Nationalist Party’s policies in the 1977 election<sup>207</sup>. I merely seek to clarify issues surrounding this popular radio series by illustrating the ethical implications of a narrative set in apartheid South Africa if the focal event fails to reveal the injustice of a racist regime. When the story lacks a moral agenda, and the

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<sup>206</sup> As stated by Devereaux (1998:237), “Riefenstahl and her supporters contend that her concerns in *Triumph of the Will* – as in all her films – were aesthetic, not political”.

<sup>207</sup> The party took 134 of the 164 contested Parliamentary seats (Van der Westhuizen 2007:105).

appropriate mobilization of the receiver's emotions and critical faculties is missing, the representation of an abhorrent reality, whether true or sanitized, becomes its endorsement.

#### **4.6 RADIO SOUTH AFRICA (1986-1995) AND RADIO SUID AFRIKA/AFRIKAANS STEREO ERA (1986-1996)**

In an article entitled "5 Nuwe dienste op 1 Januarie", the *SABC* (No. 71) bulletin of January 1986 gave listeners formal (if belated) notice of the broadcaster's intention to close down Springbok Radio, introduce Radio Jakaranda, Radio Oranje and Radio Algoa, and re-launch the English and Afrikaans Services as Radio South Africa and Radio Suid Afrika on January 1 1986. The decision to close the popular Springbok Radio had already attracted considerable coverage in the media, and all but eclipsed another historical - and unpopular - decision made by the SABC. The broadcaster's intention to break with the time-honoured traditions and mandate of true public service broadcasting is announced briefly, as follows: "Radio South Africa en Radio Suid-Afrika sal ook advertensies uitsaai"<sup>208</sup>. The plan to introduce advertising on these two services received scant attention in the press prior to their opening, a low-key approach which left many of the regular listeners to the English and Afrikaans services unprepared for the commercial nature of the new stations. Considerable dissatisfaction was expressed by these listeners once it became apparent that the SABC had not only closed down Springbok Radio, but created two sources of advertising revenue from the former "A" and "B" Services. As citizens, taxpayers, and licence holders, they regarded the provision of a true public broadcasting service as an inalienable right. Moreover, new names aside, the inclusion of "spot breaks", broadcast at an increased sound level<sup>209</sup>, constituted the only significant change. Robert Young (2007:146-7) aptly describes the situation as it affected the newly-launched Radio Suid Afrika with his comment that

[i]n die praktyk...was dit bloot naamsverandering, want die twee dienste het voortgegaan soos voorheen. Die enigste verskil was dat albei voortaan advertensies sou dra – nie met die doel om wins te maak nie, maar om die SAUK se inkomste te help aanvul<sup>210</sup>.

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<sup>208</sup> "Radio South Africa and Radio Suid Afrika will also broadcast advertisements"

<sup>209</sup> A long-standing "bone of contention" amongst listeners!

<sup>210</sup> In practice, this was merely name changing, as the two services went ahead just as before. The only difference was that both had to broadcast advertisements – not with the intention of making an improvement, but to increase the SABC's income.

The financial burden borne by the SABC was, indeed, considerable at a time when South Africa was struggling in the grips of a recession, a situation exacerbated by P.W. Botha's Rubicon speech on 15 August 1985 at the Natal NP congress. The political climate was undergoing significant changes, with the ruling party forging links with big business, implementing the reforms advised by the Wiehahn<sup>211</sup> and Riekert<sup>212</sup> commissions, and expelling those NP leaders who continued to "place the narrow, ethnically defined interests of Afrikaners...above the interests of capital" (Van der Westhuizen 2007:117). As Dan O'Meara (1996) describes the situation: "The large, self-confident class of Afrikaner capitalists brought into being through NP policies was not likely to abandon either its economic power or its now affluent, materialistic lifestyle for mystic appeals to the unity of the *volk*. Like their English-speaking compatriots, Afrikaner businessmen and managers were now exclusively concerned with the bottom line" (O'Meara 1996:316, cited by Van der Westhuizen 2007:117). This overriding concern with "the bottom line" led to the SABC'S decision to abandon the Reithian principle of providing the public with a broadcasting service devoid of commercial interests. Once again, the current "Zeitgeist" of the ruling party is reflected in boardroom decisions, and the atmosphere abroad at the SABC.

Insight into the effect that the vagaries of political decision-making may have on the course of broadcasting can be found in Young's account of P.W. Botha's decision to remove the responsibility for the SABC from the Department of Post & Telecommunications, and place it under the control of the Department of Foreign Affairs, headed by Minister Pik Botha.<sup>213</sup> In 1984, a former official of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Riaan Eksteen, was appointed as successor to SABC Director-General, Steve de Villiers. Eksteen's term as Director-General was, as described by Young

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<sup>211</sup> The Wiehahn Commission recommended that black workers be allowed the right to form trade unions. It also advised "that discriminatory regulations such as job reservation be scrapped in order to address the skills shortage" (Van der Westhuizen 2007:116)

<sup>212</sup> The Riekert Commission "proposed that the government allow urban black people property rights and higher wages, and improve their housing and education. It also recommended the relaxation of influx control – a cornerstone of apartheid" (Van der Westhuizen 2007:116.)

<sup>213</sup> This decision may not be as arbitrary as it appears, but may possibly be explained by the dissolution of the Department of Information following the Muldergate (Information) scandal in 1976, after which responsibility for the SABC's External Broadcasting Service, Radio RSA, fell under the Department of Foreign Affairs. *The Family Radio and TV* (June 6-13 1976:72) reports that Radio RSA beamed transmissions, not only to the rest of Africa, Europe, and the SA base in Antarctica, but to the United States and Canada, where it "leaked right across the Pacific to reach the Far East the long way round". Afrikaans lessons offered on Radio RSA were popular with German, Dutch, French and English-speaking listeners. Significantly, the Head of External Services at this time was Theo Greyling, who was responsible for the initiation of SABC's *Current Affairs* programme (a propagandistic daily news commentary) in 1964. Greyling was also SABC Head of News Services, Head of Programme Administration and Head of Public Relations before his appointment to the External Broadcasting Service (p.75)

(2007:146), “stormagtig”<sup>214</sup>. It was during this period that Springbok Radio was closed and two new commercial stations, Radio South Africa and Radio Suid Afrika, were introduced. Former Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Brand Fourie, replaced Prof. Mouton as Chairman of the SABC Board in 1985, only to be replaced in turn in 1988 by Stellenbosch academic, Prof. Christo Viljoen (Young 2007:148). In the same year, the “golden handshake” was accorded the controversial Director-General, Riaan Eksteen<sup>215</sup>, but decisions made during his and Fourie’s terms of office were more firmly entrenched.

Despite the mid-eighties thaw in Cold War relations between the Western powers and the Soviet Union, followed by the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, the rhetoric of P.W. Botha continued to flay the imagination of the white population with images of the “rooi gevaar”. The spectre of a “total onslaught”, and the war waged in Angola and South West Africa (Namibia)<sup>216</sup>, contrasted with efforts at reconciliation and transformation within South Africa’s borders. The Premier’s decision to repeal the raft of regulations and legislated Acts that had upheld “petty apartheid” for three decades, and his denunciation of the Separate Amenities Act, introduced a concomitant easing of certain race-based policies at the SABC. In Natal, extensive alterations to the frontage of the Old Fort Road studios, eliminating the separate front entrance to Radio Bantu and creating one main entrance for employees and visitors of all cultures, became a powerful signifier of change for all who entered the SABC. During this period the political situation altered even further, with the resignation of P.W. Botha, the appointment of Transvaal NP leader, F.W. de Klerk as hoofleier in 1989 (Van der Westhuizen 2007:181), the 1990 release of Nelson Mandela from prison, the unbanning of the ANC, and, finally, the advent of South Africa’s first democratically elected government on the 27 April 1994.

Radio Suid Afrika became Afrikaans Stereo following the introduction of stereo transmissions in October 1991. The new name heralded a new era in which the station strove to extend its appeal to all Afrikaans-speaking South Africans, and attract a wider

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<sup>214</sup> “Stormy, turbulent”.

<sup>215</sup> As noted by Young (2007:148) “Dit was tydens sy termyn dat Eksteen in dieselfde jaar die sogenaamde goue handdruk gekry het”.

<sup>216</sup> Van der Westhuizen, C. (2007: 146) observes that the growing dissent amongst white youth at this time was epitomised by the Voëlvry alternative Afrikaans music movement, led by Johannes Kerkerrel and his Gereformeerde Blues Band, with members Koos Kombuis and Bernoldus Niemand. Afrikaans author Koos Prinsloo also addresses the issue of conscription in *Jonkmanskas (Young man’s cupboard)* in 1982 and *Die Hemel Help Ons (Heaven help us)* in 1987.

range of potential advertisers. An innovative attempt to market the new station by inviting key personnel from amongst existing clients to a week-end trip on the Blue Train resulted in the signing of a number of new advertising contracts, and positive comments from the predominantly English-speaking guests, who saw this public relations exercise as “’n aanduiding dat Afrikaans Stereo minder konserwatief is as die persepsie van verkramptheid wat hulle van die stasie gehad het” (Young:151)<sup>217</sup>. This attempt to make the station more accessible to all listeners was, however, not entirely successful. *The Voice – the Vision* (1996:70) describes the change from Radio Suid Afrika to Afrikaans Stereo as “the first real effort...to make the Afrikaans radio service more representative of the total Afrikaans-speaking community”, with its “much more informal” approach, but adds that “many Afrikaans speaking people still could not identify with the station”. Afrikaans Stereo remained “focused primarily on the needs of the white Afrikaners [sic] at the expense of the non-white Afrikaans speakers. The programme content and schedule thus had [to] undergo significant change” (p.70), resulting in the introduction of Radio Sonder Grense in 1996.

Amid much-publicized controversy<sup>218</sup>, a new board was appointed to the SABC in 1993, chaired by the first woman and black person to hold this post, Dr. Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri. The newly-appointed Chief Executive of SABC Radio, Govin Reddy, attributed Radio South Africa’s reduced listenership, which had allegedly dropped to 400 000<sup>219</sup>, to the station’s inability to change format, style and programmes in accordance with international trends. In the April/June 1994 *SABC Radio & TV* (p.20), he undertakes “to reposition Radio South Africa as a public broadcasting flagship with a boosted audience that would set it sailing close to the one million mark”. Reddy (1994:20) identifies Radio South Africa as the flagship station “because it captures the whole of South Africa in one language”, but warns that

it does not follow that it must be run by people whose first language is English. A cross section of South Africans will cross the portals of Radio South Africa and this means that more different accents will be heard on the station.

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<sup>217</sup> An indication that Afrikaans Stereo was less conservative than indicated by their former perception of the station’s “verkramptheid” (narrow conservatism)

<sup>218</sup> This controversy was largely centred on Prime Minister F.W. de Klerk’s attempted imposition of seven board members and the proposed appointment of Dr. Frederick van Zyl Slabbert as Chairperson.

<sup>219</sup> Govin Reddy is evidently rounding-off figures to suit his argument: the correct 1994 listenership figure for Radio South Africa is 454 000, according to the SABC Annual Report, 1994:26, and cited by Horwitz 2001:162.

A "total face lift" (*The Voice – the Vision*, 1996: 68) was envisaged for Radio South Africa with the change to SAfm on March 1 1995. The new station would be "more accessible, more relevant, more flexible, more immediate, more lively and more true to South Africans across the spectrum" (p.68). Moreover, it aimed to be "more connected to its audience in the context of the new political and social outlook of the land" (p.68).

Reddy's warnings coupled with the rapidity with which changes were taking place led to a sense of insecurity spreading amongst existing members of staff. Talk of "early retirement" in the mid-nineties became commonplace. Many first-language English listeners, already dissatisfied with the standard of English spoken by bilingual presenters and journalists on SATV, were highly critical of the fact that "more different accents" were introduced on "their" station.

In a foreword to *The Voice – the Vision* (1996:4) Dr. Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri describes the SABC as the "village story teller". An account of the SABC's English and Afrikaans radio drama department's attempts to perform this role is related below.

#### **4.6.1 ENGLISH RADIO DRAMA**

Prior to the closure of Springbok Radio, various speakers on behalf of the SABC took pains to re-assure the public that it was not the broadcaster's intention to deprive listeners of their favourite programmes, or to destroy the creative endeavours – and incomes - of the relatively small but dedicated group of radio drama practitioners whose talents had served the station well. Ian Gray of *The Star* (13 October 1985) quotes the Head of Radio South Africa, Leon Shirley as describing the new commercial service as "the happiest marriage of the best of the English Service and Springbok Radio", one in which the SABC would "maintain the present standard of the English Service with the addition of those Springbok programmes which fit into the pattern". Shirley issues similar reassurances to the readers of the *SABC Radio & TV* No. 71 (1986:2), stating that the SABC had "goed daarin geslaag [het] om Springbokradio en die Engelse Diens in hul programbeplanning te kombineer"<sup>220</sup>. He adds:

Ons weet luisteraars wou nie graag van hul gunstellingprogramme op die twee stasies afskeid neem nie, en daarom het ons 'n besliste

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<sup>220</sup> The SABC had successfully combined Springbok Radio and the English Service in their programme planning.

poging aangewend om vir hulle versiening te maak. Ons kon in die meeste gevalle daarin slaag om die programme te akkommodeer<sup>221</sup>.

Publicity manager of the new English radio service, Bill Sharp, re-iterates Shirley's promises to listeners in an article entitled "Radio SA will use more local content" (*The Citizen*, 18 December 1985). Sharp adds that "although all the dramas scheduled so far have been imported from the UK via America, the new service intends to use more local content in drama and documentaries than ever before". Initially there would be "two serials a day on weekdays, a half-hour weekday morning slot for self-contained dramas, two 30-minute evening drama slots per week and an hour-long play on Saturday" (a total of 7 hours). Yet in an article entitled *New Radio SA will have 'frivolous' air*, Roland Solomon of *The Star* (17 December 1985) claims that "drama on the new service will account for 8½ hours of air-time a week". Solomon voices the concern of local free-lance English actors who felt that their livelihoods were threatened by the fact that the majority of dramas scheduled were imports. In the same article, Leon Shirley "blames his budget for the weight of overseas productions", quoting the following figures: "A half-hour drama, produced locally cost us between R700 and R800, while one bought from America costs only R150". However, Shirley "denies that local artists and writers will be penalised", adding "that he hopes to buy at least 44 new dramas by South Africans next year"<sup>222</sup>.

In order to achieve Leon Shirley's stated objective of including "Springbok Radio-style" entertainment on Radio South Africa, production houses were invited to submit tapes of daily serials to the Drama Department, on the understanding that all recordings had to take place in SABC studios. Jack Mullen<sup>223</sup> (2002:3) describes his experience of this ill-conceived process:

I recall audition tapes from, among others, Andre Bothma (ex-Springbok Radio and then in limbo) in Cape Town, Henry Diffenthal in Durban and Gerrie van Wyk in Jo'burg. Our task was to assess the suitability and quality of the material. We were in the dark as to what was supposed to happen regarding the financial set-up, and I do

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<sup>221</sup> We know that our listeners don't want to say goodbye to their favourite programmes on both stations. We therefore made a serious attempt to take their needs into account. In most instances we have been able to successfully accommodate these programmes.

<sup>222</sup> Given the volume of local work provided by Springbok Radio, this represented poor compensation for those whose livelihoods largely depended on radio drama.

<sup>223</sup> Producer, actor, writer and SABC Drama Department employee who replaced Colin Fish as Head of Drama on Radio South Africa on the latter's retirement in late 1986. Mullen was also appointed Head of English Radio from 1990, overseeing the transition from Radio South Africa to SAfm.

remember our sense of frustration in not knowing how this was going to work. Finally, we heard the details of what will always remain to me both farcical and unfathomable: the amount paid to the Production Houses for the production of a serial would be equal to the costs incurred by the production houses, and payable to the SABC. In other words, one would cancel out the other. Obviously, no Production House could possibly accept such a ludicrous arrangement, and the whole thing simply stopped dead.

Not surprisingly, without a margin of profit allowed as an incentive, the independent production houses withdrew from the scheme. However, those production companies that relied on the SABC studio facilities<sup>224</sup> were well-placed to take advantage of the opportunities offered, and a limited number of popular Springbok radio serials and comedy series were featured on Radio South Africa<sup>225</sup>. It appears that the SABC's failure to offer the independent production houses a favourable deal played a part in the subsequent failure of Radio South Africa to keep its early promise to offer listeners "the best of both worlds" as envisaged by Leon Shirley (*The Star*, 13 October 1985).

The change to Radio South Africa initially introduced an increase in the volume of dramatized work broadcast on the former English Service. Dramas in Saturday Night Playhouse, Radio Theatre, Monday Night Playhouse, two daily serials, poetry and novel readings, as well as special series such as the Winter Radio Play Festival, and a BBC series entitled *The Black Museum*, meant that regular listeners were well entertained. Radio South Africa remained unable to shed the English Service's air of elitism, however, with the result that many former Springbok Radio adherents turned for entertainment to regional radio stations and increasingly attractive offerings on television. A Eurocentric bias in the choice of dramatic material broadcast on RSA remained, but as "things began to thaw, politically, and the cracks in apartheid were beginning to let in some fresh air" (Mullen 2002:2), the tentative beginnings of a new era in South African English radio drama began to emerge. Several attempts to improve Radio South Africa's image took place over the years, without much success. A 1990 press release advising of a Radio South Africa re-vamp which would give the station "enormous flexibility" and enable it to "respond to groundswell changes" met

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<sup>224</sup> These production houses generally had lower overheads than those with fully equipped recording studios.

<sup>225</sup> These included recordings of the popular *Men from the Ministry*, the most memorable of several comedy series produced by Tom Meehan (Pty) Ltd. and recorded before an audience at the SABC Old Fort Road studios during the Springbok era. However, the presence of a studio audience was sorely missed, and "canned" laughter requires the deft touch of someone with a keen sense of humour if it is to replace a genuine "live" response.

with a scathing response from radio critic, Jill Mills, who claims in the *Star* (10 January 1990) that

RSA has never shown the slightest flexibility in its programming and and is not doing so now. The "re-vamped" schedule is virtually the same as it has always been, apart from some new titles for the same sort of dreary offerings the station has broadcast for years and some pointless mucking about with times...It just plods on, year after year, exhibiting incredible smugness and arrogant disregard of international trends, listeners complaints and staff frustration over stifled initiative and creativity.

The cynicism shown by Jill Mills was, however, largely unfounded: with the addition of two bright, young announcers, Bruce Millar, and Alan Swerdlow, the newly-appointed manager of RSA, Jack Mullen, determined to rid the station of its "dreary" image. A better relationship with the press was sought with the distribution of a monthly guide to programming, listing an attractive mix of documentaries, dramas, novel readings, comedies, children's half-hour, and a weekly teen programme. Some idea of "the frivolous air" which began to permeate work broadcast on RSA is evident in the introduction to the Radio South Africa Stereo monthly programme schedule issued by the Drama Department in June 1994, as follows:

The nights have drawn in, so gather round the cheery glow of the primus stove (that you stockpiled during the election run-up), stick a baked bean in your toasting fork, crank up the steam on your hand-driven radio and listen in to some of our winter fare.

The gently satirical tone adopted indicates a younger, more light-hearted approach that would have been unacceptable on Radio South Africa's predecessor, the relatively staid English Service.

At this juncture it may be helpful to provide a brief account of the staff changes that took place before and during this crucial period, particularly as they also influenced the new direction taken by English radio drama once the opportunity arose. In 1986 the English radio drama Organizer, Colin Fish, was retrenched, his post downgraded, and Jack Mullen assumed responsibility for the drama department. Ralph Lawson, then producer/announcer with the SABC, describes Fish as having been finally ousted as a result of his "refreshingly anarchical" attitude, which was "absolutely 'agin"<sup>226</sup> the

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<sup>226</sup> "absolutely against".

Afrikaner regime and the stranglehold it had on the SABC" (Interview, October 2002)<sup>227</sup>. During this era a preponderance of work from the literary canon was performed, some of which was "unbearably stuffy" (Vermaas 2002:2-3). Don Ridgway (2000:2), former Durban drama producer, comments that "during the long tenure of anti-deluvian [sic] troglodite [sic], Colin Fish, broadcasting local playwrights was almost verboten". This situation soon altered once Jack Mullen took over, but the elitist impression left by earlier work was hard to dispel. As Mullen (2002:3) acknowledges, the staff of Radio South Africa had to make a determined effort to begin "the long-overdue task" of shaking off the impression that the service "was a Colonial outpost of the BBC", but notes that "this did not (nor should it) mean becoming insular". A selection of radio theatre drawn from the world's literature, therefore, continued to be broadcast, alongside work by established South African writers, and a number of innovative local productions, the result of intensive ground work invested in developing the local content of radio drama

Nigel Vermaas's production of Athol Fugard's *People are Living There*, broadcast on Saturday Night Playhouse on the 18 July, 1987 represents a milestone in South African radio drama. South African characters of different cultures and accents also featured in the remarkable 1988 Idem and Artes award-winning production, *Day of the Trolleys*<sup>228</sup>, written and directed by Nigel Vermaas, and Bruce Millar's production of Paul Slabolepszy's *Over the Hill*, first broadcast on 16 October 1992. Nigel Vermaas and Jerry Mofokeng's 1993 production of Fugard's *Boesman and Lena* garnered two Artes acting awards: Nomhle Mkonyeni as Lena, and Bill Curry as Boesman. Cecil Jubber's Idem award-winning adaptation of Herman Charles Bosman's *Stone Cold Jug* was re-broadcast in January 1993.

The cultural boycott imposed by members of Equity, the majority of playwrights, and the BBC, remained in place for most of this period, restricting the choice of scripts and transcriptions available for broadcast. However, local scriptwriters such as Michael McCabe, Brian O'Shaughnessy, Jack Mullen and Nigel Vermaas produced original work of a very high standard, and a concerted effort continued in order to discover and encourage new writers. Following his appointment as station manager of RSA in 1990,

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<sup>227</sup> Meeting between Lawson and the author at Bean Bag Bohemia, Durban, October 2002.

<sup>228</sup> A highly imaginative and allegorical piece in which exploited and overworked supermarket trolleys strike back at their abusers, killing an unfortunate security guard and spreading fear and pandemonium amongst staff and customers alike.

Mullen worked with drama department head, Nigel Vermaas, and newly-appointed young announcers/producers Bruce Millar and Alan Swerdlow, to encourage “hitherto disadvantaged writers” to write for the station (Mullen 2002:2). This process entailed a multi-pronged effort in which meetings were set up with COSAW and a series of annual Competitions were initiated, aimed at writers who had never had any work broadcast in English before. Apart from awarding prizes for the best plays, the drama department selected a further ten writers from those who had submitted plays from around the country, and brought them to Johannesburg for a 5-day writers’ workshop. This, in turn, was followed-up by a mentor system (Mullen 2002:3).

The introduction of the SABC’s “Soundscapes” Competition unearthed several new writers and produced a number of new scripts with local settings, but not all the new work met the high standards set in the past, and not all the listeners to radio drama responded well to the change. Old listening habits were deeply ingrained, and the older audience’s adaptation to the unfamiliar delivery of dialogue by African language voices, and, as it was frequently claimed, “exaggerated” white South African accents, was bound to take time. There were also those who welcomed the change. Producer Bruce Millar reports that the feedback from listeners was “predominantly positive”. He adds that “[p]eople relished hearing S Africans speaking with local accents and discussing familiar themes using the sort of language we are used to hearing around us all the time”(2002:2). The audience response may have been mixed, but, for the first time, South African radio drama practitioners of different cultures were working together, and the value of the creative exchange was inestimable.

#### **4.6.2 AFRIKAANS RADIO DRAMA**

As Drama Organizer for both the Afrikaans Service and Radio Suid Afrika, Robert Young shared the sense of responsibility felt by Roelf Jacobs, (then Head of Radio Suid Afrika), towards former Springbok Radio listeners whose enjoyment of “stories” had now to be satisfied by the newly-launched RSA. Young’s observation (2007:128) that the same effort was not required of the drama organisers of Radio South Africa<sup>229</sup> is debatable, but details of the workload undertaken by his department at this time are impressive. A total of 11 ½ hours of drama were broadcast each week on Radio Suid

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<sup>229</sup> Young remarks that “Van die Engelse Diens, wat Radio South Africa geword het, is nie dieselfde verwag nie”.

Afrika, including poetry readings<sup>230</sup>, short stories, six serials, and weekly plays in both Radioteater and Kleinteater. A monthly Meesterdrama was also broadcast at midday on Sundays. Although a core group of established writers, such as Dolf van Niekerk, Jan Scholtz, and Cor Nortje, had been formed over the years, this surge of dramatic output called for the discovery and nurturing of new writers, and the encouragement of the old<sup>231</sup>. Workshops were held in conjunction with the Afrikaanse Taal en Kultuur Vereniging (ATKV) at Klein Kariba in order to discover and develop new writers. On one occasion, experienced writers such as Ingrid Winterbach, Barry Hough, M.C. Botha, Jan van Tonder and Pieter Stofberg were invited to take part. A formidable team, well-versed in the art of script production, whether for plays or serials, was successfully developed<sup>232</sup>. Information provided by the SABC Sound Archives, which may not be complete, indicates that approximately 560 plays alone were broadcast during this period, several of which were repeated over the years. Few members of the creative group developed by RSA are still writing, having retired or passed away. Young remarks that unfortunately not many writers have been left to inherit and develop their legacy (2007:130).

A clear indication of the changes taking place at the SABC during this period is the decision, taken shortly after the introduction of Radio Suid Afrika, that N.P. Van Wyk Louw's *Die Pluimsaad Waai Ver* could now be broadcast. Roelf Jacobs approached the writer's widow, Truida Louw, with a request to adapt the text and oversee its production, which she agreed to do with the assistance of Robert Young. *Die Pluimsaad Waai Ver* was finally broadcast on Meesterdrama in June 1986, twenty years after it was written for the Republiekfees of 1966. Adapted and directed by Truida Louw, assisted by Young, the play featured Kobus Rossouw in the controversial role of President Steyn, and Anna Neethling-Pohl as narrator. As the slot assigned to RSA's flagship productions, Meesterdrama frequently featured prestigious adaptations of canonical texts, such as *Antigone* (11 October 1987), *The Three Sisters* (13 May 1989), *Uncle Vanya* (20 March 1988), and *Death of a Salesman* (18 February 1990), as well as

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<sup>230</sup> *Digterskeuse and Vers en Klank*. (2007:129)

<sup>231</sup> As Young explains it: "Al het baie skrywers gereeld tekste voorgelê, het ek geweet dat ek die vuur op die brand moet hou"

<sup>232</sup> Young lists these writers as follows: Kiep Vermeulen, Frieda de Villiers, Jac. J. Brits, Joe Kleinhans, Raaitjie Stols, Lerina Erasmus, Schalkie van Wyk, Marida van Staden, Helena Hugo, Jan Groenewald, Francois Stemmet, Bennie Fritz, Christo van der Merwe, Pieter Pieterse, Naomi Maree, Beyers Boshoff, Obie Pretorius, Emily Pieterse, Calvyn van Nieker, Mari Snyman and Leon van Nierop. (2007:130).

classics in Afrikaans literature, such as Uys Krige's *Die Goue Kring* (27 November 1988) and Jochem van Bruggen's *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*<sup>233</sup> (23 May 1988).

As Robert Young (2002:1) has stated, the SABC Afrikaans drama department was unaffected by the cultural boycott. A time had arrived when the advantages enjoyed by SAE radio drama<sup>234</sup> had fallen away, and the disadvantages that faced Afrikaans radio drama, once overcome, had created an independent indigenous-language art form with a strong will to survive.

#### **4.7 THE SAFM (1995 -) / RSG (1996 -) ERA**

In 1994 South Africans re-entered the world of international trade, politics, sport and art, under the conciliatory leadership of Premier Nelson Mandela. Increasing political uncertainty and acts of raw violence<sup>235</sup> had raised the spectre of civil war during the period prior to the first democratic election, leaving the majority of South Africans relieved at the successful post-election transition to a new era of peaceful democratic governance. Middle-class white South Africans and potential overseas investors were re-assured by the ANC's adoption of existing economic policies, which envisaged the redistribution of wealth through economic growth, in line with current global trends. The transitional period, during which the country was ruled by the Government of National Unity, saw the policies of the NP and ANC draw closer together, with the result that "one nationalist party handed over power to another in a transition where both embraced neo-liberal capitalism and, to a qualified extent, liberal democracy" (Van der Westhuizen 2007:246). The NP's long-standing corporate ally, SANLAM, having played an influential role in proceedings, implemented the first BEE (Black Economic Empowerment) deal in 1993, and publicly conceded that their "very warm relationship" with the NP had now also been formed with the ANC (p.322). Despite representing a relatively small sliver (13%)<sup>236</sup> of Nelson Mandela's "rainbow nation", white South Africans had managed to retain a firm hold on their disproportionate share of the country's proverbial "pot of gold".

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<sup>233</sup> *The Mayor(Burgermaster) of Slaplaagte.*

<sup>234</sup> Such as inexpensive access to plays and serials from the BBC transcription service, scripts of plays, and readily available English translations and adaptations of the world's literature.

<sup>235</sup> Most notably the violent clashes between Inkatha Freedom Party and ANC followers in Kwa-Zulu Natal, the necklacing of suspected "sell-outs" in townships nation-wide, the Bophuthatswana uprising and intervention by members of the AWB, and the assassination of Communist Party leader, Chris Hani, by right-wing party members, Janus Waluz and Clive Derby-Lewis, in April 1993.

<sup>236</sup> Steyn (2001: xxiii) citing Race Relations Survey 1994/5.

No sense of complacency could survive the revelations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which heightened a sense of white guilt and induced much self-reflexivity amongst members of this group<sup>237</sup>. Letters to newspapers revealed that NP supporters were “alternatively beset by horror and denial, recognition and guilt” (2007:267) as hitherto little-known details of past murders and brutal torture were exposed by the TRC, and reported in the media each day. The stark truths revealed by the TRC played a significant role in both the NP’s dramatic losses in the 1999 election, and the party’s rejection by its traditional support base and eventual demise. As argued by Melissa Steyn (2001:xxi), the social revisions brought about by the dramatic change in the political balance of power has meant that “South Africans, willingly or unwillingly, successfully or unsuccessfully, are engaged in one of the most profound collective psychological adjustments happening in the contemporary world”.

A detailed account of the protracted negotiations on the future of broadcasting, which began between the NP government and the ANC as early as 1990, falls outside the scope of this study. Most relevant, however, are an appreciation of the following issues:

- The contribution made by the considerable input and sustained efforts of a coalition of civil-society based organizations, various journalist organizations and labour. (Horwitz 2001:127);
- The understanding that an atmosphere of mutual mistrust existed between the two main protagonists, the NP ruling party and the ANC, a factor which influenced the politically expedient decision to establish an independent Public Broadcaster and Broadcasting Regulator.
- Attempts by the State and big business to restructure broadcasting before a new government took power needed to be hurriedly restrained by the ANC, and “every political party could see the danger if its opponent obtained control of the medium” (2001:141). Put simply, “the ANC was fearful of continued NP control of Broadcasting *before* the election; the NP was fearful of the possibility of ANC control *after* the election” (p.141), and thus consensus between the two parties on an independent Broadcaster and Regulator was reached.

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<sup>237</sup> Particularly fine examples are Antjie Krog’s *Country of My Skull* and Ingrid Kok’s *The Engineer*.

- The various groups within the “broad church” of the ANC held wide-ranging opinions on telecommunications and broadcasting. Differences even existed between individuals within those groups.

Horwitz (2001:132) argues that, at the Jabulani! Freedom of the Airwaves Conference in August 1991, “there was clearly a centralist, State Broadcaster orientation among some at the Conference and within the ANC generally”. The party’s Department of Information and Publicity (DIP) National Media Seminar held a few months later in November 1991 endorsed the principle of an independent public broadcaster, “governed by structures representative of all sectors of South African society” (p.133). Those delegates who favoured a partisan media accepted this option as only “second-best”, but pragmatism ruled in the face of current political circumstances, marked by “negotiations and compromise at every level of policy” (Horwitz 2001:134, citing Teer-Tomaselli 1993:227-240). Within the ANC’s DIP itself, leaders such as Pallo Jordan, Joel Netshitenzhe, Gill Marcus and Carl Niehaus formed a strong nucleus “in support of the principles of free press and a public broadcaster separate from government” (2001:128). It may also be argued that subsequent events have shown that once the threat posed by the NP’s attempts to privatise and thus entrench white domination of the broadcasting and telecommunications sectors passed, and the ruling party was firmly in power, the independence of the SABC and Broadcasting Regulator from political influence, as enshrined in Section 6 (3) of the Broadcasting Act of 2002 (Minne 2008:3), has been incrementally undermined by the increasingly bureaucratic, statist tendencies of the ruling party, and top-down administrative approach of both ANC-appointed executives and board members of the SABC.

The pace of change at the SABC accelerated, following the 1993 appointment of a new SABC Board in accordance with an innovative process of transparent public nomination of candidates. Rapid adjustment was asked of the “old guard” at SABC Radio, where the policy of transformation continued to be applied with particular zeal by the Divisional CEO, Govin Reddy. In September 1993, the front page of *Interkom*, the SABC’s internal newsletter, carried a smiling photograph and “Special message from the Chairperson”, Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri. Under the bold heading NO NEED TO FEAR CHANGE, staff were assured that “[t]he changes in the SABC should not be feared by personnel who want to contribute to a new and different future for the

corporation<sup>238</sup>...we all – Board Members, Management and Staff – have to work together towards constructing a new future”. As it transpired, a genuine commitment to transformation counted for little, as did years of broadcasting experience, creativity and organizational ability. Reductions in staff gathered momentum, and pressure was placed on all those employees over fifty to accept the severance package on offer and retire.

As early as 1986, “furtive changes” were made to Radio South Africa during Jack Mullen’s tenure as station manager (Stewart 1995:1) in an attempt to attract all English speakers and challenge the racial stratification imposed on broadcasting in the past. The launch of SAfm in 1995 seemed a natural outcome of this early vision, which extended far beyond the current SAfm weekly fare, dominated as it is by “phone-in” programmes<sup>239</sup> and news bulletins. Radio South Africa’s listenership had been predominantly white (83%) (1995:1); SAfm’s task was to provide a format that would attract listeners drawn from the broader English-speaking population, of “mainly urbanized Black, Coloured and Indian people” (p.1) This first attempt at creating a hybridized “third space” in South African broadcasting presented a daunting prospect. In the interview with Stewart, Mullen concedes that “[i]t is a mammoth task to try to appeal to a cross-cultural English speaker in such a divergent society as South Africa”, but explains that “[w]hat we are doing is pioneering. In a few years time we believe that, firstly, society will be less diverse than it is now and, secondly, that others will be doing what we’re doing” (p.2). The new dispensation provided the first concrete opportunity to revamp the station, when Govin Reddy gave the “green light for a complete facelift” (p.1).

Dubbed “Mr. Radio” by the SABC Radio & TV (April/June 1994), Govin Reddy publicly announced the repositioning of the Public Service Broadcaster’s “Flagship”, with a confident prediction that, despite an anticipated initial loss of as many as 180 000 of

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<sup>238</sup> A number of long-standing SABC employees, whose open opposition to apartheid policies had placed a firm ceiling on any career advancement past middle management, welcomed the advent of a new, democratic order, having endured intense frustration at the bureaucratic and ideological restrictions of the previous government. The majority of these (largely English speaking) employees finally decided to accept the retrenchment package on offer, recognizing perhaps that the ideological imperative driving the new order offered further frustrations in the workplace.

<sup>239</sup> Mullen forcibly expresses his views on phone-in programmes in a discussion of the cost of radio drama, as follows: “[W]hether you call it (the cost of radio drama) “enormous” or not depends entirely on what you’re measuring it against. For example, set against the cost of a theatre production, a TV production or a film – radio drama is a minute fraction of the cost of any of those three. Set against boring “Talk Radio”, where you open the mike, open the lines and let verbal diarrhoea ensue, then yes indeed, radio drama is expensive” (2002:4)

the existing listeners to the station<sup>240</sup>, “growth towards a daily audience of 800 000 or more should be steady” (*Interkom* – 3 - Februarie 1995:40). The optimism expressed by Reddy is based on the premise that his RSA listenership statistics of 400 000<sup>241</sup> compare unfavourably with Radio Australia’s listenership of well over 900 000, “in a country with a population less than half of ours” (*SABC Radio & TV* – April/June 1994:20)<sup>242</sup>. Reddy concludes from these figures “that his projected target audience is well within range of his proposed flagship’s recalibrated sights”(p.20). The flawed nature of this argument, as applied to a PSB English language station, should be obvious: as cited by Steyn (2005:128), figures released by the Pan South African Language Board (15 June 2002) reveal that 49% of the SA population “struggles to understand English” (p.128). Moreover, according to Stats SA, in 1996 only 8.6% of 40.58 million South Africans acknowledge English as the language spoken most often at home. This figure is composed of 0.4% of the African/Black population, 16.4% of all Coloureds, 94.4% of Indians/Asians, 39.1% of Whites, and 23.2% of unspecified others. Allowance should be made for the potential growth in listenership of middle-class black South Africans and Afrikaans speakers who are fluent, but not home-language, English speakers. Even so, I would suggest that the results of genuine comparisons drawn between the existing Australian radio listenership, composed of a largely homogenous (white) English-speaking population, and the potential offered by South Africa’s uniquely multi-cultural radio audience (with 11 official languages already catered for by the SABC’s segregated radio services), are so disparate as to render Reddy’s argument fallacious. Yet, despite obvious cultural differences in Australian and South African post-colonial broadcasting, Reddy “called in the help of experts from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation to analyse and evaluate Radio South Africa” (*Interkom* -3- February 1995:1) prior to the 1 March 1995 launch of SAfm. His stated aim was to “steer the station in a new image direction” and “meet the needs of the new target audience” (p.1)

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<sup>240</sup> The internal bulletin of the SABC, *Interkom* - 3 - February 1995, p.1, reports that “Mr. Reddy says a new image for the station became necessary because it is clear that Radio South Africa, with its limited, predominantly white elderly audience, cannot play a significant role in the vital task of rebuilding the nation”. Only two months later, a very different SAfm audience profile to that given by Mr. Reddy (in his early fifties himself at the time) is provided under the heading Fact File in the *SABC Radio & TV* April/June 1995, p.21. It reads as follows: “The (SAfm) audience is a blend of mature and younger listeners, with trends showing an upswing in younger audiences of all race groups. The ratio between male and female listeners is almost equal – and the A/B income group predominates. A high proportion of listeners have post-matric qualifications”.

<sup>241</sup> The SABC Annual Report of 1994 quotes the listenership of Radio South Africa as being 0.454 million (Horwitz 2001:162), a drop of 46 000 from the 500 000 daily listenership to Radio South Africa quoted by the SABC in 1985 (Gail Force in New Radio, *SABC* bulletin dated 8 December 1985)

<sup>242</sup> Reddy describes South Africa’s population figure as being “close to 40 million” in 1994 (*SABC Radio & TV* – April/June 1994:2).

Even greater emphasis was placed on the autonomy and financial independence of each station after the launch of SAfm in 1995, and RSG in 1996. Stringently applied constraints necessitated the further downsizing of staff and paring of programmes, particularly those that fulfilled the broadcaster's commitment to public service broadcasting. Costly music programmes<sup>243</sup> on RSG were dispensed with altogether, along with regular weekly poetry readings. Documentaries that featured regularly as part of SABC Radio's cultural programming schedules on both RSA services could no longer be afforded, unless resurrected from archives for re-broadcast, or produced as arbitrary "one-offs"<sup>244</sup>.

As a survivor of the staff retrenchment process set in place to reduce costs and implement affirmative action, Robert Young (2007:152-153) enumerates the sizeable staff tasked with organizing and presenting Radio Suid Afrika's (1991) successor, Afrikaans Stereo, in 1994, compared to the dramatically reduced station management of Afrikaans Stereo's successor, Radio Sonder Grense, only five years later (p.165). The figures provided by Young lend insight into a difficulty inherited from the "old order" SABC, namely the sizeable, even excessive, staff component in a number of TV and Radio Services departments<sup>245</sup>. Young states that in 1994, the Station Manager of Afrikaans Stereo, Andre Terblanche, had a team of 4 departmental managers, 32 assistants, secretaries, and announcing staff. Regional managers, programme organizers and announcers in Pretoria, Bloemfontein, Durban, Cape Town and Port Elizabeth, were also assisted by one or two members of staff (p.153).

Following Terblanche's acceptance of a retirement package, former KZN SABC employee, Mohamed Shaikh, was appointed RSG Station Manager in November 1995 (p.155). Under Shaikh's stewardship the gradual re-positioning of the station accelerated dramatically, and "major cost-saving procedures in terms of format, content, facilities, and staff" were introduced (*The Voice – the Vision* 1996:70), with the aim of making the station a self-supporting "business unit" in line with other (commercial) stations within the Radio Division of the SABC. Shaikh achieved his stated

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<sup>243</sup> At this time music programmes on Radio Suid Afrika were produced at a cost of at least R30 000 per half hour compared with a full-length radio drama production, which cost R6000 (Young 2007:157).

<sup>244</sup> Drama Organizer on Radio Sonder Grense, Margot Luyt, confirms that the situation on this station in 2008/2009 has altered, in that documentaries now feature on a weekly basis throughout "seasons" of three months duration, which alternate with three monthly "seasons" of radio drama.

<sup>245</sup> Horwitz (2001:121) also cites the views of Neel Smuts (1996), former member of the SABC Management Board, in this respect.

objective, which was to transform a station which previously “focused on the needs of the white Afrikaansers [sic] - at the expense of the vast number of non-white Afrikaans speakers” (p.70), to one which served the needs of all Afrikaans speakers. Yet, despite being billed by the SABC as “the man who will lead the station into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” (p.71), Shaikh’s tenure was brief. Indicating to colleagues that he “had no choice”, he made his untimely departure from the SABC on the 31 May 1997 (Young 2007:161), leaving Radio Sonder Grense, a Public Service Radio station, seriously understaffed with a management of only two (p.165)<sup>246</sup>. Following a delay due to alleged prevarication on the part of the Head of Commercial Radio Services (p.162), Koos Radebe, Sarel Myburgh was eventually appointed to the now onerous position of Afrikaans Stereo Station Manager. Assisted by Robert Young, he attempted to juggle the listeners’ need to be entertained and educated, with the SABC’s requirement that the station achieve financial independence.

Similar difficulties were experienced on SAfm, as key team members continued to leave and budget constraints affected the variety and quality of material broadcast. In his capacity as Station Manager of both Radio South Africa (1990-1995) and SAfm (1995-1996), Jack Mullen remarks that he fought many fierce battles in order “to stave off serious threats to Full Spectrum broadcasting – including such alternatives as a 24-hour rolling news format!” (2002:4). Mullen confirms that the “Full Spectrum” mandate of the SABC<sup>247</sup> was still in place when he left in 1996, but admits to not knowing “[w]hether that mandate has been physically changed, or simply ignored, or interpreted in a manner to facilitate removal of plays, serials, book readings, poetry, etc” (p.4)<sup>248</sup>. However, he *does* know that “for many of the new entrants into the

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<sup>246</sup> In *Communication and Democratic Reform in South Africa*, Robert B. Horwitz suggests that Minister Dr. Pallo Z. Jordan’s (temporary) fall from political favour and his replacement as Minister of Posts, Telecommunication and Broadcasting by COSATU General Secretary, Jay Naidoo, lay not only with his opposition to Deputy President Thabo Mbeki’s proposal in 1995 that the SABC cede a regular one-hour time slot for the government, but certain differences with President Nelson Mandela. These included the frustration that Mandela felt at the SABC’s handling of the Afrikaans language issue. Horwitz states that “The decline of Afrikaans language programming following the South African Broadcasting Corporation relaunch angered many Afrikaners, and Mandela reportedly feared that this was turning into a rallying point for the right wing and jeopardized the process of reconciliation and nation-building” (Horwitz 2001:260).

<sup>247</sup> The “Full Spectrum” mandate of the SABC states that it is the role of the Public Service Broadcaster to provide cultural programming and cater for minority tastes.

<sup>248</sup> The SAfm website “About us” provides the following information on SAfm: “Up until 1995, it was known as a “full spectrum” radio station; news, information, music, art, drama, children’s programmes, sport, etc. It was also the first station to introduce “talk” format and current affairs programming (Radio Today etc). During the next 8 years, SAfm moved away from “full spectrum” broadcasting in favour of news and information, dropping drama and cutting back on music in favour of a live, “talk show” format. Children & teenage programming had already been removed from the programme schedule at the birth of SAfm. However, in 2006, the broadcasting governing body, ICASA, instructed SAfm to re-introduce both drama and children’s programming which it has done. SAfm draws its audience from LSM’s 7-10. It’s [sic] core listeners fall into the age bracket 30-49 (519 000 with a peak of 730 000 in

management of national broadcasting, the priority (as far as English radio is concerned, anyway) has been firmly placed on News & Information" (p.4).

In 1996, in accordance with conditions laid down by the IBA (Independent Broadcasting Authority), it was decided that six regional stations<sup>249</sup> should be offered for sale to private consortiums (*The Voice – the Vision* 1996:45). This decision accorded with the government's GEAR (Growth, Employment and Redistribution) and BEE (Black Economic Empowerment) policies, and the ruling party's adoption of the neo-liberal policy of privatisation, as opposed to the socialist practice of nationalization. Only details of the sale of Radio Algoa are revealed in *The Voice – the Vision* (p.56), as follows: "Umoya Communications (PTY) [sic] Ltd was formed to acquire Radio Algoa and its transmitter split BRFM Stereo. Its licence was granted in October 1996. The company has four key holders in Fedlife, Tubeni Investment Holdings, HACLA Broadcasting and the management and staff of the two stations". Amongst the listed key characteristics of the company is the fact that it is deeply committed to the Eastern Cape region and, (at the insistence of the IBA), is led by historically disadvantaged groups.

Information on the sale of KFM, East Coast Radio, Radio Jacaranda, Highveld Stereo and Radio Oranje could not be released in *The Voice – the Vision* published in 1996, as the commercial licence awards for these stations were eventually made more than a year later. The IBA's insistence on its empowerment criteria led to an estimated 63% of the assets of private radio being held by black ownership. (Horwitz 2001: 172, citing Janisch & Kotlowitz 1998:29). The licences for KFM, East Coast Radio and Radio Jacaranda were not awarded to the highest bidder, but Africa on Air's R320 million offer for the most attractive asset in the SABC portfolio, namely Highveld Stereo, outbid its nearest competitor by R190 million (2001:173). Horwitz observes that "the commercial license awards thus highlighted the IBA's success in transforming South African broadcasting and the limits of its independence" (p.172). He adds that they also reveal the pattern of black economic empowerment in the post-election period, and notes that "some of the license awards reflected ANC political influence peddling and cronyism" (p.172). Despite the state's expectation that the SABC would be self-

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2003). The station has also actively sought a "diverse" audience (currently 61% black vs. 39% white)"[sic]. (Dennis O'Donnell's statistics confirm that the 39% "white" figures include other cultural groups such as Indians and coloureds)

<sup>249</sup> Radio Oranje, Kfm, Radio Jacaranda, East Coast Radio, Highveld Stereo and Radio Algoa.

funding, newly appointed Minister Jay Naidoo agreed that “proceeds from the sale of SABC radio stations, went to the central fiscus, not back to the SABC” (p.343). This amount was in excess of R500 million (p.176). Given that the government seems unlikely to increase its current contribution of 2 per cent to the SABC’s total budget, it is not surprising that the broadcaster has been unable to fulfil its public service mandate, and relies heavily on advertising for revenue<sup>250</sup>.

Both Robert Young of RSG and Jack Mullen of SAfm regarded the sale of the six regional and commercial stations as an error of judgment, given the long-term financial implications for the SABC<sup>251</sup>. Mullen (2002:3) explains that the cross-subsidization process which traditionally took place between the financially viable commercial stations and their PBS counterparts had enabled the latter to observe their commitment to the presentation of discrete, non-commercial programmes. The sale of so many of the SABC’s commercial stations, including those generally regarded as “geldmakers”<sup>252</sup> (Young 2007:147), seriously affected this established practice of cross-subsidization. Mullen’s (2002:4) disillusionment with the commercialisation of the PBS stations, and belief in the value of cultural programming, are evident in his observation that:

[a]s long as the goal is mass audiences, as long as the cost outweighs the intrinsic (and sometimes un-quantifiable) value of so-called cultural programmes to cater for minority tastes, then just so long will these programmes be under attack – or simply absent from the schedules.

RSG’s Robert Young, (2007:175-178) relates that in 2002, Australian consultants were once again brought in by Judy Nwokedi, Charlotte Mampane’s successor as Head of Radio Services, to advise on the re-structuring of various radio stations<sup>253</sup>. The two consultants had no knowledge of African languages and culture, and thus fared badly in their criticism of the African Language Stations. They also had no experience in the

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<sup>250</sup> Jeanette Minnie states that 77% of the SABC’s income is mainly generated by advertising, and 18% is derived from licences (Mail & Guardian, 27 June- 3 July 2008.)

<sup>251</sup> Their opinion on this issue is shared on several levels by Horwitz (see pages 13/13), who also observes that “[c]ommercializing and privatizing parts of the sector without supporting the public service broadcaster will inevitably lead to a shell of public broadcasting – something like that of the United States” (2001:344).

<sup>252</sup> Money-spinners.

<sup>253</sup> The consultants, Brad Story and Peter Butler, had no knowledge of African languages or culture and thus made their most serious mistakes in their judgment of the various African Language stations. As described by Young (2007:175), “[o]mroepers wat hulle uitgewys het as swak aanbieders, was toevallig die gewildste persoonlikhede onder die luisteraars” (Announcers they identified as ineffective presenters were the most popular personalities with the listeners).

field of Public Service Broadcasting, but their 2003 brief from Nwokedi included the introduction of dramatic changes to RSG, in order that the station might “compete with Radio Jacaranda” (p.177). This turn of events prompts Young (pp.177-178) to question the wisdom of the original decision to dispose of these stations, as follows:

Waarom sou die SAUK Jakaranda, Hoëveld, East Coast, Orange en KFM verkoop indien hulle nou met daardie stasies wil meeding? Was dit 'n geval van die melkoeie verkoop en nou die kalwers probeer melk?<sup>254</sup>

The issue of the cross-subsidization process operating between public service broadcasting and commercial services on both radio and television came under discussion in early 1998, with the proposed transformation of the SABC into a corporate body. Newly-appointed Minister Jay Naidoo introduced a bill, which aimed to transform the SABC into a public company, with the state as the sole shareholder. As described by Horwitz, this “represented a new policy in line with GEAR imperatives” (2001:343). It also had the effect of giving the minister greater control over the programming content as an indirect result of the “considerable discretion” which the state was able to exercise over SABC funding (p.343) The commercial and public service operations of the SABC would be separated, with the possibility of the commercial arm eventually undergoing privatisation. A further expectation was that the SABC would become export-oriented, selling programmes to other broadcasters on the African continent. In 1997 the SABC was described as “a goldmine” (Horwitz 2001:343, citing John Spira 1997) by Zwelakhe Sisulu<sup>255</sup>, Chief Executive Officer, as he publicly predicted the broadcaster’s “first profits ever”. Of particular relevance to this study is the comment by Horwitz that “any privatization of the SABC’s commercial wing would eliminate the public service broadcaster’s cross-subsidy source”. Horwitz (2001:43) also cites various sources (Freedom of Expression Institute 1998, Media Monitoring Project 1998, Berger 1998, and Duncan 1998) as influencing his observation that

[a] continually cash-starved public service broadcaster, reliant on a combination of advertising as well as the ad hoc munificence of the

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<sup>254</sup> “Why did the SABC sell Jakaranda, Hoëveld, East Coast, Oranje and KFM if now the broadcaster must enter into competition with them? Was it a case of once the milk cow is sold, attempts must be made to milk the calves?”

<sup>255</sup> Horwitz states that Zwelakhe Sisulu, former journalist and son of Edwina and Walter Sisulu, was also the original leader of MWASA (Media Workers Association of South Africa), “a Black Consciousness organization of journalists and nonjournalists in media positions with some ties to Azapo” (Horwitz 2001:127). MWASA was part of the coalition of the civil society- based media organizations formed during the UDF (United Democratic Front) period, and also formed part of the coalition that contributed towards countering the NP’s “main reformist thrust in media policy...after February 1990” (p.127). This organization also staged a successful strike against the SABC in May-June of 1992 (p.143)

minister, is hardly in a position to act as a bold, independent broadcaster. Subject to both commercial and political pressures (even if indirect in the latter), the SABC will find it difficult to program to South African audience in the mode distinctive to public service broadcasters, to wit, *addressing the audience as citizens rather than as consumers or as political subjects*. (My emphasis)<sup>256</sup>

Several changes were soon to take place within the SABC hierarchy, with CEO Zwelakhe Sisulu's premature departure from office in 1998 to pursue a career as head of New African Investments Limited (NAIL)<sup>257</sup>, an organization with close ANC connections, and affiliated to Urban Brew, another ANC-linked business organization. Urban Brew was awarded a lucrative contract for breakfast television, amongst other programmes that are now outsourced by a diminished SABC (p.344).

Govin Reddy's career expectations had been raised by his appointment as Deputy Chief Executive of the SABC following Sisulu's departure<sup>258</sup>. This led to disappointment and Reddy's resignation once the coveted appointment was awarded, amid much controversy, to the arguably less-experienced Rev. Hawu Mbatha<sup>259</sup>. The accusations of racial discrimination, which were levelled by Reddy against the SABC board, found support amongst staff members, and from former board member, struggle icon and compatriot, Fatima Meer (Braid, *The (London) Independent*, July 5 1998:2)<sup>260</sup>. Braid comments that "[i]ronically, Mr. Reddy was an enthusiastic supporter of the policy to which he now insists he has fallen victim. He zealously pursued affirmative action policies, designed to redress the racial imbalance and journalistic bias within the SABC,

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<sup>256</sup> The SABC was transformed into a company named SABC Limited, with the state holding 100% of the shares, and the Minister of Communications determining the company's memorandum and articles of association. In terms of these articles the SABC is unable to appoint the three executive directors, that is, the group chief executive, the chief operating officer, and the chief financial officer, all of whom form part of the SABC Board (Minnie, *Mail & Guardian*: June 27-July 3 2008)

<sup>257</sup> Newshelf 71, a consortium of New Africa Investments Ltd. (NAIL), had been awarded 61% of Radio Jacaranda's shares when the sale of this station finally took place in August 1997 (Horwitz 2002: 173).

<sup>258</sup> More recently, a similar situation arose when Minister of Communications, Matsepe-Casaburri, failed to appoint Mvuzo Mbebe as Chief Operations Officer, contrary to earlier assurances made in 2006, on the basis that several of her parliamentary colleagues had indicated that the appointment would not be accepted. Mbebe took the SABC to court, where the Johannesburg High Court judge strongly criticized the SABC Board for its failure to give Mbebe reasons for not appointing him, and put a hold on to the board's plans to make another appointment to this post. Baldwin Ndaba notes in *The Star* (5 October 2008) that the position of Operations Officer had earlier been "held on an acting basis by Charlotte Mampane – who has since been removed after the High Court ruled in an unrelated matter that procedures were not followed when she was given the post".

<sup>259</sup> The Rev. Assah Hawu Mbatha's career appears to have been fast-tracked; his online CV reveals a rapid ascendancy from Minister of the Uniting Reformed Church of SA, Vryheid and Mpumalanga (KZN) from 1978-1982, to SABC Producer of Religious Programmes (01 May 1982), to Manager Radio Zulu - Ukhozi FM (01 June 1991), to SABC General Manager KZN region (01 January 1994), Director of Radio Programmes (01 October 1995), SABC Deputy Chief Executive-Operations (01 June 1996), Chief Executive -Radio (01 October 1997) and SABC Group Chief Executive (01 July 1998).

<sup>260</sup> Braid's article entitled *Race prejudice and political bias: sounds like the old South Africa*, makes the specific claim that "The allegations were vehemently denied by the board, but most of the corporation's staff - even those who bitterly resented Mr. Reddy's eager pursuit of change – do not believe them".

the former lapdog and slavish mouthpiece of apartheid and the National Party". A statement made by Neel Smuts<sup>261</sup> in a 1996 interview with Horwitz seems relevant here: Smuts states that, under the old order, "top appointments to the SABC always suffered because they were made with a view toward politics and factional compromises within the National Party, rather than on the basis of actual managerial competence" (2001:121). In not dissimilar fashion, once the new ruling party assumed control of the SABC, appointments tended to be made based on ideological commitment or struggle credentials, rather than skill or experience. In this instance, if Reddy's accusations are correct, a decision was made purely on grounds of race. However, Braid (1998) also suggests that Mr. Reddy could have been mistaken in believing his colour was the only bar to promotion, as personal convictions and personality may have also played a part. Mbatha's alleged pliability is set against Reddy's "independent spirit and determination to keep the SABC free of government interference" (p.2). This "independent spirit" is posited as an additional factor that "may have turned off the board as much as the colour of his skin" (p.2). Reddy's stance on press freedom, as detailed in an issue of the *SABC Radio & TV* (April/June 1994: 22), lends credence to this argument, quoting his statement that "[w]ithout a free press...you won't have democracy. You can have all the constitutional guarantees in the world but the best guarantee is a strong, ethically sound free press". The same (April/June 1994) edition of *SABC Radio & TV* also points out that "as new Chief Executive of SABC Radio – and therefore as the man who controls actuality and news broadcasts on the SABC's 21 internal radio services in 11 languages – his views are certain to be stamped on broadcasts" (p.22). It is worth noting that Reddy's views on press freedom, as published in detail and with pride by the SABC, accord with the broadcaster's Code of Conduct, originally developed in 1993 and revised in 2004, in particular section 4.5.3, which states that

[t]he SABC is not the mouthpiece of the government of the day, nor should it broadcast its opinion of government policies, unless they relate directly to broadcasting matters.

The Rev. Mbatha's tenure as CEO proved to be brief, slightly less than two years' in duration. Robert Young, who found Mbatha to be "uiters bekwaam vir die pos"<sup>262</sup>, drily observes that "onder 'n nuwe raad en nuwe voorsitter, is sy loopbaan ook skielik

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<sup>261</sup> Former member of the SABC Management Board, and Eminent Persons Group for NTPP (National Telecommunications Policy Project).

<sup>262</sup> "ideally equipped for the post".

beëindig”<sup>263</sup> (2007:172). After four years his successor, Peter Matlare, left the SABC for an executive post with Vodacom. Allegations of conflict between the CEO and Dr. Snuki Zikalala, the SABC managing director of news, arose during Matlare’s tenure, followed by Zikalala’s resignation (Bizcommunity.com 2005:1-2). However, Dr. Zikalala had been re-employed two years later (April 2004) by the SABC as Group Executive: News and Current Affairs, before Matlare’s resignation.

In contrast to Reddy’s principled stance on press freedom in 1994, the findings of a detailed report produced in 2006 by the *SABC’s Commission of Enquiry into blacklisting and related matters*<sup>264</sup> (*Mail & Guardian* online, 14 October 2006) indicate a marked decline in journalistic freedom at the SABC over the interim 12 year period. The Commission’s findings ascribe this deviation from the SABC’s official mandate as being largely due to restrictive editorial decisions made by Dr. Zikalala. Matters such as the “blacklisting” or partial exclusion of certain commentators and analysts for interviews, chiefly on SAfm’s influential AM Live, are found to be “impermissible” (*SABC Commission of Enquiry Report* 2006:53), and, at times, “politically driven” (p.58). Commenting on staff morale, the Commission also expresses the view that the SABC newsroom does not appear to provide an environment in which people can safely articulate their views without fear of repercussion (p.58). Several witnesses agreed to testify only on condition of anonymity, a disturbing fact that “suggested an atmosphere of fear and distrust which is scarcely conducive to the kind of open and rational debate expected with a public broadcaster” (p.56). Dr. Zikalala’s intervention “at a micro-level inappropriate to his level of management” and “in a seemingly ad hoc and inconsistent manner” had resulted in a “downward micro-management” style that impacted negatively on the morale and initiative of executive producers, producers and presenters (p.57). The issues involved and the *SABC Commission of Enquiry’s* findings provoke the following observation in the report:

It would indeed be abhorrent, and at gross variance with the SABC’s mandate and policies, if the practices of the old order were being repeated in the new, with the effect of disqualifying South Africans from democratic discourse and debate. (p.9)

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<sup>263</sup> “Under a new board and new chairperson his period of office was also rapidly terminated”.

<sup>264</sup> Full document released not by the SABC, but by the *Mail & Guardian* online, 14 October 2006.

John Perlman, the popular SAfm presenter and anchorman of AM Live, contradicted SABC spokesperson, Kaizer Kganyago when he denied the blacklisting of commentators in a live radio interview. Perlman's ethical dilemma is acknowledged, and his stance is vindicated by the findings of the commission, whereas the commission criticizes Zikalala's autocratic management style, and the dishonesty of the SABC and its representatives in their response to the allegation that a blacklist of political commentators did exist. Unlike Perlman, a journalist of high calibre who was popular with SAfm listeners of all cultures, no reprimand was issued or action taken by the SABC against Zikalala. Dissatisfaction with internal politics in the workplace led to Perlman's resignation and final broadcast on 2 March 2007<sup>265</sup>.

It may be argued that Reddy's appointment as GCEO, and, as such, editor-in-chief of the SABC, would have served as a bulwark against the "blacklisting" of independent analysts, and ensured that the provisions of Section 10.1 (d) of the Broadcasting Act were fulfilled; that is, the Public Service provided by the Corporation must "provide significant news and public affairs programming which meets the highest standards of journalism, as well as fair and unbiased coverage, impartiality, balance and independence from government, commercial and other interests". However, Reddy's stated willingness to shed as many as 180 000 traditional RSA/SAfm listeners in the belief that SAfm's existing "limited, predominantly white elderly audience cannot play a significant role in the vital task of rebuilding the nation" (*Interkom* – 3 – February 1995), indicates a prejudice that sits somewhat uncomfortably with the Corporation's public service obligation, as outlined in Section 10.1(b), which is, to "reflect the unity and diverse cultural and multilingual nature of South Africa and all its cultures and regions to audiences" (*SABC Commission of Enquiry Report* 2006:13).

Govin Reddy's projected listenership of 800 000 for the "revamped" SAfm has never materialized. The closest approach to this projection was reached in 2003, when the SABC reports a peak of 730 000 in listenership figures (*SAfm – About Us* online). The "Rebuilding Radio" strategy, which changed SAfm's day-time format to news and talk, and positioning to that of "News and Information", was first implemented in February

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<sup>265</sup> A press release issued at a Cosatu Executive press conference in Nov. 2006 condemns the SABC's move in taking disciplinary action against John Perlman and requested National Office Bearers to defend Perlman and ensure "that he is not open to intimidation in a manner that would communicate a message to SABC staffers that those who stand up when the public is told untruths will suffer", as this would "deepen the culture of sycophancy at SABC and further undermine its role as the public broadcaster". Cosatu also took out a full-page advertisement in the *Mail & Guardian* (1 March 2006) paying tribute to "an excellent and patriotic journalist".

2003, and followed up with changes to the evening and weekend format - and programme presenters - in October 2004. SAfm's station manager, Mapule Mbhalati delivered an official explanation of the second change to the programme schedule, as follows: "The SABC is set to reinforce its national leadership role in providing quality insightful programming to all its listeners. The decision to revamp is part of a long-term plan to take advantage of format opportunities in the radio environment" (*Bizcommunity.com*, 4 October 2004). Earlier indications of change met with protests from listeners, eliciting an "Editor's Note" from Barney Mthombothi<sup>266</sup> (*Sunday Tribune*, 19 September 2004), and a reply from Dianne Kohler-Barnard<sup>267</sup> (*Sunday Tribune*, 4 October 2004). As forecast by Reddy, SAfm had shed many traditional white listeners. The more vocal objections on air included the claim the station's "re-positioning" was a "take-over" contrived for the benefit of the black political elite. The arguments presented by Mthombothi and Kohler-Barnard, both former SABC employees, give some indication of the culturally divided opinions amongst listeners to SAfm, and the erratic nature of the station's listenership figures. They also lend some credence to Steven Lang's (2008) assertion, discussed below, that SAfm occupies an anomalous position in the SABC radio portfolio. Mthombothi makes the following points:

- According to Rams figures released on Friday, September 17, 2004, RSG has more than a million listeners, whereas SAfm has only 300 000 [sic]<sup>268</sup>. It would appear from the Rams figures that "SAfm's downward slide continues".
- SAfm and RSG, have the biggest transmitter network in the country. Ukhozi FM with less than half SAfm's footprint, has around 5 million listeners. In order to maintain its huge transmitter network, SAfm has to be subsidized by the other African language stations. If SAfm were a commercial enterprise, it would have to close down.
- English is powerful. It "reigns supreme throughout the world". Moreover, it is the language of business and politics, and the preferred medium of the black

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<sup>266</sup> Former SABC Radio News Editor-in-Chief (1995-1999) and SABC News Chief Executive (2000-2002). (Nevertheless, Mthombothi states in the *Sunday Tribune* article discussed above that he "hold[s] no brief for the mugs and government lickspittles who run the SABC" (Editor's Note: September 19 2004).

<sup>267</sup> Former SABC radio announcer and presenter of SAfm's *The Editors*.

<sup>268</sup> Mthombothi's claim that SAfm listenership figures had slid to "a meagre 300 000" may serve to support his suggestion that the station deserves euthanasia, but this assertion is substantially incorrect. The Rams listenership figure issued by the South African Advertising Research Foundation on September 17 2004, is 488 000 listeners to SAfm during the July/Sept 04 period, as confirmed by Claire Welch of SAAF. These figures do represent a "downward slide" from 589 000 in the Feb/April period, to 585 000 in Mar/May, and 525 000 in April/Aug. 04, but rallied to 508 000 in the Oct 04/Mar 05 period. RSG's listenership for the same period (July/Sept 2004) is shown as having increased from 1672 000 in Feb/April 2004 to 1 802 000 in July/Sept 04. Ukhozi FM's listenership remains steady at 6437 000 in July/Sept 04, reflecting little change throughout the 2004/2005 period.

intelligentsia. Yet any changes to SAfm are seen by some as an attack on the language and those who speak it. English belongs to all those who speak it, and language is about clarity, not accent.

Kohler-Barnard replies as follows:

- The station had reached and passed a listenership of over 700 000 when the new manager, Thelma (Mapule) Mbhalati, took over (January 2003). Having worked “virtually around the clock”, the SAfm staff felt confident that the station would reach the 1 million mark within two years. However, since the all-talk changes were instituted (February 2003), the increase in listenership has turned into decline. SAfm has been taken over by the news department and the input from SAfm staff is minimal. This means that the public service mandate has been lost.
- SAfm is not a commercial enterprise: “it is a public service station obliged to air, for example, TB advertisements and general announcements a commercial station wouldn’t touch”. Station staff’s repeated pleas to management to drop the unutilized and financially crippling transmitters are ignored.
- No single group “owns” the English language, and the issue is not about accent but clarity, which is frequently lost on SAfm. The station has highly paid announcers and newsreaders who “grossly mispronounce” the language. Ukhozi FM management is protective of the (Zulu) language, having “booted off” announcers who fail to live up to their high standards.
- Like the other ten language groups in this country, the people of South Africa who speak English as a first language do have a culture they wish to be reflected on a public service broadcaster.

The re-introduction of radio drama (a 15 minute weekly serial or book reading, a one hour Saturday Play and a half-hour Sunday play or serial) in 2006, in order to meet with PBS licensing conditions laid down by ICASA, did little to mollify the still-shrinking white listenership. Gradual improvements in the station’s listenership figures are noted, however: Dennis O’Donnell, Station Manager of SAfm<sup>269</sup>, confirms that the figure for the week ending 29 July 2008 is 609 000. This represents barely more than a 100 000 increase on SABC statistics quoted in 1985, and 154 000 more than in 1994. It can be

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<sup>269</sup> E-mail addressed to Retha Roux of the SABC radio archives and forwarded to me (29 July 2008).

claimed that the station has been successfully re-positioned, with statistics quoted by O'Donnell showing a 60% black (62% male, 38% female) and 40% combined white, Indian and coloured listenership. The age of SAfm's listenership is given as ranging from 35-49 (33%), and 50+ (30%)<sup>270</sup>.

In September 2007 a "divided ANC in parliament rubber-stamped SABC board members with strong links to the highest office in the land" (Quintal & Carter, 2007:1) giving President Mbeki control over the public broadcaster. Objections were raised in the ANC parliamentary caucus meeting to the appointment of attorney Christine Qunta and businesswoman Gloria Serobe<sup>271</sup>. Conflict centred around the SABC continued prior to the recall of President Mbeki in 2008, concerning the selection of board members by the President, the subsequent suspension of Dr. Zikalala by the current GCEO, Dali Mpofu (appointed 1 August 2005), and Mpofu's own successive suspensions by a controversial SABC board at odds with the ANC's post-Polokwane order and parliament itself. A resolution to the crisis has been sought with the promulgation of an Amended Broadcasting Amendment Bill, which was finally passed by the National Assembly and signed into law in February 2009 by President Kgalema Motlanthe (News24.com: 2009). The Draft Bill was earlier placed before the National Council of Provinces, and comment invited from relevant organizations and members of the public. The Save our SABC Coalition submission on the Broadcasting Bill (12 September 2008), as presented to the NCOP, suggests "a holistic review of the challenges facing public broadcasting in South Africa". The list includes several issues referred to above, expressed concisely as follows:

- The on-going funding crises at the SABC, resulting in an over-reliance on commercial activities, to the detriment of public interest programming;
- The structural dysfunction at the SABC between its public and commercial divisions. The stated motivation of such division was to relieve the public wing's reliance on commercial revenue. The separation, however, has not achieved this;
- The failure of the SABC to abide by its own editorial policies, particularly with regard to the recent "blacklisting crisis";

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<sup>270</sup> Statistics provided by SAARF for the period.

<sup>271</sup> Mafela, Boyle, Harper & Mkhabela of *The Sunday Times* (16 September 2007:1) report that presidential spokesman Smuts Ngonyama insisted on Serobe's appointment, and note that Ngonyama, Serobe and SABC chief executive Dali Mpofu are partners in the Telkom empowerment deal.

- The on-going politicization of the SABC Board and the failure by the SABC's leadership (including Board members and senior management) to represent the public interest effectively in the carrying out of their respective duties<sup>272</sup>.

The SABC 2007/8 annual report, released 10 October 2008, claims that the corporation made an operating profit during this period, with commercial advertising revenue having grown to R3.1 billion. The broadcaster also "appears to be in a healthy financial shape, with R165 million in the kitty" (Naidu, E. 2008:7). Both Naidu and Kate Skinner (2008:29) comment on items such as the R40.6 million expenditure incurred on "fruitless and wasteful" expenditure, and the writing-off of R76 million as the result of the SABC's failure to screen programming bought for that amount within a prescribed licence period. Skinner also raises the issue of cross-subsidization between commercial and public broadcasting services, noting that the Broadcasting White Paper issued in 1998 motivated the separation of the SABC's commercial and public television and radio stations in order to facilitate this process, but adds that "it seems the vision hasn't worked in practice"(p.29). Co-ordinator of the current "Save our SABC" Coalition, Kate Skinner concludes with the observation that "[t]he central missing element in the report is the issue of the SABC's public mandate: how is the broadcaster actually fulfilling its obligations to its public on our screens and over the airwaves?" (p.29).

In describing SAfm as "an anomaly", former SAfm executive producer and radio columnist, Steven Lang<sup>273</sup> (*Rhodes Journalism Review* 28, September 2008:34)

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<sup>272</sup> The Save our SABC Coalition submission lists a number of other problems which it alleges have given rise to the "current crises plaguing the public broadcaster", namely

- the provisions of the Broadcasting Act, 1999, the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the SABC and the Shareholder Compact between the SABC and the Minister of Communications;
- the unlawful and direct interference in Parliament's process of appointing the current Board;
- the silence by the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) about the crises and its failure therefore to fulfil its legislative responsibility to monitor compliance by the SABC with its Charter and the Broadcasting Act, 1999;
- the vague wording in the SABC Charter, which has resulted in a lack of clarity about the public broadcaster's real mandate.
- A lack of clarity on the role of the Board;
- the appointment/disqualification and removal criteria and processes for both executive and non-executive members of the Board;
- the lack of clarity around the role of the Minister with regard to the SABC;
- the fact that the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the SABC and the Shareholder Compact are in many respects, ultra vires the provisions of the Broadcasting Act;
- the fact that public stakeholders have no formal way of inputting their concerns to the Board.

<sup>273</sup> Lang was executive producer of SAfm's AM Live at the time of the "Blacklisting scandal", and gave evidence to the SABC appointed *Commission of Enquiry into Blacklisting and Related Matters*.

confirms that, despite making massive losses, SAfm has the biggest radio footprint in the country, the wealthiest audience profile, and is better resourced than other stations. Lang further states that Current Affairs programmes AM Live, Midday Live and PM Live, account for all prime time broadcasting during the week, yet the station manager, Dennis O'Donnell, has no influence on the content of these shows, this being the prerogative of the news division (p.34). Top management at the SABC devote more time and attention to SAfm than to other stations due to the fact that "the decision makers within the SABC, in Cabinet and in most boardrooms in corporate SA choose to listen to current affairs in English"<sup>274</sup> (p.34). Moreover, unlike other stations, telephonic complaints concerning interviews are received from the Presidency (p.34). Indications are that the much-vaunted independence of the public service broadcaster has once again become endangered, as the machinery of state draws perilously near.

As Horwitz (2001:340-341) avers, the impressive contribution achieved by various anti-apartheid civil society groups working towards democratic reform (including the freedom of the press and early restructuring of the communications sector) between the periods 1990-1994 and 1994-1996, could only have been achieved during transitional periods such as these, and in a climate in which the state is amenable to participatory politics. In such a situation, Horwitz argues, once the post-social democratic vision of the transitional struggle is achieved, a new phase is entered in which the structures and institutions created during the earlier period "become part of the conflicts and politics of the consolidation of that democracy, a process and period generally more structured, more bureaucratic, more prone to clientelism, and less open especially to participatory democracy" (p.341). It can be shown that the bureaucratic inclinations and statist tendencies of certain factions within the ruling party were evident at an early stage in this process: only months after the 1994 elections Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, irritated by the criticism of the government and ANC in the predominantly white press, proposed that a one-hour time slot be allocated on SABC in which "to communicate government positions and policies" (p.293). SACS (South African Communication Services) head David Venter also "made submissions to the SABC Board in a bid to secure TV time for government representatives" (Horwitz, 2001:293, citing Sibongo and Lush, 1997:34, also Republic of South Africa, 1996; Zaina, 1996). As an advocate of the independence of the public broadcaster and

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<sup>274</sup> Lang also observes that an interview on any one of the SAfm current affairs programmes may draw a telephonic complaint from the Presidency, whereas other programmes, such as Morning Talk and stations such as RSG, are free to interview whoever they please (p.34).

freedom of the press, Communications Minister, Pallo Jordan, rejected the proposal in a Parliamentary address<sup>275</sup>, a move, which arguably contributed towards the loss of his ministerial post to former COSATU general secretary, Jay Naidoo.

Horwitz enumerates the difficulties encountered in the post-apartheid transformation of the South African economy and society in general, describing them as being common to other socialist movements engaged in this process. His analysis is detailed and instructive: we are drawn to the conclusion here (in far simpler, if reductive, terms) that operating within a global capitalist economy necessitates taking advantage of markets. The challenge faced by government, therefore, is to devise a system that not only achieves this goal, but also does so without allowing economic and political power to accumulate in a small class. Horwitz (2001:355) continues in general terms, as follows:

[s]ocial democracy characteristically met this challenge with statist solutions that, over time, tended to generate bureaucratic externalities and fiscal overextension - and also tended to generate nonpluralistic cultural formations -

but adds a reference specifically addressed to earlier discussions concerning the commercialization of the SABC 's public broadcasting service:

we saw this in, e.g., the complaint about traditional public service broadcasting" (p.355).

Almost an afterthought to a compelling discussion of issues of political import, this final comment assumes far greater significance in another discussion; that of developments in radio drama on the SA public service broadcaster, as outlined in the sections below.

#### **4.7.1 AFRIKAANS RADIO DRAMA**

Changes in RSG's demographic profile took place in accordance with the "total repositioning" required of the station, but "listeners' interest in radio drama remains

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<sup>275</sup> Jordan conceded in his speech for the "obvious need for effective Government communication with the public", but made the observation – re-assuring for many – that the Government was "currently putting a lot of effort into producing credible and impartial public broadcasting services, which enjoy the trust and confidence of all South African citizens". He felt it would be "unwise to jeopardize this enterprise with ill-advised projects" (Horwitz 2001: 294, citing Republic of South Africa, 1995n; cols. 2285-2286).

high" (Young 2002:2)<sup>276</sup>. Despite the popularity of the art form, the "major cost saving procedures in terms of format, content, facilities and staff", as outlined by Mohamed Shaikh in *The Voice – the Vision* (p.70), continued to whittle away at the air-time allocated to all cultural programming, including radio drama. In 1986 Afrikaans radio drama productions occupied 11hr: 30mins per week, excluding repeat broadcasts. Twenty years later, in 2006, the weekly broadcast of drama on RSG had been reduced to 1hr: 30mins (Young 2007:128). Young explains that "Dramaproduksies is van die duurste programme – daarom was dit "logies" om daar to besnoei" (p.136)<sup>277</sup>. The cost of a radio drama production in 2006 has been estimated by Mapule Mbhalati<sup>278</sup> as being between R16 000 and R20 000 depending on the category (Ben, Sergio:2006), which, in *radio* terms, is considered expensive. As Vermaas (2002:2) observes, "you have the expense of writers (sometimes two, if it's an adaptation/dramatization), producer, actors, two technicians, drama studio, etc. Compare that to a phone-in. Or even a documentary. News is more expensive but there is a huge demand for it. In *drama* terms, radio drama is cheap" (Vermaas's emphasis)<sup>279</sup>.

Not all the developments in radio drama during the first year of RSG's existence were negative: Afrikaans radio drama organizer, Robert Young, had cherished the notion of an annual radio drama writing competition to discover and encourage new writers, but external funding of the project was essential. In his earlier position as manager of the news actuality programmes, *Monitor* and *Spektrum*, station manager, Mohamed Shaikh, had been offered finance from Sanlam in order to promote radio journalism. Shaikh decided that radio drama was a more deserving cause (Young:159), and, after discussions with Sanlam representatives, the prestigious annual RSG/SANLAM writing competition was introduced in 1997. In the third year (1999) a second section was introduced for established writers, but nine years later (2008), in order to attract the work of professional writers and raise the standard of entries received, the organizers decided to revert to a single section, open to all writers, with prizes totalling R44 000<sup>280</sup>. The decision may appear to go against the original spirit of the competition, but

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<sup>276</sup> Nigel Vermaas, former Drama Organizer for Radio South Africa and SAfm also confirms "drama is more highly rated by listeners to RSG and ALS stations than on ours. (English Language)...RSG still has many platteland listeners" (2002:3).

<sup>277</sup> Drama productions are amongst the most expensive form of programming – therefore it was "logical" to cut expense in this direction.

<sup>278</sup> SAfm station manager in 2006.

<sup>279</sup> A low budget fringe production at a festival costs a great deal more than a radio play but reaches a far smaller audience, and the cost of a film or television production is phenomenal by comparison.

<sup>280</sup> In an interview with Naomi Bruwer of Litnet, Afrikaans radio drama organizer Margot Luyt explains the decision as follows: "Ons wou ook die standaard van die inskrywings verhoog en hoop dat ons meer inskrywings sal ontvang

could be justified if the standard of the new drama currently broadcast is proving difficult to maintain. Despite the reduction in airtime allocated on RSG, Afrikaans radio drama was not subjected to a 7 year suspension, and every effort has been made by the depleted drama department to maintain the high standard of work that listeners expect. A particularly fine example is Chris Barnard's *Blindemol*, produced by Margot Luyt (b/c 22 November 2007), which received the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns award for radio drama in Afrikaans in 2008.

A list provided by the SABC radio archives records that 55 plays were broadcast on RSG over the 4 year period from 1996-1999, excluding repeats. The work of well-established dramatists, such as P.G. du Plessis's *Siener in die Suburbs*<sup>281</sup> (b/cast 12 May 1996), Pieter Fourie's *Faan se Trein*<sup>282</sup> (b/cast 17 June 1997), *Faan se Stasie*<sup>283</sup> (b/cast 14 July 1997), *Donderdag se Mense*<sup>284</sup> (6 May 1997), *Die Propenentjie*<sup>285</sup> (b/cast 19 November 1996), and *Die Koggelaar*<sup>286</sup> (b/cast 22 April 1997) were broadcast, together with plays from the literary canon, such as Federico Garcia Lorca's *Die Huis van Bernard Alba*<sup>287</sup> (b/cast 3 November 1998), and a new production of Anton Chekhov's *Drie Susters*<sup>288</sup> (b/cast 17 November 1998), translated and adapted for radio.

An increase in the number of new single dramas broadcast on RSG is apparent from 2000-2008<sup>289</sup>, with prize-winning entries in the Sanlam/RSG radio drama writing competition making an important contribution. The account of new developments in radio drama on RSG from 2000-2008 provided below might either be judged as being too limited or needlessly comprehensive. However, the data does assist in facilitating comparisons between the progress made and different directions taken by Afrikaans and English radio drama in recent years

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van mense wat volbloed-skrywers is". (We would like to raise the standard of entries, and hope that we will receive more entries from people who are full-blooded writers).

<sup>281</sup> *A prophet in the suburbs.*

<sup>282</sup> *Faan's train.*

<sup>283</sup> *Faan's station.*

<sup>284</sup> *Thursday's people.*

<sup>285</sup> *The young minister.*

<sup>286</sup> *The mocker..*

<sup>287</sup> *The house of Bernard Alba.*

<sup>288</sup> *Three sisters.*

<sup>289</sup> Retha Roux of SABC's Radio Sound Archives has provided details of new recordings only, not repeat broadcasts.

## Sanlam/RSG Radio Drama Writing Competition 2000

The SABC radio archives lists only 11 new plays as having been broadcast on RSG in 2000, but this information may be incomplete. No mention is made of the winning entries in the 1999 Sanlam/RSG radio drama writing competition. Information provided indicates that despite a focus on locally-written dramas, RSG also broadcasts selected work by French, German, Russian and English writers. In 2000 *Die Lyk in die Park*<sup>290</sup> by Robert Lord and *Drie in die Duister*<sup>291</sup> by T.D. Webster were translated from English, and *Lieutenant Tenant* by Pierre Grand-Paris was translated from French. Jan Schutte's translation of *Ete saam met die familie*<sup>292</sup> by Jean Anouilh, produced by Terrance April, was broadcast in November 2000 and re-broadcast in June 2005.

### 2001:

An increase to 20 single dramas is recorded in 2001, 9 of which were winners or finalists in the 2000 RSG/Sanlam radio drama writing competition. Details of these winners are provided for each year, in recognition of the contribution made by the sponsors towards the development of creative writing talent and the provision of worthwhile new dramatic work on RSG.

### Category A: (Established Writers)

1<sup>st</sup> Prize: *Die Held*<sup>293</sup> by Helena Hugo, produced by the writer (b/c 8 May 2001). Cast: Rina Nienaber, Riana Wilkens, Bettie Kemp, Richard van der Westhuizen, Anton Schmidt, Danie Joubert.

2<sup>nd</sup> Prize: *Poppiekind*<sup>294</sup> by Madeleine S. Gericke, produced by Evert Snyman (b/c 1 May 2005). Cast: Bettie Kemp, Evert Snyman.

3<sup>rd</sup> Prize: *Lig*<sup>295</sup> by George Weideman, produced by Johan Rademan (b/c 17 April 2001 and rebroadcast 14 May 2001). Cast: Albert Maritz, Joanie Combrink, Pedro Kruger, Andre Rossouw.

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<sup>290</sup> *The body in the park.*

<sup>291</sup> *Three in the dark.*

<sup>292</sup> *Dinner with the family.*

<sup>293</sup> *The hero.*

<sup>294</sup> *Doll child.*

<sup>295</sup> *Light.*

### **Category B:** (Novice writers)

1<sup>st</sup> Prize: *Die Wenner*<sup>296</sup> by Deleen Bekker, produced by Terrance April (b/c 7 April 2001). Cast: Andre Rossouw, Chris Fourie, Ronel Geldenhuys, Suzanne Beyers, Joanie Combrink, Marcel Stone, Denver Vragom.

2<sup>nd</sup> Prize: *Die Losprys*<sup>297</sup> by Fanie Viljoen, produced by Evert Snyman (b/c 10 April 2001). Cast: Lochner de Kock, Anton Dekker, Doctor Gaso, Josias Molela, Charl van Heyningen.

3<sup>rd</sup> Prize: *Praatmaar*<sup>298</sup> by Charles J. Fourie, produced by Johan Rademan (b/c 3 April 2001). Cast: Johan Nel, George Ballot, Ronel Geldenhuys, Pieter Cilliers, Joanie Combrink.

Three other competition entries were broadcast: Mariana Brand's *'n Tweede Kans*<sup>299</sup> (b/c 19 June 2001), Pirow Bekker's *Vishuis*<sup>300</sup> (b/c 29 May 2001) and Christo van der Merwe's *Die Groen Tafel*<sup>301</sup> (b/c 15 May 2001). Three translated works by German writers were also broadcast in 2001: *Gaste uit Duitsland*<sup>302</sup> (b/c 30 January 2001) by Christian Ferber, translated by Annette MacKenzie, *Die grafskender*<sup>303</sup> (b/c 6 November 2001) by Wolfgang Altendorf, translated by Alewyn Lee, and *Die dagboek van 'n verleier*<sup>304</sup> (13 November 2001) by Max Gundermann, translated by Alewyn Lee.

### **2002:**

A reduced number of 13 single dramas are recorded as having been broadcast in Radioteater in 2002, 4 of which were drawn from the 2001 Sanlam/RSG radio drama writing competition. The winners are as follows:

### **Category A:** (Established writers)

1<sup>st</sup> Prize: *Te jonk om pa to wees*<sup>305</sup> by Shane Buys, produced by Johan Rademan (b/c 7 May 2002 and rebroadcast 12 December 2002). Cast: Pieter Cilliers, Juanita Swanepoel, Esther von Waltzleben, Pedro Kruger, Margit Meyer-Rodenbeck, Kitty Albertyn.

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<sup>296</sup> *The winner.*

<sup>297</sup> *The ransom.*

<sup>298</sup> *Just talk.*

<sup>299</sup> *A second chance.*

<sup>300</sup> *Fish house.*

<sup>301</sup> *The green table.*

<sup>302</sup> *Guests from Germany.*

<sup>303</sup> *The grave vandal.*

<sup>304</sup> *Diary of a seducer.*

<sup>305</sup> *Too young to be father.*

2<sup>nd</sup> Prize: *Husse met lang ore*<sup>306</sup> by Kiep Vermeulen, produced by Evert Snyman (b/c 30 April 2002). Cast: Anton Dekker, Bettie Kemp, Leona Riche, Don Lamprecht, Arnold Hoon, Annelize Bosch, Marissa Martin (vocalist).

**Category B:** (Novice writers)

1<sup>st</sup> Prize: *Nosferatu, die Doodlose*<sup>307</sup> by Marlise Joubert, produced by Eben Cruywagen (b/c 16 April 2002). Cast: Hannes Horn, Deirdre Wolhuter, Andre Rossouw, Joanie Combrink, Suzanne Beyers.

2<sup>nd</sup> Prize: *Eerbare dief*<sup>308</sup> by Barry le Roux, produced by Evert Snyman (b/c 9 April 2002). Cast: Richard van der Westhuizen, Riana Wilkens, Hermien de Vos, Johan Bothma, Lochner de Kock, Don Lamprecht.

An abbreviated translation of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, produced by Evert Snyman (b/c 10 December 2002) and rebroadcast (19 April 2005), featured Richard van der Westhuizen as Hamlet, Anton Dekker as Claudius, Riana Wilkens as Gertrude, Bettie Kemp as Ophelia and Don Lambrecht as Polonius.

**2003:**

25 newly recorded productions are recorded as broadcast on RSG in 2003, 7 of which were winners or finalists in the 2002 Sanlam/RSG writing competition. The prize-winning 2002 productions broadcast in 2003 are as follows:

**Category A:** Established writers

1st Prize: *Die Roeping*<sup>309</sup> by Jac J. Brits, produced by Johan Rademan (b/c 6 May 2003). Cast: Johan Stassen, Leon Kruger, Suzanne Beyers, Margit Meyer-Rodenbeck, Christine Wessels, Neels van Jaarsveld, Deirdre Wolhuter, Albert du Plessis (instrumentalist – guitar).

2<sup>nd</sup> Prize: *Agter Geslote Deure*<sup>310</sup> by Fanie Viljoen, produced by Evert Snyman (b/c 29 April 2003). Cast: Miems de Bruyn, Riana Wilkens, Anton Dekker.

3<sup>rd</sup> Prize: *Die Vierde Wedren*<sup>311</sup> by Marlise Joubert, produced by Johan Rademan (b/c 22 April 2003 and rebroadcast 9 January 2008). Cast: Johan Stassen, Leon Kruger, Juanita Swanepoel, Christine Wessels, Johan Nel, Pieter Cilliers, Deon van Zyl.

**Category B:** Novice writers

1<sup>st</sup> Prize: *Kies*<sup>312</sup> by Charlene Stanley, produced by Evert Snyman (b/c 15 April 2003). Cast: Karin Wessels, Hermien de Vos, Johnny Klein, Jacques Bosch, Anrich Herbst, Johan van der Merwe, Evert Snyman, Frikkie Wallis.

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<sup>306</sup> *Husse with long ears (a nonsensical answer in response to inquisitive children's questions)*

<sup>307</sup> *Nosferatu, the dead loss.*

<sup>308</sup> *Honourable thief.*

<sup>309</sup> *The calling.*

<sup>310</sup> *Behind closed doors.*

<sup>311</sup> *The fourth race.*

2<sup>nd</sup> Prize: *Die Pondok*<sup>313</sup> by Deon le Grange, produced by Johan Rademan (b/c 8 April 2003). Cast: Christine Wessels, Deon van Zyl, Vicky Davis, Theresa Cloete, Leon Kruger, Ronel Geldenhuys.

The work of two finalists in the competition was also broadcast, namely *'n Man en sy pop*<sup>314</sup> by Kiep Vermeulen (b/c 13 May 2003) and *Petrus se Oorlog met die boom*<sup>315</sup> by Christo van der Merwe (b/c 2 May 2003).

Several translated works (German and French) were also broadcast: *Tere Bekentenisse*<sup>316</sup> by French writer Fred Kassak was produced by Robert Young, (b/c 24 June 2003), with Leona Rich as Mev. Chambarin, Francois Stemmet as Mnr. Chambarin, Rina Nienaber as Veronique, Richard van der Westhuizen as Phillippe and Lochner de Kock as Kommissaris Thomas. Ida Grabe translated *Ouma en die Rampokkers*<sup>317</sup> by Charles Maitre (b/c 14 October 2003), and Jean Beasjou's *In die skadu van Vermeer*<sup>318</sup> (b/c 18 November 2003) was translated by Verna Vels and produced by Evert Snyman. Two plays by German writer Wolfgang Altendorf were also broadcast in 2003: *Ontsnapping*<sup>319</sup>, produced by Evert Snyman (b/c 7 October 2003) and *Die Sluis*<sup>320</sup> (23 December 2003), translated by Mariaan Killian and produced in Cape Town by Johan Rademan.

## 2004:

RSG's Radioteater featured 21 new single dramas in 2004, 6 of which were drawn from entrants in the 2003 RSG/Sanlam radio drama writing competition.

### Category A: Established writers

1<sup>st</sup> Prize: *Sand*<sup>321</sup> by George Weideman, produced by Johan Rademan (b/c 11 May 2004). Cast: Juanita Swanepoel, Joanie Combrink, Johan Botha, Christine Wessels, Lida Botha.

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<sup>312</sup> *Choice.*

<sup>313</sup> *The shack.*

<sup>314</sup> *A man and his doll.*

<sup>315</sup> *Petrus's war with the tree.*

<sup>316</sup> *Tender confessions*

<sup>317</sup> *Granny and the gangsters*

<sup>318</sup> *In the shadow of Vermeer*

<sup>319</sup> *Escape*

<sup>320</sup> *The sluice*

<sup>321</sup> *Sand.*

2<sup>nd</sup> Prize: *Die Nag Kom In*<sup>322</sup> by Marlise Joubert, produced by Eben Cruywagen (b/c 4 May 2004). Cast: Suzanne Beyers, Pieter Cilliers, Juanita Swanepoel, Leon Kryger, Andre Weideman, Marcelle Olivier.

2<sup>nd</sup> Prize: (Shared with Joubert) *Plat Agt*<sup>323</sup> by Dick Otto, produced by Eben Cruywagen (b/c 30 April 2004). Cast: Leon Kruger, Joanie Combrink, Dawie Ackerman, Juanita Jaaarsveld, Johan Rademan.

3<sup>rd</sup> Prize: *Sewentien bale vir Scheepers*<sup>324</sup> by Hans Oosthuizen, produced by Eben Cruywagen (b/c 6 April 2004). Cast: Johan Botha, Lida Botha, Leon Kruger, Pieter Cilliers. (The play was recorded in the garrison cells in the Castle at Cape Town).

**Category B: Novice writers**

1<sup>st</sup> Prize: *Sê my alles*<sup>325</sup> by Francois Bloemhof, produced by Johan Rademan (b/c: 20 April 2004). Cast: Christine Wessels, Leon Kruger, Margit Meyer-Rodenbeck, Eben Cruywagen, Deirdre Wolhuter.

No second or third prize-winner is listed, but entrant Jan van Tonder's *Die Swakkeling*<sup>326</sup> was produced by Evert Snyman (b/c 27 April 2004).

**2005:**

The Sanlam/RSG competition contributed 7 of the 21 new plays broadcast on RSG in 2005, with 5 prize-winners as follows:

**Category A: Established writers**

1<sup>st</sup> Prize: *Swane*<sup>327</sup> by Helena Hugo, produced by the writer (b/c 7 June 2005), Cast: Rina Nienaber, Lisha Stemmet, Roel Beukes, Solet Thomsen, Elize Cawood.

2<sup>nd</sup> Prize: *Omdat die wind alleen is*<sup>328</sup> by Engela van Rooyen, produced by Robert Young (b/c 31 May 2005). Cast: Riana Wilkens, Chris Chameleon, Mariette Engelen.

3<sup>rd</sup> Prize: *Uurslag*<sup>329</sup> by Christo van der Merwe produced by Margo Luyt (b/c 24 May 2005). Cast: Pieter Cilliers, Juanita Swanepoel, June van Mersh, Royston Stoffels, Joanie Combrinck.

**Category B: Novice writers**

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<sup>322</sup> *The night draws in.*

<sup>323</sup> *Flat eight.*

<sup>324</sup> *Seventeen bales for Scheepers.*

<sup>325</sup> *Tell me everything.*

<sup>326</sup> *The weakling*

<sup>327</sup> *Swans.*

<sup>328</sup> *Because the wind is alone.*

<sup>329</sup> *On the stroke of the hour.*

1<sup>st</sup> Prize: *'n Kwessie van balans*<sup>330</sup> by Pierre du Plooy, produced by Eben Cruywagen (b/c 17 May 2005). Cast: Johan Nel, Adriaan Botha, Martelize Kolver, Freda van den Heever, Dawie Ackerman, Shaun Arnolds, Ivan Abrahams.

2<sup>nd</sup> Prize: *Ompaaie*<sup>331</sup> by Johan Botha, produced by Evert Snyman (b/c 10 May 2005). No cast listed.

3<sup>rd</sup> Prize: Not listed.

The work of several finalists was also broadcast: *Siembamba*<sup>332</sup> by Eleonor Lombard, produced by Leon van Nierop (b/c 14 June 2005) and *Meeue*<sup>333</sup> by Hans Oosthuizen, produced by Johan Rademan (b/c 21 June 2005).

Several plays from the western canon were broadcast in 2005: *Die Les*<sup>334</sup> by Eugene Ionesco, translated by Bartho Smit and produced by Johan Rademan (b/c 18 January 2005), *Romeo en Jeannette*<sup>335</sup> by Jean Anouilh produced by Eben Cruywagen (b/c 13 December 2005), and *Die reisiger sonder bagasie*<sup>336</sup> by Jean Anouilh was translated and adapted by Johan Olivier, and produced by Bettie Kemp (b/c 20 December 2005). Classic Afrikaans plays were also produced and broadcast: Margot Luyt produced both *Siener in die Suburbs*<sup>337</sup> by P.G. du Plessis, with Antoinette Kellerman, Johann Botha, Jan Ellis, Deidre Wolhuter, Leande Valentyn, John Richards and Gideon van Eeden in the cast (b/c 20 November 2005), and Chris Barnard's *Op die pad na Acapulco*<sup>338</sup>, with Johan Nel and Joanie Combrink in the leading roles, supported by Antoinette Kellerman, Andre Rossouw, Johan Botha, Ivan Abrahams, Andre Samuels and Gideon van Eeden (b/c 27 December 2005).

## 2006:

A further 21 new productions were broadcast in 2006, including 6 prize-winning plays from the 2005 Sanlam/RSG radio drama writing competition, as follows:

### Category A: Established writers

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<sup>330</sup> *A question of balance.*

<sup>331</sup> *Detour.*

<sup>332</sup> *Siembamba.*

<sup>333</sup> *Seagulls*

<sup>334</sup> *The lesson*

<sup>335</sup> *Romeo and Jeannette*

<sup>336</sup> *The Traveller without luggage.*

<sup>337</sup> *Prophet in the suburbs*

<sup>338</sup> *On the road to Acapulco.*

1<sup>st</sup> Prize: *Moord in die Ateljee*<sup>339</sup> by George Weideman, produced by Margot Luyt (b/c 9 May 2006). Cast: June van Merch, Johan van Jaarsveld, Susan Beyers, Pieter Cilliers, Ronel Geldenhuys, Stian Bam.

2<sup>nd</sup> Prize: *Nat vrou in my kop*<sup>340</sup> by Niel Steenkamp, produced by Leon van Nierop. (b/c 2 May 2006). Cast: Isak Taljaard, Melt Sieberhagen, Don Lambrecht, Elmarie le Grange, Paul Luckoff, Renske Jacobs.

3<sup>rd</sup> Prize: *Die kat en die kok*<sup>341</sup> by Hans Oosthuizen, produced by Johan Rademan (b/c 25 April 2006). Cast: Sizwe Msutu, Melany Kuhn, Nolwazi Hene, Ivan Abraham, Andre Samuels, Johan Nel, Margit Meyer-Rodenbeck.

### **Category B:** Novice writers

1<sup>st</sup> Prize: *Kat*<sup>342</sup> by Alet Moller, produced by Eben Cruywagen (b/c 23 May 2006). Cast: Juanita Swanepoel, Joanie Combrink, Johan Botha, Lida Botha.

2<sup>nd</sup> Prize: *Die vyfjaarplan*<sup>343</sup> by Louis Lategan, produced by Bettie Kemp (b/c 11 April 2006). Cast: Evert Snyman, Lerato Moloi, Louis Minnaar, Anthony Wilson, Denver Vraagom, Riana Wilkins.

3<sup>rd</sup> Prize: *As mure ore het*<sup>344</sup> by Angelique Liebenberg, produced by Robert Young (b/c 4 April 2006). Cast: Richard van der Westhuizen, Mariette Engelen, Louis van Niekerk, Don Lamprecht, Francois Stemmet, Lochner de Kock.

*Van huise en honne*<sup>345</sup>, by Deleen Bekker, a finalist in the 2005 competition was also selected for broadcast and produced by Leon van Nierop (b/c 10 October 2006).

A special Easter drama by Joey van Niekerk entitled *Die Sleepsel van die slang*<sup>346</sup> was produced by Helena Hugo (b/c 14 April 2006). Elsa Joubert's *Die swerfjare van Poppie Nongena*<sup>347</sup> was adapted by Suzanne van Wyk and produced by Margot Luyt. Zenobia Kloppers was cast in the title role, with Nick de Jager as narrator (b/c 21 November 2006). Margot Luyt also adapted and produced Reza de Wet's *Verleiding*<sup>348</sup> (b/c 13 June 2006). *Anastasia* by Marcelle Maurette, translated by Lourens Fourie and adapted

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<sup>339</sup> *Murder in the studio.*

<sup>340</sup> *Wet woman in my head.*

<sup>341</sup> *The cat and the cock.*

<sup>342</sup> *Cat.*

<sup>343</sup> *The five-year plan.*

<sup>344</sup> *If walls had ears.*

<sup>345</sup> *Of houses and dogs.*

<sup>346</sup> *The trail of the snake.*

<sup>347</sup> *The long journey of Poppie Nongena.*

<sup>348</sup> *Seduction.*

by Robert Young, was produced by Johan Rademan (6 June 2006). Evert Snyman produced *Die Wals van Die Toreadors*<sup>349</sup> by Jean Anouilh (b/c 28 November 2006).

## 2007:

21 new recordings of plays are listed as broadcast in 2007, 5 of which are prizewinners in the 2006 Sanlam/RSG competition.

### Category A: Established writers

1<sup>st</sup> Prize: No prize-winner listed.

2<sup>nd</sup> Prize: *Tramontane*<sup>350</sup> by Hans Oosthuizen, produced by Margot Luyt (b/c 19 June 2007). Cast: Pieter van Zyl, Frieda van den Heever, Johan Nel, Ivan Abrahams, Lida Botha, Deon van Zyl, Elizabeth Archer, Deon Lotz, Margit Meyer-Rodenbeck, Shaun Arnolds, Chris Fourie. Music by Derek Fordyce.

3<sup>rd</sup> Prize: *Die Paspoort*<sup>351</sup> by Marlise Joubert, produced by Eben Cruywagen (b/c 12 June, 2007). Cast: Deirdre Wolhuter, Trix Pienaar, Eugenie Wiggins, Pearl Gawlowski, Johann Nel, Frieda van den Heever.

### Category B: Novice writers

1<sup>st</sup> Prize: *My woord is my eer*<sup>352</sup> by Jacques Eybers, produced by Margot Luyt, (b/c 5 July, 2007) Cast: Charl van Heyningen, Leon Kruger, Joanie Combrink, Pieter van Zyl, Leande Valentyn, Wilhelm Schuman.

2<sup>nd</sup> Prize: *Eiland van die Slang*<sup>353</sup> by Piet Steyn, produced by Bettie Kemp (b/c 22 May 2007). Cast: Melt Sieberhagen, Solette Thomson, Lochner de Kock, Chris van Rensburg, Jac Grobbelaar, Frikkie Wallis.

3<sup>rd</sup> Prize: *Towerspe*<sup>354</sup> by J.J. Coetzee, produced by Leon van Nierop (b/c 29 May 2007). Cast: Don Lamprecht, Christo Compion, Paul Luckhoff, Melt Sieberhagen. (Shared 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize with one other entry which is not listed)

RSG also featured the work of two distinguished South African writers, André Brink and Chris Barnard. Brink's *Die Bobaas van die Boendes*<sup>355</sup>, described briefly as "local material" concerned with the "upliftment of the local community", was produced by

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<sup>349</sup> *The waltz of the toreadors.*

<sup>350</sup> *Tramontane.*

<sup>351</sup> *The Passport.*

<sup>352</sup> *My word is my honour.*

<sup>353</sup> *Island of the snake.*

<sup>354</sup> *Witchcraft.*

<sup>355</sup> *The big boss of the bundu.*

Eben Cruywagen (b/c 8 November 2007), with Nazli George, Ivan Lucas, Joseph Mitchell, Ivan Abrahams, Denver Vraagom, Peter Butler, Denise Newman and Royston Stoffels in the cast. RSG commissioned Chris Barnard's *Blindemoi*<sup>356</sup> as part of the 70 year Celebration of Afrikaans Radio. Produced by Margot Luyt, the text is described as a lyrical piece reminiscent of *Under Milkwood* by Dylan Thomas, with a cast selected from "the cream of Cape Town's Afrikaans actors", namely: Nic de Jager, Nerina Ferreira, Juanita Swanepoel, Susan Beyers, Johan Botha, Andre Rossouw, Joanie Combrink, Zenobia Kloppers, Shaun Arnolds and Martelize Kolver. Several translated works were also featured: *Traan*<sup>357</sup> by Eugene O'Neill<sup>358</sup>, produced by Bettie Kemp (b/c 10 April 2007), *Pase*<sup>359</sup> by August Strindberg, produced by Leon van Nierop, *In die gevaarsonne*<sup>360</sup> by Eugene O'Neill<sup>361</sup>, translated by S.J. Pretorius and produced by Evert Snyman (b/c 17 April 2007), *Citroene uit Sisilie*<sup>362</sup> by Luigi Pirandello, translated by Lourens Fourie, and produced by Helena Hugo (b/c 24 April 2007)<sup>363</sup>.

## 2008:

The recording of 17 productions is listed as having taken place in 2008, five of which were prize-winners in the 2007 Sanlam/RSG radio drama writing competition.

### Category A: Established writers

1st Prize: Not listed.

2<sup>nd</sup> Prize: *Jesus Titus*<sup>364</sup> by Frans Fourie, produced by Johan Rademan (b/c 1 May 2008). Cast: Susan Beyers, Albert Maritz, Vilje Maritz, Anoeska Life, Johan Botha, Marius du Plooy, Lida Botha, Ian Abrahams.

3<sup>rd</sup> Prize: *Die Bode*<sup>365</sup> by George Weideman, produced by Margot Luyt (b/c 24 April 2008).

### Category B: Novice writers

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<sup>356</sup> *Blind mole.*

<sup>357</sup> *Tear.*

<sup>358</sup> Information concerning this half-hour play supplied by the SABC Sound Archives. Attempts to identify the title of the original play by O'Neill have not been successful.

<sup>359</sup> *Easter.*

<sup>360</sup> *In the Danger Zone*

<sup>361</sup> *In die gevaarsonne* was adapted from an early play by Eugene O'Neill entitled *In the Zone*.

<sup>362</sup> *Lemons from Sicily.*

<sup>363</sup> Two other classics, Friedrich Durrenmatt's *Teenspoed (Ill Fortune)* and Henrik Ibsen's *'n Pophuis (The Doll's House)* were rebroadcast in December 2007.

<sup>364</sup> *Jesus Titus*

<sup>365</sup> *The messenger.*

1<sup>st</sup> Prize: *Karen*<sup>366</sup> by Tilla Tredoux, produced by Evert Snyman (b/c 17 April 2008). Based on the life of Danish author Baroness Karen von Blixen-Finecke, nee Dinesen, and her life in Africa. Cast: Riana Wilkens, David Minnaar, Anton Dekker, Lourens Cilliers, Rika Sennet, Miems de Bruyn, Isak Taljaardt.

2<sup>nd</sup> Prize: *Die Slagoffer*<sup>367</sup> by Wim Kruger, produced by Bettie Kemp (b/c 10 April 2008). Cast: Paul Luckoff, Christo Kompion, Riana Wilkens, Lochner de Kock, Jac Grobbelaar.

3<sup>rd</sup> Prize: *Buig of breek*<sup>368</sup> by John Pretorius, produced by Leon van Nierop (b/c 3 April 2008). Cast: Paul Luckoff, Dirk Stoltz, Elmarie le Grange, Chanel de Jager.

Two plays enjoyed a revival, namely Dolf van Niekerk's *Kamer 99*<sup>369</sup> (b/c 29 May 2008), and Hennie Aucamp's *Peerboom in die Tuin*<sup>370</sup> (b/c 12 June 2008). *Kamer 99* was originally broadcast in the seventies, being awarded a 1971 SAUK Academy prize for radio drama, and an Artes award for the best radio text in 1977. Production in 2008 was by Helena Hugo, with Johan van der Merwe, Cobus Visser, Neels Coetzee, and Mariette Engelen in the cast. Aucamp's *Peerboom in die Tuin* was written 19 years ago. Produced by Bettie Kemp, with Rina Nienaber, Sally Campher, Sulette Thomson, Melt Sieberhagen and Richard van der Westhuizen providing music played on a harmonica, the production included an interview by Kemp with the author.

Several translated works were also broadcast: Three plays by Ugo Betti enjoyed revival: *Onskuldige Iereen*<sup>371</sup> (b/c 5 June 2008), translated from the original Italian text by Alewyn Lee, and adapted and produced by Evert Snyman. *Die huis op die water*<sup>372</sup> (b/c 16 October 2008), also translated by Alewyn Lee, was originally produced for the Afrikaans Service by Roelf Jacobs in 1969. The 2008 production was by Evert Snyman with Anrich Herbst as Luca and Anna-Mart van der Merwe as Elli. Others in the cast are listed as Rika Sennet, Rina Nienaber and Anton Dekker. Alewyn Lee also translated *Misdaad op Bokeiland*<sup>373</sup> produced by Leon van Nierop and broadcast in November 2008. A new recording of Chekhov's *Die Drie Susters*<sup>374</sup> was adapted and produced by Robert Young's successor, RSG's drama organizer, Margot Luyt, in the Cape Town studios in 2008. The play has retained its popularity with listeners since the

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<sup>366</sup> *Karen*.

<sup>367</sup> *The victim*.

<sup>368</sup> *Bend or break*.

<sup>369</sup> *Room 99*.

<sup>370</sup> *Pear tree in the garden*.

<sup>371</sup> *Innocent Iereen*.

<sup>372</sup> *The house on the water*.

<sup>373</sup> *Crime on Goat Island*.

<sup>374</sup> *The Three Sisters*.

early years of broadcasting. Luyt attributes the affinity felt by both radio drama practitioners and their audience for work by writers such as Chekhov, Dostoevsky, and Strindberg, to “a certain rhythm, or more languid pace of performance required by the writing, and the empathy felt for characters who must contend with life’s vicissitudes in an often inhospitable climate, reminiscent of the Karoo” (E-mail correspondence, 17 February 2009). Luyt’s new production featured Joanie Combrink, Martelize Kolver and Frieda van den Heever as the three sisters.

RSG’s drama department’s commitment to the development of local playwrights and their stories is evident from information provided by the SABC Radio archives. The mandate introduced during the brief tenureship of Shaikh Mahomed, that is, to serve the needs of all Afrikaans speakers, has largely been met in that story lines demonstrate a wider appeal, while the racial profile of RSG’s radio drama practitioners has altered. Cast lists, when provided, are representative of all the RSG drama cast lists provided by SABC Radio archives, which indicates that the great majority of actors are Afrikaans home or first-language Afrikaans speakers, while second-language Afrikaans speaking actors are in the minority. The RSG audience therefore seldom encounters difficulties with the clarity of dialogue delivered, which has been cited as a problem on SAfm. Luyt (2009:1) reflects on this problem as follows:

I think the difference with Coloured actors acting in Afrikaans and Black actors acting in English is that in most (probably 90%) cases the Coloured actors’ home language is Afrikaans. So, like in the UK where you have different dialects, we have the same in Afrikaans with mother tongue speakers. This is hugely influenced by geography. The coloureds from the Northern Cape speak the same Afrikaans as the white people there. This of course is not true of the people of the Cape flats. In many cases the Coloured actors are well trained and can give you what the part requires.

The cultural mix of voices now heard in radio drama on RSG appears to accord with that of the station’s listenership, as provided below:

**SAARF RADIO DIARY (SA) 2008/7 AUG/DEC 08  
RADIO SONDER GRENSE**

Unit 1000's

<b>Total Audience (Adult) One week cume</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>1928</b>
Afrikaans Home Language	85.3	1645
English Home Language	12.3	237
Zulu Home Language	0.2	4
Xhosa Home Language	0.9	17
North Sotho Home Language	0.1	2
South Sotho Home Language	0.2	4
Tswana Home Language	0.8	15
Other language	0.2	4
Whites	65.4	1261
Coloureds	30.8	594
Blacks	3.7	71
Indians	0.1	2

Although a "home language" may not necessarily be a "first language", statistics indicate that Afrikaans is the mother tongue of most RSG listeners. Language being not only a means of communication but a carrier of culture, it may be argued that cultural bonds between white and coloured Afrikaners also exist<sup>375</sup>. No such commonality exists between the majority of listeners to SAfm, who find English a convenient means of communication, and the first language English speaking listeners, now in the minority. The composition of this station's audience is far more diverse, as borne out by the figures below:

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<sup>375</sup> Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o states that " language, any language, has a dual character: being both a means of communication and a carrier of culture" (1994:439),

**SAARF RADIO DIARY (SA) 2008/7 AUG/DEC 08  
RADIO SONDER GRENSE**

**SAFM**

<b>Total Audience (adult) one week cume</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>573</b>
English Home Language	31.8	182
Xhosa Home Language	15.3	88
Zulu Home Language	14.9	85
Afrikaans	11.2	64
Tswana	8.1	46
North Sotho	6.0	34
South Sotho	5.7	33
Tsonga	2.1	12
Venda	1.1	6
Swazi	1.3	7
Ndebele	1.0	6
Other Language	1.4	8
Blacks	60.5	347
Whites	30.8	176
Coloureds	5.7	33
Indians	3.0	17

The transformation required of both RSG and SAfm has been far-reaching, but, in terms of listenership and advertising, the change has met with less success for the latter<sup>376</sup>. Devising entertainment to satisfy the needs of an audience of such cultural diversity is clearly more difficult.

RSG's high listenership is commonly attributed to the language medium and a lack of alternative entertainment.<sup>377</sup> The continued popularity of Afrikaans radio drama,

<sup>376</sup> Stephen Lang (2008:34) states "[i]n spite of having by far the wealthiest audience profile, SAfm regularly makes massive losses while advertising executives consistently complain about how difficult it is to sell airtime on SAfm".

<sup>377</sup> SAfm's Bruce Millar (2002:2) comments "RSG because of its language medium has a huge – and captive – listenership". Jack Mullen's remarks are of interest, as follows: "RSG has always had a pretty good listenership – and

however, is also the product of expertise, dedication on the part of practitioners, and insight – born of long, uninterrupted service - as to the listeners' needs. Although focused on South African writers and stories, the judicious inclusion of well-crafted plays from other sources serves to educate and widen the world-view of the audience. Actors and producers are given vital experience in exploring universal themes, re-creating iconic roles or portraying characters outside the realm of their everyday experience. A further benefit of this practice is that, with a wider choice of material available, repeat broadcasts of plays and serials are kept to a minimum.

The air-time allotted to radio drama on RSG has recently been increased, with a second daily serial introduced in the second half of 2008, in addition to the weekly play broadcast in Radioteater during the three month long drama seasons, which alternate with documentary seasons throughout the year. Novel readings and children's programmes are also broadcast during the week. In an online *Litnet* interview conducted with Margo Luyt, Naomi Bruwer makes the following pertinent observations concerning the state of the art form at present:

- Die plek van radiodramas het verander met die koms van verskeie televisiestasies, die internet en ander vermaak<sup>378</sup>.
- Radiodrama is volgens algemene persepsie nie meer so gewild nie<sup>379</sup>.
- Aan die positiewe kant sien uitstekende nuwe dramas, soos byvoorbeeld Chris Barnard se *Blindemol* wat einde verlede jaar opgevoer is, steeds die lig<sup>380</sup>.
- Ook bied radiodramas belangrike opleiding en ondervinding aan jong akteurs en stemkunstenaars<sup>381</sup>.

Having encapsulated the key issues confronting radio drama practitioners and their audience, Bruwer raises the question: "Wat is die plek en toekoms van Afrikaanse radiodramas?", to which Luyt replies as follows:

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this is a question of language, and choices/other options. Certainly, they draw enough listeners to satisfy sponsors and /or advertisers. You can deduce from this that the imperative is to get high listenership, so that revenue can be generated". He adds that "[l]istenership to English-language radio drama (certainly since the demise of Springbok) has not been sufficiently high to attract sponsors or advertisers. In fact, listenership to drama on the English Service (and its successors) has never, ever been high. I venture to say that this would apply to most English-language Radio drama anywhere in the world. It appeals to a minority". (2002: 3-4)

<sup>378</sup> The advent of various television stations, the internet and so on, has changed the place held by radio drama.

<sup>379</sup> As a result, radio drama is generally perceived as being less popular than before.

<sup>380</sup> On the positive side, outstanding new dramas still emerge, such as Chris Barnard's *Blindemol*, produced late last year.

<sup>381</sup> Radio drama also provides young actors and voice artists with important training and experience.

In *Siener in die suburbs* se Tiemie vir haar ma: "Ek wil van geweet wees, Ma". Dit is my missie dat daar weer van radiodrama kennis geneem sal word. Ons sal dit slegs met gehalte regkry. Hou ons dop!  
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Luyt's reply reflects the vision and determination that has been the hallmark of Afrikaans radio drama since its inception: that is, not only to survive, but to continually strive towards achieving higher standards in work broadcast.

#### 4.7.2 ENGLISH RADIO DRAMA

No longer under apartheid's shadow, the once pale visage of SAE radio drama acquired a more robust hue. During the RSA era, SABC radio drama practitioners actively sought stories reflecting the South African experience from all cultural viewpoints. These early efforts towards developing a distinctly local, hybrid form of sound art with wider audience appeal gathered momentum during the early years of SAfm, but were brought to a halt with the SABC's decision to disband the English radio drama department in April 1999.

During the early years of SAfm, the drama department continued the transformation of the art form begun on Radio South Africa. In order to confine costs within certain budgeted limits, and avoid insularity while encouraging new writing, South African stories were interspersed with inexpensive imported dramas, and a few in-house productions of work by writers such as Somerset Maugham<sup>383</sup>, Katherine Mansfield<sup>384</sup>, A.S. Byatt<sup>385</sup>, and William Shakespeare<sup>386</sup>. However, the majority of plays listed in the archives database as having been produced and broadcast by the SABC during this 1995-1999 period are the work of local writers. A few were new recruits to the genre, while others were established playwrights who had "wanted nothing to do with the SABC" (Mullen 2002:2) in the past. Nigel Vermaas, Senior Radio Drama Producer from November 1987, and Organiser of English Radio Drama from 1990, states that "an initiative the Drama Department pursued with COSAW in 1994/5/6 raised the profile of

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<sup>382</sup> In *Siener in die suburbs*, Tiemie says to her mother: "I will be known, Ma." It is my mission to make the importance of radio drama known once again. We will only succeed if we can restore its intrinsic value. Watch this space!

<sup>383</sup> *The Fall of Edward Barnard* and *French Joe*, produced by Judith Krummeck and broadcast in the Tuesday Play, 23 April 1996.

<sup>384</sup> *Je ne Parle Pas Français*, produced by Don Ridgway for the Monday Play (13 November 1995),

<sup>385</sup> *Art Work*, produced by Judith Krummeck and broadcast as part of a double bill in the Wednesday Play, b/c 31 July 1996.

<sup>386</sup> *Measure for Measure*, produced by Judith Krummeck for the Tuesday Play, b/c 30 May 1995.

Radio Drama" (2002:1), but adds that the results were disappointing as not enough new writers were found. Although the actual number of successful new writers emerging from the workshop initiative and annual Soundscapes competitions failed to meet SAfm's expectations, the new freedom of choice led to fresh voices and an interesting mix of South African stories being heard. Some indication of the variety of material broadcast may be gathered from the few examples below:

- *Mooi Street Moves* by Paul Slabolepszy. (B/c 9 May 1995 and repeated 25 July 1998.) The cast of this two-hander featured Zane Meas as Stix Letsebe and writer, actor and director Paul Slabolepszy. Meas won a 1996 Artes award for the best performance by an actor in a dramatic work: radio broadcasting in English and Afrikaans. Produced by Bruce Millar, *Mooi Street Moves* has also been re-broadcast in three parts as the Sunday Play from 3.30-4.00 p.m. (11 January 2008, 18 January 2008, and 25 January 2008).
- *Bedtime Stories* by Moira Lovell. First prizewinner of the 1995 Soundscapes Competition, production of poet Moira Lovell's radio play was by Jack Mullen. It gives a poignant, poetic, and moving account of a man under house arrest in the old South Africa, and his relationship with his daughter. The cast features Neville Thomas, Dorothy-Ann Gould and Kathy-Jo Ross.
- *Big Bodies of Men* by Neil McCarthy, broadcast 9 October 1996, adapted for radio and produced by Judith Krummeck and Neil McCarthy for the one hour Wednesday Play slot, this production features a large cast including Richard Nwamba, Patrick Ndlovu, Graham Hopkins, Nick Boraine, Nomhle Nkonyeni, Owen Sejake and Douglas Bristow. Technical production by Schalk Vorster and Daisy Jane<sup>387</sup> Parsons.
- *At the Edge* by Ronnie Govender, broadcast 17 July 1996, and re-broadcast 13 May 1997. Directed by Alan Swerdlow. Narration by Pat Pillai.
- *A Man out of the Country* by Antony Ackerman, broadcast 2 October 1996, and adapted and produced for radio by Alan Swerdlow for the Wednesday Play. Cast included Terence Reis, Neville Thomas, L. Buthelezi, Charmaine Weir-Smith, Elize Cawood and David Clatworthy.
- *Miss Dolly* by Kobus Moolman, broadcast 22 April 1997, and produced by Bruce Millar for the Tuesday Play. Cast as follows: Rina Nienabar, Fezile Mphela,

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<sup>387</sup> The spelling of all names is given in accordance with the information provided by the SABC Sound Archives & Audio Library Arcactiv Database.

Theresa Iglich, Gaby Lomborg, Corinne Willoughby, Roger Dwyer and David Clatworthy.

- *A Promise of Rain* by Peter Krummeck, broadcast 15 March 1997, and produced for the Tuesday Play by Judith Krummeck. Cast: Camilla Waldman, David Clatworthy, Richard Nwamba, Dinah Hlongwane, Ed Symes. Technical Production by Brigitte Pernusch and Daisi Jane Parsons.
- *Playland* by Athol Fugard. A BBC production, broadcast 11 July 1998, directed by Christopher Vennings and produced by Bruce Millar, this play features a cast of South African and British actors as follows: Alton Kumalo (SA), Andrew Sachs (UK), David Thorp (UK), Leonie Hofmeyer (SA). (Note: It is stipulated that BBC productions recorded as joint ventures with the SABC are not available for re-broadcast.)
- *Once a Pirate* and *Abnormal Load* by Paul Slabolepszy. A double bill of monologues broadcast on the 30 October 1996, as the Wednesday Play, and repeated 13 May 1997. Adapted for broadcast and produced by Bruce Millar, *Once a Pirate* concerns a soccer-mad devoted fan, and *Abnormal Load* tells the tale of a travelling salesman whose marital problem has him teetering on the brink of a violent solution. Cast: *Once a Pirate*: Seputla Sebogodi, and *Abnormal Load*, James Borthwick. Technical production by Brigitte Pernusch and Daisi Jane Parsons.
- *The Reunion* by Mike van Graan, broadcast 29 April 1999. Commissioned by SAfm to write a radio play for Wordplay, an international festival of radio plays, van Graan worked under the mentorship of Senior Radio Producer Nigel Vermaas, to produce his first radio play, and the last play to be broadcast on SAfm before the SABC closed the English radio drama department in April 1999. *The Reunion* was later adapted for the stage, appearing first as *Slippery Slope*, then re-worked before winning the PANSAs Festival of New Writing in 2003 as *Green Man Flashing*. Under the direction of Clare Stopford, *Green Man Flashing* played to appreciative audiences at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown and later at the Hilton Festival. Plays written for the theatre are frequently adapted for radio broadcast, but *The Reunion's* progression from radio to theatre demonstrates the art form's potential as a platform from which the work of new playwrights may be tried out and launched.

As discussed, the limited number of “hitherto disadvantaged” writers<sup>388</sup> to emerge from the initiatives described above became a cause for particular concern. Few appreciate that writing for radio drama is an exacting literary form and acquired craft. To produce a script suitable for broadcast is a difficult task, even in the playwright’s home language. More formidable, and fraught with sensitivities, the portrayal of characters outside the writer’s own experience creates cultural pitfalls for even experienced radio dramatists<sup>389</sup>. Unlike watching a film or television, listening to radio drama is essentially a private, as opposed to a collective experience, making it only too easy to “switch off” if any aspect fails to ring true.

Amongst the new voices making a meaningful contribution to the new form of English radio drama were Richard Nwamba and Jerry Mofokeng, both of whom have been successfully engaged as playwrights, actors and producers. A brief account of their experience and work broadcast on RSA and SAfm may illustrate my contention that the development of second-language English writers is a valuable cultural investment, but one which may take time and experience gained in the field. The first example of such a career in English radio drama is that of Richard Nwamba, compiler/presenter of the popular music programme, *African Connection*. Nwamba’s script for *Please Don’t Shoot Him* was awarded third place in the 1993 Soundscapes Competition. The writer attended the COSAW/SAfm radio drama workshops, along with established playwright Ronnie Govender and author Jayaprega Reddy. *Please Don’t Shoot Him* was re-worked and later produced for the half-hour Monday Play by Hillary Keogh in April 1996. The story tells of a middle-class black family that loses everything when the father, a security guard, is retrenched. Gerry Mofokeng, Nomhle Nkonyeni, and Nomsa Nene featured in the cast. Nwamba’s *March Soldier March* was also produced by Hillary Keogh for the Tuesday Play, and first broadcast on the 22 July 1996. The play later formed part of “Wordplay 1997”, the first International Festival of English language drama on radio. It tells the story of five young people from different cultural and racial backgrounds who join the SADF and become good friends when “a shock revelation tests their friendship and tolerance”. (Standard Report for *SABC Arcactiv Database*). A third play by Nwamba, entitled *Karoo*, was produced by Hillary Keogh for the one-hour Tuesday Play in February 1997.

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<sup>388</sup> As referred to by Jack Mullen (2002:3) and quoted in 4.

<sup>389</sup> A more recent work by the talented and experienced playwright, Richard Nwamba, entitled *The Secret Switch*, b/c 3 June 2007, and repeated on Sunday, 30 August 2009, is an example of a writer attempting to transcend the difficult cultural and gender divide. See Sunday play 2007 list below.

The second example of a second-language scriptwriter who performed, produced and wrote for English radio drama, is found in the work and experience of Jerry Mofokeng, whose talent has since reached a wider audience through theatre, television and film. His apprenticeship as an amateur actor/writer/director began in the 1980's at a Christian Academy. In 1992, as a junior lecturer at Wits University, the thirty-six year old Mofokeng took part in the recording of a Monday Night Playhouse (24 August 1992) production of H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*. Dramatised by Peter Mackie and produced by Brian O'Shaughnessy, the play featured a strong, multi-cultural cast, including the renowned Sello Maake ka-Ncube, Zane Meas, Xaba Nomsa, Mike Mvelase, Ken Gampu and Ramolao Makene, together with seasoned SAE radio drama actors Hugh Rouse, Douglas Bristow, John Lesley and David Sherwood. Recently returned from a year's study of theatre directing and administration at Columbia University, New York, Mofokeng was offered more free-lance work on Radio South Africa, including the co-production with Nigel Vermaas of Athol Fugard's *Boesman and Lena* (11 October 1993).

This success was followed by yet another Mofokeng/Vermaas co-production, Julie Frederikse's Soundscapes prize-winning play *The People's Voice*. The cast of eighteen actors included producers Mofokeng and Vermaas, together with Dambisa Kente, Tyelele Motshabi, Peter Sepuma, Makwela Lekalakala, David Phetoe, Delia Meyer, Corinne Willoughby, Keketso Semoko, Zane Meas, Trevi-Jean Le Pere, Dominic Wilhelm, Gaby Lomborg, Nandi Nyembe, Busi Zokufa, John Mokapama and Sello Maake ka-Ncube. Jack Mullen (2002:4) sees himself as having been "extremely fortunate" in his own late 1996 experience of adapting and co-directing Jerry Mofokeng's *A King is Born*. Both this production, and Mullen's own forty episode, locally-set sci-fi serial, broadcast in 1997 and featuring Richard Nwamba and Zane Meas as leads, are described by writer/producer Mullen as "fabulous experiences" (p.4) which "opened up huge possibilities for the future. Possibilities which, as things stand, have been squashed flat!" (p.4). He adds that "[o]ther directors in Jo'burg, Cape Town & Durban had similar experiences...some more memorable than others!"(p.4).

As Mullen's comment indicates, the quality of scripts produced and broadcast as plays or serials during this new phase in English radio drama was uneven, attracting criticism as well as praise. The creation of a story entirely from sound – particularly in an era in

which the tactile TV image dominates, and imaginations grow flabby - is an acquired skill, often learnt as an actor working within the medium itself. As Drama Organizer on RSA, Afrikaans Stereo and RSG, Young received a mixture of work from aspiring playwrights, much of which he rejected as being "totaal onbruikbaar"<sup>390</sup> (Young 2007:129), but there were those that held promise. The adaptation of these scripts involved an enormous amount of work in preparation for broadcast, the problem being that "meeste van de nuwelinge nie in klank kon "sien" nie. Tekste moes 'n aantal kere oorgeskryf word, geredigeer en gepoleer word voordat dit uiteindelijke gereed was vir uitsending"<sup>391</sup> (p.130). The development of a writer takes patience and funding, luxuries that the traditional listenership and SABC executive of that time were not prepared to concede.

The introduction of television brought about a world-wide reduction of interest in radio drama. Those South Africans able to afford television also succumbed to this global phenomenon, following the belated launch of the service in 1976. The decline of interest in radio drama was exacerbated by the fact that radio plays were "eventually tucked away in slots such as 19.30 on a Saturday night"<sup>392</sup> (Millar, 2002:2). Other factors played a significant part in the art form's apparent demise in 1999. They are identified by those most closely concerned with the medium as follows:

- an apathetic listenership;
- an unsupportive SABC management and governing body;
- a lack of funding.

The apparent apathy of listeners to English radio drama has been attributed to a number of factors including the advent of television, videos, DVD's, audio books and the internet. The choice of entertainment available for those English language speakers who can afford it is extensive in comparison to the options available in Afrikaans or any African language. This relative lack of alternative entertainment contributes towards the greater popularity of radio drama on RSG or the African

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<sup>390</sup> "Totally unusable".

<sup>391</sup> "most of the new writers cannot "see" in sound. A text must be re-written, edited, and polished before the final product is ready for broadcast".

<sup>392</sup> In fact, radio theatre was traditionally broadcast about this time on Saturday nights, but with the advent of television, this slot became a veritable graveyard for any programme, with a regular audience comprised of the aged, poor or disabled. The emergent art form was aimed at a younger, more ethnically mixed listenership and was therefore poorly positioned during off-peak listening times and less likely to reach the targeted audience.

Language stations. The higher listenership on these stations attracts sponsorship from advertisers, whereas radio drama in English is not commercially viable.

Although a relatively small but enthusiastic (and largely white) listenership continued to listen to plays and serials on both Radio South Africa and SAfm, the introduction of local settings, accents and political themes met with a mixed response. Vermaas (2002:2) observes that “[f]rom 1987-1999 we (the English radio drama department) did some amazing drama, relevant, hard-hitting, also comic...but many of our listeners didn’t want this!” Gillian Anstey (1999:4) states that, by the end of 1998, radio drama had lost 13 000 listeners, leaving only 7 000 listening to the Saturday play. Caroline Smart (2002:2) suggests that the drop in traditional listenership resulted from the introduction of “a new fairly confrontational genre that listeners were not yet prepared for, having been used to Eurocentric styled drama”.

White South Africans were now exposed to previously repressed stories portraying the suffering inflicted by various forms of racial discrimination<sup>393</sup> against the “other”, and the portrayal of dysfunctional whites who accepted their privileged status as the norm. Such themes no doubt challenged the listeners to “confront the extent to which their identities and personal expectations have been shaped through asymmetrical power relations” (Steyn 2001:xxxii), but, in an era concerned with “reconciliation” and “political correctness”, objections to such issues, if privately acknowledged, were seldom publicly aired. More easily justified was another threat to white identity which provoked a widespread, indignant response: the impeccable “Standard English” and Afrikaans, traditionally spoken on SAfm and RSG and their predecessors, was rapidly giving way to the “Afrikaanses” and “Englshes” of the new cultural mix of voices heard on these stations. Thinly-veiled racism fuelled much of the criticism of these new “accents”, and exaggerated claims of unintelligibility, as expressed by prescriptive mother-tongue English speakers. A clear division should be drawn, however, between the failure to appreciate that “[t]he price a world language must be prepared to pay is submission to many different kinds of use” (Achebe 1994:423), and the very genuine difficulty experienced by radio drama listeners. Clarity of speech is essential in an art form in which the imagination depends solely on dialogue and sound effects<sup>394</sup>. Not only does radio acting necessitate the development of different skills and training from

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<sup>393</sup> Influx control, curfews, job reservation, unlawful arrests and imprisonment

<sup>394</sup> It is for this reason that a professional sound artist or radio actor will seldom affect a heavily pronounced foreign accent, unless required for comic effect.

those needed in theatre, films and television, but differences in radio acting technique are also discernible on the English, Afrikaans and African language radio stations. The different needs of audiences on different language stations have dictated the content of work broadcast and honed the radio actor's technique over several generations. The most popular form of drama amongst the huge, predominantly rural or low-income urban listenership to ALS<sup>395</sup> stations are serials rather than "one-off" plays which, it is generally accepted, call for longer rehearsal times, greater finesse of delivery and technical complexity. Again, Vermaas is instructive in his comment that "we didn't develop Black actors and so found it difficult to cast Black roles when we started moving towards REAL S.A. drama" (2002:4). It is, as he says, "[t]he story of the country really" (p.4).

The SABC's board-level decision to close the SAE drama department in April 1999 met with remarkable compliance by members of SAfm management. Wouter de Wet, the station's PRO and a member of the announcing staff, is quoted by Gillian Anstey in the *Sunday Times Lifestyle* (April 4 1999:4) as expressing his sadness at the closure, but adds: "[T]he point is: who listens? I don't, even though it was one of the reasons I joined radio thousands of years ago". In the same article, SAfm's station manager, Bill Sharp, registers his resignation to the inevitable as follows: "It's nice to have drama but can you survive without it? Is it a must-have? No." This public response on the part of SAfm management contrasts with that of their RSG counterparts. When asked to account for radio drama's survival on Radio Sonder Grense, Robert Young (2002:3) states that "Afrikaans radio Drama exist [sic] because the management of the station decided that we must go on at all cost".

The SABC Executive's decision to discontinue SAE radio drama has been officially attributed to a lack of available funding<sup>396</sup>. This offers, I suggest, a simplistic explanation for a complex situation, fraught with political tension and sensitivities. South Africa's PBS stations remain segregated, not only by race and language, but also by class. SAfm's predecessors were guilty of a form of cultural apartheid, traditionally serving a middle-class white audience who saw the public service ethos of broadcasting as their inalienable right. Despite the station's altered demographics and

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<sup>395</sup> African language service.

<sup>396</sup> A report by Charles de Olim in IOL Technology dated 22 May 2006 quotes SAfm station manager, Mapule Mbhalati, as admitting that "radio drama was originally dropped purely as a cost-saving exercise (a half-hour drama requires about eight hour of recording, excluding pre-production and the scriptwriting process) and was only brought back when SAfm's hand was forced by new ICASA licensing conditions for a public broadcaster service".

broader social profile, the listenership to SAfm remains largely middle-class. While listeners to ALS stations such as Ukhozi FM and Lesedi FM rate drama as “tops”, with 4.5 million listeners on Ukhozi rating drama “second only to news, while 700 000 of Lesedi’s two million listeners follow the lunchtime serial and 400 000 the evening one” (Anstey 1999:4) indications are that the “black intelligentsia for whom English is the preferred medium” (Barney Mthombothi, *Sunday Tribune* Editor’s Note, 19 September 2004), also prefer News and Information to the labour-intensive format of the past.

Whereas the intrinsic value of cultural programming is immeasurable, public political opinion is easily gauged – and swayed – by Current Affairs programmes and talk shows, while “phone-in” programmes only too easily become outlets for the polemic of politicians and intractable ideologues<sup>397</sup>. Indeed, it would be remarkable if those adherents of African Nationalism who struggled against apartheid felt an affinity for the old form of SAE radio drama when, as I have argued, historical and cultural factors, together with ideological and economic constraints, fostered its development as an elitist, white supremacist art form, and perception as bearer of cultural imperialism. In April 1999, drama producer Bruce Millar, having joined the SABC in 1990, was “eventually left to oversee the drama dept’s demise” (2002:1).

During the seven-year long interregnum (1999-2006) that followed the closure of the SAfm drama department, several developments contributed towards keeping interest in South African English-language radio drama alive amongst aspirant writers and a wider circle of listeners:

- Radio drama plays and serials were introduced on Bush Radio, where workshops on devising an HIV-Aids mini-serial were conducted by the charismatic American producer, Anthony Sloan. In 2005, SAfm’s former Drama Organiser, Nigel Vermaas, embarked on a 12 week African Radio Drama Season on Bush Radio, featuring dramatizations of Short Stories by Black South African Writers. This series resulted in the introduction of new actors and writers to the medium. The method of recording drama digitally, which involves extensive post-production work in order to add effects, acoustics, backgrounds and music, was also introduced: as Vermaas has

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<sup>397</sup> Regular listeners to SAfm talk shows are familiar with the inflexible views of callers such as Eddie of Ficksburg, Pat of Vryburg, Faizal of Mayfair, Prophet OJ, Peter Wylie of Grahamstown, and so on. None of these callers show signs of transformation in their opinions, which was the hope when call-in programmes were originally introduced.

remarked, this involved a “huge learning curve”<sup>398</sup> for everyone involved (Bush radio online:3).

- In 2002, the British Council, in conjunction with the BBC World Service and Performing Arts Network of South Africa, and the SABC, held “Writing for Radio” workshops’ in major centres. These were followed by advanced workshops in 2003 and 2004. Participants were encouraged to enter the BBC World Service’s annual African Performance script-writing competition. The winning entries are broadcast during a six week long African Performance Season on BBC, featuring 28 minute long plays written by aspiring playwrights from any country in Africa<sup>399</sup>.
- In Cape Town, radio drama writing workshops conducted by former SABC radio drama organizer, Nigel Vermaas, before the re-introduction of English radio drama in 2006, have continued under the auspices of the Cape Scriptwriters’ Association (CASWA). Working in collaboration with SAfm, with additional assistance and sponsorship from the Cape Film Commission and the City of Cape Town (Arts and Culture), these weekend workshops are now facilitated by Nigel Vermaas and Film and TV script editor Dermot Judge.
- In 2002 Old Time Radio archivist, expert and enthusiast, Frans Erasmus launched a new radio drama programme entitled Vintage Radio, featured on the independent community radio station, Radio Today. Sponsorship by Toshiba enabled Erasmus to re-introduce listeners to many of the most popular productions featured on Springbok Radio. He also commissioned new plays to be written, produced, and broadcast, aided by the expertise of Henry Diffenthal, of Olympia Recording Studios. In conjunction with an American enthusiast known only as “Mary-Anne”, Erasmus also launched a South African OTR website, the nostalgic “Pumamouse” website, on 1 January 2002.

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<sup>398</sup> Vermaas’s remark is worth repeating in full, as follows: “Five years ago, when I directed drama at SABC, we recorded everything simultaneously – actors, sound effects, backgrounds, music links, etc. There was minimal post-production. Adding effects, acoustics, backgrounds and music afterwards gives us much greater freedom, of course, but it’s hugely time-consuming. It’s a steep learning curve for all of us.” (Bush radio, p.3)

<sup>399</sup> South Africans have participated and won prizes in BBC radio drama competitions for many years. Poet, playwright and English lecturer, Kobus Moolman won a prize in the 1987 BBC African Radio Theatre Award competition, and was later awarded 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize in the 2002 African Performance radio drama prize (About Kobus Moolman. Online). This success was followed by two PANSAs playwriting awards: *Full Circle* (2004), and *Stone Angel* (2007). Distinguished artist, Andrew Verster, won first prize in the BBC World Service Play Competition in 1993, with his first radio play entitled “You may leave, the show is over”. His second attempt at playwriting was rejected by the SABC.

- BBC's Radio 4 commissioned radio drama producer, Claire Grove to find and direct 3 plays for broadcast in April 2004, as part of the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations of South Africa's first democratic elections. Grove approached writers/performers Greig Coetzee, Sibusiso Mamba, and Thembi Mtshali-Jones, asking each to provide personal, intimate stories reflecting their "own" experiences "now" in this "new country". Coetzee and Mamba's work was recorded in the UK, but Mtshali's *Gogo and Big Sister* was produced by Grove, and recorded by local actors, including Thembi herself and Zolani Mahola, lead singer of the popular *Freshly Ground*, in the Cape Town music studios of the SABC.

In an interview with Nigel Vermaas on SAfm's *Art of the Matter* (b/c 6 March 2004) Grove offers some insight into the "complete revolution" that has taken place in the United Kingdom since 1999 in radio drama production technology, editing, and acting techniques<sup>400</sup>. Her comments lend force to my argument that SAE radio drama, having been denied access to work reflecting worldwide trends throughout the cultural boycott, has also lacked the benefit of exposure to these "revolutionary" new developments during the seven years (1999-2006) of the art form's interregnum.

As related above, in 2002 Judy Nwokedi, successor to Charlotte Mampane as Head of Radio Services, commissioned two Australian consultants to assist in the restructuring of SABC radio stations, including RSG and SAfm. Robert Young recalls that Brad Story and Peter Butler, whose experience lay in commercial radio services, advised that RSG, in its new format, should restrict sound bites to 30 seconds or less. As station manager, Sarel Myburgh asked how they expected ICASA would respond to this innovation, only to be told that ICASA's definition of public service radio was so vague that "jy met enigiets kan wegkom"<sup>401</sup> (2007:178). The Australians underestimated

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<sup>400</sup> Grove's precise comments are worth repeating in full. She somewhat diffidently observes that her production methods may be different to those followed by drama practitioners in South Africa, but adds: "I've been making drama since 1990, and - it's the last five years, there's been a complete revolution really - and it affects the way we work very much. Instead of having all the sound fx and everything and the complete performance all going on at once, you know, we can add a lot of things afterwards. We'll be adding the backgrounds of this play afterwards, and it gives you a lot of choices, I think. I mean, ultimately we can produce better work...I think what has changed is the relationship to the microphone, the relationship to the audience... Our audience now are used to hearing "documentary". They're used to hearing people talking like we're talking now, and I think formerly an audience related radio drama to theatre and to going to the theatre. Now, I think, that's a huge "turn-off" factor. If you hear something theatrical, I mean, our audiences will just switch it off. So it's really got to sound truthful, as if we are eavesdropping on a family, and the audience are used to hearing that for real, so if they hear the acting, you've lost your audience".

<sup>401</sup> "you can get away with anything".

ICASA: as Young observes, “Dis wat hulle gedink het<sup>402</sup>” (p.178). In order to comply with ICASA’s (2004) licensing conditions, the SABC re-introduced radio drama on SAfm in April 2006. Interviewed by Sergio Ben of Independent Newspaper’s *Tonight*, station manager Mapule Mbhalati<sup>403</sup> explains the decision as the result of SAfm’s “different mandate from the other radio stations” (4 April 2006), adding that in order to meet ICASA’s licensing conditions, the management of SAfm had to “re-think our programming, we have been mandated to produce, among others, drama and children’s programmes”. Mbhalati claims that the task proved to be less difficult than anticipated for, despite the fact that “the station didn’t have an infrastructure for producing drama since 1995 [sic]<sup>404</sup>”, and therefore had to “start from scratch”, the cost of organizing workshops with writers, producers and actors was minimal. Julia-Ann Malone and Bruce Millar embarked on the task of re-building the department’s infrastructure, and the difficult task of unearthing new work. Help in sourcing scripts was solicited from various quarters, including PANSA (Performing Arts Network of South Africa).

The Public Sound Broadcasting Licence issued to SAfm by ICASA on the 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2004 (No. PBSR 1/2004) contains a number of stipulations. Those most salient to this study are as follows:

- The format of the licensed service shall be a full-spectrum service.
- Within eighteen months from the date of issue of this licence, the Licensee shall, in the provision of the licensed service, broadcast at least 30 minutes of drama per day, on weekdays, within the South African performance period.
- Without derogating from the specific obligations set out below, the Licensee shall, in the provision of the licensed service, take reasonable steps to provide programming that reflects both the cultural and traditional needs of its audience.
- The Licensee shall, in the provision of the licensed service, broadcast at least one hour of programming targeted at children (as contemplated in section 10 (1) (g) of the Broadcasting Act) per week during the South African performance period, to be increased to two hours per week within eighteen months of this

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<sup>402</sup> “That’s what they thought”.

<sup>403</sup> Mapule Mbhalati has subsequently been appointed head of SABC Radio News.

<sup>404</sup> Despite the closure of the Durban drama studios in 1996, the infrastructure for radio drama production remained in place in both Johannesburg and Cape Town.

licence being issued. In the production and presentation of its children's programming, the Licensee shall ensure that such children's programming is broadcast at times of the day when children are available to listen, targeted at and appropriate for children between the ages of 0 to 6 years and 7 to 12 years respectively, educational and is made from children's point of view.

It would appear that SAfm is currently in breach of conditions laid down by ICASA. No longer a full spectrum service, the station exceeds the 90 minutes of news programming and four hours of information and current affairs programming required by the licence, but lacks programmes that reflect the cultural and traditional needs of its diverse audience. A book reading from 11h45 and 12h00 from Monday to Thursday was the only "drama" provided during the week<sup>405</sup>, until the recent introduction of a 15 minute weekday serial<sup>406</sup>. Genuine drama is reserved for off-peak listening: that is, a play of approximately one hour duration (broadcast after the 19h00 news) on Saturday evenings, and a half-hour serial or play (broadcast from 15h30) on Sunday afternoons. Children's programmes consist of interviews with pre-school children on Friday afternoons from 15h.05 to approximately 15h.25, and on Saturday at noon, further interviews with children in "Radio Workshop" followed by discussions on issues of interest to young adults. This programme replaced a 12-15 minute children's story derived from the award-winning Takalani Sesame TV series<sup>407</sup>. The corporation's scant regard shown for ICASA regulations is borne out by the SACP's (2003:4) call for the SABC to "comply with ICASA regulations on programme sponsorship" in their submission on the Draft Editorial Policies of the SABC, which asserts that "the SABC violates these ICASA regulations in its daily practice".

In an early interview with Caroline Smart of *Artsmart* (18 March 2006), Mapule Mbhalati states that "we (at SAfm) are passionate about creating a rich, new tradition of South African radio drama" (p.2), adding that "We are working very hard in training new drama producers, writers and actors from all sectors of our society and are excited by their potential new stories rooted in South Africa and Africa" (p.2). Discussing the guidelines SAfm have laid down for the future development of English radio drama, Mbhalati reveals that "for the first time the output will be 100% locally

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<sup>405</sup> Recent book readings include Mark Gevisser's *Thabo Mbeki: the dream deferred*, Jeremy Gordin's *Zuma: a biography*, and *In a different time* by Peter Harris.

<sup>406</sup> Paul Slabolepszy's serial *Whatyamacallit!*, directed by Bruce Millar, broadcast weekdays from 3.45 to 4.00 p.m, features Samson Kumalo, Michael Richard, Louise Saint-Claire and Quanita Adams (*Natal Mercury*, May 29 2009).

<sup>407</sup> The popularity enjoyed by the television series did not necessarily translate into a good response on radio.

produced with no productions brought in from overseas". Moreover, the focus is to be "on commissioning new work that deals with themes relevant to South Africa in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century and on nurturing a new generation of radio writers, actors and producers". In building relationships with community theatres around the country, the SAfm drama producers hope to discover and foster new talent, and more plays will be recorded on location (p.2).

The genesis of the promised re-birth and cultural creolization of English radio drama lies in the work first introduced on RSA in the late 80's, and lessons learned then still apply: the discovery and development of new talent takes time. SAfm producer, Julia-Ann Malone, confirms that the drama department has a budget for workshops. At least two writers' workshops are held each year, including an annual workshop held by Malone with students of Rhodes University. Several plays, and the introduction of podcasts, an innovation that gives a new - possibly younger - audience access to radio drama on line, have resulted from this particular initiative. Workshops for actors also take place each quarter, but the finest experience for actors is to work in a studio, in front of a microphone: as Malone comments, "new actors tend to learn all the tricks from the experienced actors during recording" (E-mail correspondence, 23 February 2009). Established dramatists are commissioned to write plays for special events, such as Human Rights Day on 21 March 2006, which marked the return of radio drama to SAfm with the broadcast of Anthony Akerman's play, *The Africanist*, directed by Malone. Akerman based the story on Benjamin Pogrand's *How can man die better: the life of Robert Sobukwe*. The play follows the protagonist's extraordinary life from his early days in politics, to his time as leader of the Pan Africanist Congress, and, finally, to his solitary confinement on Robben Island. Moagi Modise plays the role of Sobukwe.

Unlike RSG's 3 monthly drama seasons, SAfm broadcasts drama throughout the year. A list of the new plays broadcast in the Saturday and Sunday plays has been provided by the SAfm drama department, and the SABC sound archives<sup>408</sup>:

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<sup>408</sup> Wherever possible, further information from a variety of sources as to the plot, cast, origins of the work, etc., have been provided. These sources include the SABC archives, the writers/adaptors/producers themselves, theatre programmes, personal knowledge and the internet.

**2006:**

### **SATURDAY PLAY**

An additional 20 new plays were broadcast as the Saturday Play in the remaining 9 months of 2006, as follows:

*Slave Mentality* by John Kench (b/c 6 May 2006), directed by Bruce Millar, features David Dennis as a young coloured man who climbs the corporate ladder, but encounters opposition in the process.

*Menstruating Men* by Richard Nwamba (b/c 27 May 2006), directed by Posy Keogh. Cast: Sello Motlounge, Abena Ayivor, Zoleka Duma, Richard Nwamba, Thembinkosi Henna, Noninzi Maggie Williams, Xolile Tshabalala, Nyanga Tshabalala, and Doctor Khasu-Nkalo.

*What If...?* by Paul Rapetsoa (b/c 10 June 2006), directed by Julia-Ann Malone, commemorated Youth Month. Cast features students of PRIDA, based at Yeoville Community Centre, Johannesburg.

*The 16<sup>th</sup> Day of June '76*, by Reshoketswe Maredi (b/c 16 June 2006), directed by Posy Keogh. (A special Youth Day Broadcast).

*Sweet Skollies* by Shirley Johnston (17 June 2006) to commemorate Youth Month, the play was directed by Ralph Lawson, with technical production by Alan Rabey. Cast: Euodia Samson, Shirley Johnston, Ryan Coetsee, Merlin Balie, Warrick Greer, Shaun Arnolds, and Buddy-Bo Butler.

*Outside Centre* by Vincent Pienaar, directed by Bruce Millar (b/c 5 August 2006), deals with issues around sport, the media and corruption. Cast: Will Bernard, James Borthwick, Wayne van Rooyen, David Butler, Astrid Braaf, Mark Richardson, David Sherwood, Ian Roberts and Norman Anstey.

*No Place for You* (b/c 9 August 2006 and repeated on 12 August 2006), a dramatization by Anthony Akerman of "117 Days", Ruth First's account of her detention without trial, directed by Julia-Ann Malone. Technical Production: Schalk Vorster and Frikkie Wallis. Cast: Fiona Ramsay, David Butler, James Borthwick, David Clatworthy, Rina Nienaber, Tobie Cronje, Nicky Rebelo, and Karen Wessels.

*Dream of the Dog* by Craig Higginson. A stage play adapted by the author for radio and directed by Bruce Millar (b/c 19 August 2006). Four characters share a terrible secret: Richard, an elderly farmer in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease, Patricia, the farmer's 60 year-old wife, Look Smart a 30 year-old land developer who grew up on the farm, and Beauty, sister of the girl Look Smart once loved. The author raises questions concerning the issue of memory as a fiction-maker, making this play "of central relevance to South Africa's continued negotiation with its past and its struggle to find a workable identity for the future"<sup>409</sup> Cast: Vanessa Cooke, Robert Whitehead,

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<sup>409</sup> The Playwright's Database online, <<http://doollee.com/PlaywrightsH/Higginson-craig.html>>. Accessed 3 March 2009.

Given Bongiwe Lunga and Mncedisi Shabangu. Play followed by a discussion between Bruce Millar and author Craig Higginson.

*African Vision Number 6* by John Kench, directed by Marvin Mathibe (b/c 2 September 2006). Technical production by Schalk Vorster and Frikkie Wallis. Cast: Mark Richardson, Louis Saint Claire, Annabel Linder, Retsi Pule, Felicia Mahambehala, and Innocent Msimango in the cast.

*Over My Deadline* by Steve Anderson, directed by Bruce Millar (b/c 9 September 2006). Technical production: Schalk Vorster and Frikkie Wallis. Cast: Craig Urbani, Anthony Fridjhon, James Borthwick, David Butler and Louise Saint Claire. Play followed by a discussion between Bruce Millar and author, advertising copywriter Steve Anderson.

*Jubilee* by Jack Mullen and Jerry Mofokeng, directed by Julia-Ann Malone (b/c 16 September 2006).

*The Trouble with Vegetarians* by Janita Thiele, directed by Marvin Mathibe (7 October 2006).

*Heresy*. (Part One of the life of Bishop Colenso) by Anthony Akerman, directed by Julia-Ann Malone (b/c 4 November 2006). Repeated in Saturday Play in February 2009.

*Treason*. Part Two of the life of Bishop Colenso by Anthony Akerman, directed by Julia-Ann Malone (b/c 11 November 2006). Repeated in Saturday Play in February 2009.

*Church Full of Light* by Guy Willoughby, a 2003 PANSAs Playwriting Festival award winner later staged at the Baxter Theatre. Adapted for radio by the author and directed by Nigel Vermaas (18 November 2006). Cast: Thembi Mtshali-Jones, Zolile Nokwe, Anthea Thompson, Ralph Lawson, Guy Willoughby, Jacqui Singer, Sindiwe Magona.

*Bush Tales* by Martin Koboekae, adapted from author's stage play, directed by Marvin Mathibe.

*Hope Deferred* by Anthony Akerman, directed by Julia-Ann Malone, to commemorate World Aids Day 1 December, 2006. (b/c 2 December 2006.)

*Four, Four Straight Town* by Desmond Ntshalintshali, directed by Marvin Mathibe (b/c 16 December 2006) commemorating the Day of Reconciliation.

*Suburban Grey Christmas* by Martin Koboekae, a Christmas play directed by Marvin Mathibe. (b/c 23 December 2006.)

*The Beat Goes On*, a docu-drama by Desmond Ntshalintshali, directed by Marvin Mathibe (30 December 2006.)

Repeat broadcasts of 24 plays from the SABC Radio archives were also broadcast.

## **SUNDAY PLAY 2006 (14.30 – 15.00):**

Repeat broadcasts of plays and serials in 2006 total 21, with 15 new dramas broadcast, as follows:

*A Silly Point* by Paul Slabolepszy, directed by Bruce Millar, (b/c 7 May 2006).

*The Taxi Affair* by Reshoketswa Maredi, directed by Julia-Ann Malone. (b/c 14 May 2006). Cast: Joyce Broderick, David Clatworthy, Shoki Maredi (author), Thembinkosi Henna, Mary Makhato, Lebo Dhlamini, and Kathy-Jo Ross.

*Scratch* by Shirley Kirchman and Stacey Sacks, directed by Bruce Millar. (b/c 21 May 2006). Cast: Shirley Kirchman and Garth Breytenbach.

*Karoo Beds* by John Kench, directed by Bruce Millar. (b/c 28 May 2006). A young couple spend a weekend camping in the Karoo, looking for artefacts and romantic moments. Cast: Jonathan Rands as Ben and Jocelyn Broderick as Sue.

*Ghost* by Rob Marsh, directed by Julia-Ann Malone. (b/c 20 August 2006), and adapted for radio from *Unsolved Mysteries of Southern Africa* by Rob Marsh (non-fiction), author of 22 published books and more than 300 radio programmes.

*The Lost City of the Kalahari* by Rob Marsh, directed by Julia-Ann Malone. (b/c 27 August 2006), and adapted from *Unsolved Mysteries of Southern Africa*.

*The Mystery of the Kruger Millions* by Rob Marsh, directed by Julia-Ann Malone (b/c: 3 September 2006), and adapted from *Unsolved Mysteries of Southern Africa*.

*Women and Children First* by Rob Marsh, directed by Julia-Ann Malone (b/c: 10 September 2006), and adapted from *Unsolved Mysteries of Southern Africa*.

*A Settlement at the Cape* by Rob Marsh, directed by Julia-Ann Malone (b/c: 17 September 2006), and adapted from *Unsolved Mysteries of Southern Africa*.

*UFO's* by Rob Marsh, directed by Julia-Ann Malone, (b/c: 24 September 2006), and adapted from *Unsolved Mysteries of Southern Africa*.

*Yes, Madame* by Will Mason, directed by Ralph Lawson (1 October 2006.)

*Coming Home* by Yvonne Hart, directed by Ralph Lawson (8 October 2006): the story of the former inhabitants of Protea Village, an idyllic spot just below Kirstenbosch, who were removed to the Cape Flats during the apartheid era. The play starts at the point where a decision has to be made – to accept the offer of a piece of land in the place where Protea Village once stood, or to accept monetary recompense in lieu of land. The playwright comments as follows: "The whole question of whether one can ever really 'go back' intrigued me, and the differing points of view as to the viability of return are expressed in the play by Minnie and her daughter Eileen. What, after all, constitutes 'home'? Is it a physical locality, the place that contains history and memories? Or is it the place where your life has meaning – the place where you feel productive, loved and wanted?" Cast: Mary Daniels, Denise Newman, Euodia Samson, Ivan Abrahams, and Royston Stoffels. Minor parts played by members of the cast.

*Intruder* by Darryn Katz, directed by Bruce Millar. (b/c: 19 November 2006).

*Mama Doesn't Sing Anymore* by Tebogo Sengfeng, directed by Marvin Mathibe (b/c: 13 March 2006) commemorating 16 Days of Activism.

*The Santa Wars* by Nigel Vermaas, directed by Nigel Vermaas (b/c: Christmas Eve, 24 January 2006). The play is described by the author as "a throwaway, mildly satirical silly seasonal piece, based on a "devilish" plan to set up a rival to Santa Claus. Cast: Sizwe Msutu, Shirley Kirchmann, Faith Ndukwana, Chad Abrahams, Quanita Adams, Matthew Roberts, Nancy Richards. Recorded by Alan Rabey in the Sea Point drama studio. Director Nigel Vermaas was also responsible for editing and post-production.

## **DAILY SERIAL 2006**

3 repeat serials were broadcast in the remainder of 2006 (*The Innocence of Roast Chicken* by Joanne Richards, *A Man's Pub is his Castle* by Vincent Pienaar and *Moord Squad* by Lee Herrmann). 3 new productions were also broadcast:

*Armed Responz* by Guy Willoughby, directed by Nigel Vermaas. (b/c Mon.-Thurs. from 19 June 2006.) The first daily serial to be broadcast on SAfm for some years, *Armed Responz* follows the fortunes of a two-bit private security company, INVINCIBLE SYSTEMS INC. (headed by the gloriously incompetent Major Pik Swart, CEO, ex-SADF, master of the malapropism and little else) that is forced to change to survive. The uneasy transformation into a "New" South African company, VALIANT SWART, provides much of the conflict and comedy. The serial gives a new and refreshing spin on the thoroughly topical issue of Black Economic Empowerment. Cast: Guy Willoughby, Sizwe Msutu, Quanita Adams, Paddy Canavan, Keith wa-Lehulere, Matthew Roberts, Mehboob Baw, Charlton George, Zolile Nokwe.

*Taung Wells* by Martin Koboekae, directed by Martin Mathibe. (22 eps. b/c Monday-Thursday from 21 August 2006.) Adapted from the novel by Koboekae, *Taung Wells* is set in the early twentieth century in the village of Molema, and is based on true events. The Rev. Ramolpone Mathe, a man of God and wealthy cattle owner, is assisted in the difficult task of digging a well during a drought by a strong Zulu, Bheki Dhalmini, but incurs the envy and enmity of another wealthy man, Matong Mooki, who is also involved in cattle herding. Matong's beautiful niece, Madipere, sparks a fight between Bheki and another digger, Sebata. The king of Molelema, Mothabane, is called upon to settle such cases in his Kgotla (traditional court). *Taung Wells* may be described as an evergreen morality tale.

*Ways of Dying* by Zakes Mda, dramatized by Richard Nwamba and directed by Hillary Keogh (b/c 2 October 2006). The author's first novel, *Ways of Dying*, won the M-Net Book prize in 1997. The story is set in the transitional years preceding South Africa's democratic transformation, and follows the passage of a character named Toloki, who deals with his destitute state by becoming a "professional mourner".

**2007:**

**Saturday Play:**

A total of 30 new productions were broadcast on the Saturday Play in 2007, including a tribute to the late Patrick Mynhardt. Repeats of 21 plays were also broadcast. The new productions are as follows:

*You Can't Make Me* by Karen Jeynes, directed by Judith-Ann Malone (b/c 13 January 2007). Three girls go on a roadtrip to be extras in a movie – or, rather, to run away from their realities. Friendships, perceptions and beliefs are tested and come out stronger, with lots of laughs and a little crying.

*Fortune Cookie* by Janita Thiele, directed by Bruce Millar (b/c 20 January 2007).

*Crossings* by Reza de Wet, adapted and directed by Ralph Lawson (27 January 2007). (Translation by Steven Stead). Tells the tale of two strange sisters, living in a cottage next to a fast-flowing river. A hypnotist and his beautiful assistant, Esmerelda, ignore the sisters' warnings of the danger in crossing the treacherous river in flood, and drown in the attempt. Twenty years on the wailing of Esmerelda's spirit still keeps the sisters awake at night. The séance held by the sisters is described as raising the spirits of the dead and "giving life to the different variations on the themes of love, dependency, hate and the desire to escape, creating a world of tremendous power, a world that is both familiar and strange, ordinary and magical and the surface of which is similar to the deceptively calm river under which terrible currents rage"<sup>410</sup>.

*And the Beat Goes On*. Docu-drama by Desmond Nthalintshali, directed by Marvin Mathibe. Cast: Abigail Kubheka and Dorothy Masuko.

*The Serpent Under* by Rob March, directed by Julia-Ann Malone (b/c 10 February 2007), tells the story of murder, robbery, deceit and the disturbed relationship of two perfectionists, who are far from being the perfect couple.

*Missing* by Reza de Wet, adapted and directed by Ralph Lawson (b/c 03 March 2007) Translation by Steven Stead. A companion to *Crossings*, *Missing* is described as another Folkloric and ostensibly naïve piece of Afrikaner storytelling. The play deals with the liberation of a character from an oppressive, matriarchal order. As such, it serves as an expression of the striving of the current generation of Afrikaner towards freedom from the Calvinist tradition of the past<sup>411</sup>.

*Acropolis Café* by Irene Stephanou, adapted for radio by Craig Higginson from the award-winning stage play, and directed by Bruce Millar (10 March 2007).

*Taxi* by Sibusiso Mamba, directed by Marvin Mathibe (b/c 17 March 2007, re b/c 25 October 2008). Mamba was one of three South African playwrights selected by BBC 4 drama producer, Claire Grove, to write a radio play to be broadcast by the BBC as part of the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations of democracy in South Africa. Mamba was asked to write about an aspect of life in the new South Africa that affected him personally: a synopsis of *Taxi* describes the play as being about "an aspect of South African life that

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<sup>410</sup> The Playwrights' Database on line (Reza de Wet):< <http://www.doollee.com/PlaywrightsD/de-wet-reza.html>> (Accessed 25 February 2009).

<sup>411</sup> The Playwrights' Database, as above.

affects us all, whether we travel by taxi or not". It adds: "The taxi industry is probably one of the most potent headaches of the present South African government, encapsulating the violence and pressures of modern society."<sup>412</sup>

*Helpline South Africa* by Richard Nwamba, directed by Posy Keogh (b/c 24 March 2007). Commemorating Human Rights Day.

*Soldier Boy* by Kobus Moolman, directed by Bruce Millar (b/c 31 March 2007, re b/c 11 October 2008). Moolman's play was awarded second prize in the 2003 BBC African Radio Theatre Competition. An established poet, playwright and academic, Moolman attended the British Council/PANSA radio drama writing workshops conducted by BBC 4's Tina Pepler in 2002 at the Durban studios of the SABC

*Sky Too Big* by Karen Jeynes<sup>413</sup>, directed by Marvin Mathibe (b/c 14 April 2007). A mother and daughter are in conflict. Where does identity come from? When does protection become prejudice? And can we put a measure on love?

*His Own Man* by Nomsa Dladla, directed by Marvin Mathibe (b/c 28 April 2007), commemorated Freedom Day on 27 April 2007).

*Little White Lies* by Fiona Coyne, directed by Bruce Millar (b/c 12 May 2007). Originally Coyne's first play under the title, *As the Koekie Crumbles*, *Little White Lies* was adapted for radio by Ralph Lawson.

*Ulutsha* by Peter Ngwenya, directed by Posy Keogh (b/c 16 June 2007). Commemorating Youth Day, and featuring students from the Soweto Drama group.

*The Upside Down Watering Can* by Rayne Topham (Rhodes University student), directed by Posy Keogh (b/c 30 June 2007).

*The Ring Master* by Natalie Anne Pickering.

*My Step Mom's Giraffe* by Deborah Sprowson.

A double bill by Rhodes University students, directed by Julia-Ann Malone (7 July 2007).

*Black is Beautiful* by Martin Koboekae, directed by Julia-Ann Malone. Commemorating the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the death of Steve Biko (b/c 15 September 2007, re-b/c 15 October 2008).

*Our Worst Nightmare* by Ashleigh Harvey, directed by Bruce Millar (b/c 13 October 2007).

*When Lightning Strikes* by Simon Hill (Rhodes University student).

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<sup>412</sup> The Playwrights' Database online (Sibusiso Mamba). <<http://www.doollee.com/PlaywrightsM/mamba-sibusiso.html>>. (Accessed 25 February 2009.)

<sup>413</sup> In attempting to find out the story-line of this new play from the playwright, I inadvertently exposed the fact that Karen Jeynes had not been notified of its broadcast or received payment and a copy of the CD. My contact with the SAfm drama department, but not the archives, was then brought to an abrupt halt. It seems that payment for repeats (that is, half the writer's fee only) is also erratic. Now living in the UK, writer Jill Fenson expresses a lack of concern at having not receiving the small amount due for an August 2009 repeat of *Inherit the Earth*, a half-hour play, originally b/c on the English Service as a part of a double bill entitled *A Touch of Armageddon*. The playwright comments that the SABC probably imagines she's dead, and the small fee is "not worth kicking up a shindig".

*The Girls' Guide to the Rugby World Cup* by Shirley Kirchman.  
A double bill directed by Bruce Millar (10 October 2007).

*Footsteps in the Ceiling* by Vincent Pienaar, directed by Bruce Millar (b/c 27 October 2007 Halloween).

*A Swig of Patrick Mynhardt*. A tribute to the actor Patrick Mynhardt, compiled and directed by Bruce Millar (b/c 3 November 2007).

*Two Plus One* by Eve Sigalas, directed by Posy Keogh (10 November 2007).

*Tipping is Not a City in China* by Danika Marquis (Rhodes University student), directed by Posy Keogh.

*Cardboard, Plastic and Glass* by Andrea Le Sueur, directed by Julia-Ann Malone (A double Bill b/c 17 November 2007).

*DC to Bree Street* by Rob Boffard (Rhodes University student), directed by Bruce Millar (24 November 2007).

*That Dawn is Here* by Doctor Khasu-Nkatlo, directed by Julia-Ann Malone. Commemorating World Aids Day. (b/c 1 December 2007).

*Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland* by Olive Shreiner, dramatized by Anthony Akerman, directed by Julia-Ann Malone (b/c 15 December 2007. Commemorating Reconciliation Day on the 16 December 2007).

*Christmas at the Myeza's* by Martin Koboekae, directed by Bruce Millar (b/c 22 December 2007).

### **Sunday Play 2007:**

The majority of plays broadcast in the Sunday play were repeats (32 in total, including 12 episodes of Richard Rive's *Buckingham Palace*, 3 episodes of Athol Fugard's *Boesman and Lena*, and 3 episodes of *The Fatherland* by Murray Watts). The 7 new productions are listed as follows:

*Express Yourself Competition*: Broadcast of 5 winning poems and 5 winning short stories in place of documentary and drama. (b/c 25 March 2007).

*Express Yourself Competition*: Broadcast of winning short story and poem, plus interview with the author and poet. (b/c 1 April 2007).

*Last Will and Testament* by Richard Nwamba, directed by Posy Keogh. (b/c 8 April 2007).

*What Now, Meneer* by Richard Nwamba, directed by Posy Keogh. (b/c 15 April 2007), is the story of an illicit affair between a schoolgirl and her teacher. (The title is taken from the question the township student asks of her teacher once she finds she is pregnant).

*The Secret Switch* by Richard Nwamba, directed by Posy Keogh. (b/c 3 June 2007). On the eve of her marriage, a young (white) virgin and bride-to-be witnesses a frightening car accident as she drives home, talking to her middle-class mother on the cell phone. Having been persuaded not to stop and help the injured victims lying in the road, the girl continues discussing her forthcoming wedding with the mother, who displays inappropriate curiosity concerning the wedding night, and stresses the need for new underwear. Finding herself lost, the daughter parks in an apparently vacant garage, where a street child attempts to hold her up with a toy gun. The driver of a tow truck rescues her and takes her home on the instructions of her masterly but out-of-town future husband. Repeat b/c 30 August 2009.

*Mr. Lucien and the Cinematographer* by Willem van der Walt, directed by Julia-Ann Malone. (b/c 8 July 2007).

*Season's Greetings x 2*. SAfm Listener's own stories, featuring 1) *A Helping Hand* by Johan du Toit 2) *Chips and Sweets for All* by Daphne Mahosi. (b/c 23 December 2007. Both pieces written by Vincent Pienaar).

#### **DAILY SERIAL 2007:**

The Daily Serial featured 4 new serials and two repeats (*Leaven: A Black and White Story* by Douglas Blackburn, and *Shades* by Marguerite Poland). The new productions are as follows:

*You Buy the Dog you Get the Fleas* by Vincent Pienaar, directed by Bruce Millar. (20 episodes broadcast from 22 January 2007 to 22 February 2007).

*Office Hours* by Karen Jeynes and Nkuli Sibeko, directed by Ralph Lawson. (40 episodes broadcast from 20 June 2007 to 28 August 2007) Excerpts from the synopsis, as provided by the authors are as follows: "Dirk Joubert has grown his web design company, WebMage, from scratch. From his beginnings as a freelancer working out of his mom's kitchen, to his recent cc registration and move to offices on an It hub building, he's done everything himself. But now it's time to hire an assistant. Things being what they are, Dirk decides to "go BEE". We start the series at his job interviews. The lucky candidate is Phumla, with a brand new marketing diploma. Moving around these central characters are others: Thando, Phumla's fiancé, Rachel, Thando's ex-girl-friend, Zayn, Rachel's boss, Leila, the receptionist, and Louise, Dirk's Mom. Although the series has comic elements, it deals with issues around modern technology-driven society versus traditional African society, and everyone's basic need to be loved.

*Shirley, Goodness and Mercy* by Chris van Wyk: a novel reading by Wayne van Rooyen, directed by Julia-Ann Malone. The first 10 episodes were b/c from 29 August 2007 to 13 September 2007. *Shirley, Goodness and Mercy* is the author's account of his childhood, growing up in the Coloured township of Riverlea during apartheid, and his later work as a political activist. The novel was also adapted and directed by Janice Honeyman for performance at the Market and Baxter Theatres in 2007. The Director's Note in the Baxter Theatre programme describes the book as being "chock-full of specifics, details and truth. His insight into and understanding of the complications, the celebrations, the sorrows, the hurt, the heart, the joys and growing-pains of childhood seem to have been written individually for everyone who reads it. Speaking so directly

to all of us, and proving that all of us feel and experience and grow up with the same inner hopes, fears, threats and personal delights and disappointments, does it not prove to be a most telling anti-apartheid statement? In spite of differing circumstances, we are all the same inside”.

*Playing in the Light* adapted from Zoe Wicomb's novel of the same name, and dramatized and directed by Nigel Vermaas. (24 episodes b/c from 17 September 2007 to 25 October 2007). *Playing in the Light* is described as a story of “secrets, lies and discomfiture”; a story of identity – and a story of a difficult journey. Set in the late 1990's, it is also the story of Marion Campbell who has her own travel agency, a luxury car, an apartment in Bloubergstrand, and a relationship with a successful businessman, Geoff Geldenhuys. Marion experiences nightmares, however, related to the Truth and Reconciliation hearings, concerning a particular woman, Patricia Williams, who was tortured in detention. With the help of a new employee, Williams sets out to investigate her past, a quest for truth that leads her to journey physically and emotionally, enduring both painful confrontation and moments of exhilaration. Cast: Bo Petersen, Bronwyn van Graan, Charl van Heyning, Charlton George, Lee-Ann van Rooi, Lynita Crofford, Wiseman Sithole, Matthew Roberts, Gordon van Rooyen and Mike Westcott. In true radio tradition, this versatile cast plays many roles. Technical Production on ProTools: Alan Rabey and Ricardo McCarthy.

*Shirley, Goodness and Mercy* by Chris van Wyk: a novel reading (continued) by Wayne van Rooyen (50 episodes b/c from 29 October 2007 to 10 January 2008).

## **2008:**

The Saturday Play features 22 new plays and 30 repeats. The new productions are listed follows:

*The One Big Mistake I Made* by Ashleigh Harvey, directed by Bruce Millar (b/c 1 March 2008).

*Behind Closed Doors* by Nicky Rebelo, and directed by Bruce Millar (b/c 8 March 2008).

*I Found the King* by Joey van Niekerk, translated from Afrikaans by Mari Snyman and directed by Julia-Ann Malone. (b/c on Good Friday, 21 March 2008).

*Don't Stand Too Close* by Richard Nwamba, directed by Julia-Ann Malone. Commemorating Human Rights Day, (b/c 22 March 2008).

*The Harvest* by Richard Nwamba, directed by Julia-Ann Malone. (Commissioned for Freedom Day, b/c 26 April 2008).

*Nomvula's Tears* by Zukiswa Wanner, directed by Julia-Ann Malone. (Commemorating Youth Day, b/c 14 June 2008).

*Bullied to Death* by Ashleigh Harvey, directed by Posy Keogh (b/c 28 June 2008). A drama that portrays issues which lead to teenage suicide. Cast: David Butler, Kim Garner, Rika Sennet, Jennifer Steyn, Christine Voorendyk, Victor Voorendyk, Sama Yoyo, Ashleigh Harvey.

*Best Served Cold* by Janita Thiele, directed by Nigel Vermaas (b/c 5 July 2008). The story of a good woman who, when she learns she has been betrayed, commits an act of revenge. Cast: Portia Mntuyedwa as Thando, Faniswa Yisa as Malebo, Zolile Nokwe as Sizwe, Deirdre Wolhuter as Rebecca, Graham Weir as Doctor Strijdom, Andrea Dondolo as Ma' Rose, Bronwyn van Graan as cashier. Other parts were played by members of cast. Billboard read by Thoka Ntshinga.

*Relative Claims* by Alexandra Halligey, directed by Posy Keogh (b/c 12 July 2008). A drama dealing with land issues in South Africa. Cast: David Butler, Samson Kumalo, Thembi Madalane, Omphile Molusi, Jennifer Steyn, Jabulile Tshabalala, Denver Vraagom.

*The Corridor* by Vincent Pienaar. Based on the short story by Nadia de Kock. Translated and adapted by E.M. Houtenbos (nom de plume for Vincent Pienaar) from Nadia de Kock's short story, *Die Gang*, and directed by Nigel Vermaas (b/c 26 July 2008). Other sources for the play include Theresa Ramashamola's testimony at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Day 2 of the Johannesburg Prisons Hearing on 22 July 1997. Nadia de Kock worked at Pretoria Central at the time that Theresa Ramashamola was awaiting execution. They are the same age. Cast: Bo Petersen as Rebecca, Faniswa Yisa as Theresa, Eben Genis as Jacques, Andrea Dondolo as Sergeant Baloyi, Bronwyn van Graan as Eunice, Graham Weir as TRC facilitator, Royston Stoffels as the Historian. Other roles played by members of the cast. Billboard read by Ralph Lawson.

*The Reclaimed Journal* by Janita Thiele, directed by Julia-Ann Malone (b/c 2 August 2008). The story of a young woman who leaves South Africa and the people she loves to satisfy her curiosity about the world, and write her journal in distant Bangkok. On completion she realizes her need to return home to those she loves. Celebrating Women's Month.

*Ugubhu Melodies* by Doctor Khasu-Nkatlo, directed by Posy Keogh (b/c 9 August 2008). A drama outlining the traditional culture and melodies of the Zulu nation as told through the story of King Mathole and his wives, especially his young wife, Princess Magogo. The princess, who was known for her singing, gave birth to the heir of the throne. Cast: Bongzi Buthelezi, Lucky Khoza, Thembi Madalane, Roelf Matlala, Boitumelo Mothabela, Masoja Msiza, Errol Ndotho, Jabu Tshabalala, Sama Yoyo, Makgofe Moagi, and Doctor Khasu-Nkatlo.

*A Far Cry* by Antony Ackerman, based on Mary Benson's autobiography, commissioned and directed by Julia-Ann Malone (b/c 23 August 2008). Benson was a South African writer, anti-apartheid campaigner and biographer of Nelson Mandela. She helped smuggle Mandela out of South Africa in 1962, remaining friends with him throughout her exile in London until her death in 2000.

*Uye Joni* by Richard Nwamba, directed by Bruce Millar (b/c 30 August 2008).

*The Games People Play* by Steve Anderson, directed by Bruce Millar (b/c 6 September 2008). A story about falling in love and the process two people go through before agreeing to become partners. Cast: Anthony Fridjohn, Robert Fridjohn, Kim Garner, David Butler, Ashleigh Harvey.

*Sterile* by Gideon van Eeden, adapted and directed by Ralph Lawson (b/c 27 September 2008). (Translated from *Stereil*, van Eeden's hard-hitting Afrikaans drama performed as part of Artscape's 3<sup>rd</sup> Spring Drama Season from the 5-11<sup>th</sup> November, 2007) The play tells the story of a white rookie ambulance driver who is plunged into a new job on the Cape Flats accompanied by a seasoned coloured paramedic.

*Life between the Lines* by Eve Sigalas, directed by Posy Keogh (b/c 4 October 2008). Two sons travel to Argentina to trace the life and hidden ministry of their father, with the help of a journal written by him before he died. Cast: David Sherwood, Christin Voorendyk, Victor Voorendyk, Jennifer Steyn, Emmanuel Castis, Greg Melvill-Smith, and Niki Sebirini.

*Kingdom in the Sky* by Juanita Thiel, directed by Posy Keogh (b/c 1 November 2008).

*Last Change* by Andrea Lezar, directed by Posy Keogh (b/c 22 November 2008).

*Banana Pancakes* by Juanita Thiel, director unknown (b/c 29 November 2008).

*Moord Squad Christmas* by Lee Herrmann, directed by Bruce Millar (b/c 20 December 2008).

*The Myesa's Happy New Year* by Martin Koboekae, directed by Bruce Millar (b/c 27 December 2008).

#### **DAILY SERIAL 2008:**

The Daily Serial featured the last few episodes of Shirley, Goodness and Mercy read by Wayne van Rooyen, as Daily Serial 2007 above, 2 repeats (*Imaginings of Sand* by Andre Brink, dramatized and directed by Nigel Vermaas, and *Moord Squad* – Season 2 by Lee Herrman, directed by Bruce Millar), and 3 new productions.

*A Good Walk Spoiled* by Vincent Pienaar, directed by Julia-Ann Malone 24 eps. (b/c 14 January 2008 – 21 February 2008).

*Bowl Like Hole* – 1 by Zoe Wicomb, adapted from *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town*, read by Astrid Braaf, (b/c 13 May 2008).

*Bowl Like Hole* – 2 by Zoe Wicomb, adapted from *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town*, read by Astrid Braaf, (b/c 14 May 2008).

*Jan Klinkies* – by Zoe Wicomb, adapted from *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town*, read by Astrid Braaf, (b/c 15 May 2008).

*Long Walk to Freedom* (abridged version) by Nelson Mandela, 22 episodes read by Sello Maake ka-Ncube, directed by Posy Keogh, (b/c 30 June 2008 – 5 August 2008)

The information provided above demonstrates that voices and stories, silenced in the past, are now being heard, and a new dramatic sub-genre reflecting the multiple identities and composite mix of South African society, has emerged. As argued by Nuttall, complex configurations of identity have always been present in South African

society, but were masked by apartheid's ideology of separation, and the new nation's foregrounding of "an over-simplified discourse of rainbow nationalism" (2000:1). The better book readings<sup>414</sup>, serials and documentary dramas broadcast on SAfm seek to explore these "complex configurations" through the telling of "history from below".

Promising as many of these developments are, difficulties arising from factors such as the restrictions of successive regimes, the 7 year closure, and a dearth of experienced script writers, can be seen to exist. In a discussion of contemporary cultural theorizing, Sarah Nuttall has referred to the "imaginative closure associated with apartheid (the inability to think of South Africa as anything but a closed space) [which] has not transformed in the new period of openings". Following Njabulo Ndebele, she envisages "a shift away from perceiving South Africa's closed view of itself as being tied to the apartheid period", and identifies "the need for an opening, for a transformation of thought".

I would suggest that, fourteen years into our nascent democracy, this shift is barely perceptible in the drama broadcast on SAfm. Radio drama has yet to break free: our imaginings are bound to the past. Why should this be? I have attempted to show that, in its old form, SAE radio drama was successively restricted to a closed space by British Imperialism, Afrikaner Nationalist ideology, and the cultural boycott. Restrictions imposed by the National Party controlled SABC stifled the art form, yet, at the time, the rules appeared reasonable enough<sup>415</sup>. Similarly, the restrictions on the new form, as outlined by Mapule Mbhalati above, appear equally reasonable, but - as with drama of the apartheid era, and the recent SABC blacklisting of political analysts - the broadcasted product says more of the ideology at play than any written instructions. The seemingly admirable stricture imposed on the art form, confining English radio drama to stories "rooted in South Africa and Africa" and "themes relevant to South Africa in the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century" has taken English radio drama from one extreme to another, with the result that the true potential of SA English language radio drama remains unexplored. As Mullen (2002:5) suggests, sound drama can play a significant role in many ways. It can

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<sup>414</sup> Book readings have replaced the weekday morning serial. Novels seldom feature, the majority of book readings on SAfm being either biographical or autobiographical.

<sup>415</sup> To recap: Drama organizer Robert Young has listed these restrictions as follows: "No swearing, foul language, attacking any religious group, to insult or be offensive to any racial group, make jokes about people with physical handicaps etc. He adds: "We avoided political, racial and religious issues...The stage plays of André Brink were all adapted for radio, as well as those written by Adam Small. We were never told that we may not broadcast it. But, of course, we would never be allowed to attack the government of the day" (2002:2)

- be the medium to break down the barriers of ignorance and intolerance which still exist between us in this land of ours, by exposing us [as] rooted in our disparate cultures;
- effectively communicate important messages on sociological<sup>416</sup> issues in an entertaining and accessible way, at a fraction of the cost of theatre, film and TV;
- present writers, producers and actors the opportunity to work together with a common purpose in creating radio drama, not only for local audiences, but for audiences beyond our borders, and beyond this continent.

In imagining the past, much of the work currently broadcast is confined to issues of politics and race. This impression may be exacerbated by the extensive use of selected “repeats”, some of which were first broadcast more than 20 years ago. This prolonged focus on racial issues and stereotypes – or what Nuttall describes as “racial supremacy and racial victimhood as a determinant of identity” – can, at least in part, be seen as the outcome of the (often white) new writers’ assessment of “what sells on SAfm”. This cynical response to the unwritten preferences of the new order inhibits the writer’s creative spirit and the new forms’ development. Nuttall (2000:5) has cogently argued that despite apartheid, and “alongside the closure of South African imaginations”, there have always existed intimacies and connectivities between people of different cultures. Portrayals of our differences, frailties and animosities make for interesting listening, but new writing could also draw on and explore these “intimacies” and “connectivities”.

At present, despite earlier promises, and the pan-African cultural exchange experience of other art forms, few stories are broadcast which are “rooted” in other parts of Africa, or expose listeners to the new plays and literature of other nationalities. It seems that African Nationalism now stays the progress of English radio drama, curbing the growth of an art form that some may still see as bearer and purveyor of cultural imperialism. Jack Mullen (2002:7) argues against this negative perception of radio drama as follows:

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<sup>416</sup> As opposed to ideological issues. (My comment).

There is, quite correctly, a strong national interest in promoting and supporting the culture, traditions and language of the various groups in South Africa. This, again quite correctly, does not apply to the culture and traditions of England. But it would be another mistake to confuse the colonial culture and traditions of England with the resplendent treasure-house of its language, which belongs to all who read it, write it, speak it and contribute to its ongoing growth and development.

Chinua Achebe (1994:431) expresses a similar opinion rather differently, as follows:

Those of us who have inherited the English language may not be in a position to appreciate the value of the inheritance. Or we may go on resenting it because it came as part of a package deal which included many other items of doubtful value and the positive atrocity of racial arrogance and prejudice which may yet set the world on fire. But let us not in rejecting the evil throw out the good with it<sup>417</sup>.

The global reach of the English language, an outcome of colonization and advances in western technology, has lent impetus to the on-going enrichment of the “treasure-house” referred to by Mullen, with literary gems garnered world-wide. These include many fine works by writers of different nationalities for whom English is only a means of communication. I would suggest that to deny listeners access to adaptations of literature drawn from this source is to risk insularity, and the advent of “nonpluralistic cultural formations”, referred to by Horwitz.

Claire Grove of BBC 4 has drawn our attention to the “revolutionary” developments that have taken place in radio drama during the past few years. A benchmark has been set by the new work broadcast by the BBC. Exposure to the best writing to emerge from these productions would, I believe, be of benefit to SA drama practitioners and listeners alike. A progressive move made by Safm at the suggestion of students attending the Rhodes University workshops has meant that selected plays and serials

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<sup>417</sup> I have earlier referred to the observation of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1994:439), that language has a dual character, being both a means of communication and a carrier of culture. In offering the English language as a typical example, this distinguished Kenyan writer and Pan-Africanist notes that “[f]or the British and particularly the English, it is additionally and inseparably from its use as a tool of communication, a carrier of their culture and history” (p.439) Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1994:439) further argues that although the English language functions as a means of communication for those of other nationalities it is not a carrier of their culture; only the mother tongue can reflect the speaker’s culture. Having expressed this essentialist view, wa Thiong’o concedes that the literature he refers to somewhat deprecatingly as “Afro-European” was initially “inspired by general political awakening; it drew its stamina and even form from the peasantry: their proverbs, fables, stories, riddles and wise sayings” (p.446) He adds that this new “hybrid tradition” has “produced many writers of genuine talent: Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ayi Kwei Armah, Sembene Ousmane, Agostino Neto, Sédar Senghor and many others” (p.450) . The fine works of these writers are stored in the “treasure-house” Mullen refers to, but have been afforded scant exposure on SABC’s radio drama, which could offer the audience access to an entertaining and educational “Library of the Air”.

may be accessed on podcast. This frees the audience to listen to audio drama either on line, or through Ipods and Iphones. The concept of time and place shifting, a significant world-wide development in audio and TV, deserves further exploration. Using the latest technology, mass customization has democratized the user's access to entertainment, whether listening to music or audio drama or watching TV. The Apple Istore website sells music, while in the USA, television productions are sold at the same time as being broadcast for free: viewers download programmes they could have watched for nothing to have the convenience of time and place shifting on demand. Audio drama has the potential to provide even more freedom for people who need to listen and move. Plugged into their own world, a new South African audience could choose what they want to listen to, connecting with micro-trends all over the world, not tied to the music or audio drama a broadcaster believes they should hear.

SAfm has targeted a younger, middle-class, affluent, educated, and predominantly black listenership. The station's future audience lies, then, with the children of to-day's listeners. These are the young people described by poet and writer Lebo Mashile (2009) in the *Mail & Guardian* as "the tribe of neo-South Africans...the deracinated fruits of freedom" who "refuse to inhabit the tortured heartscape of the past and of their parents"(p.27). Mashile predicts that the time will come when "a generation of storytellers, poets, educators and healers will emerge who do not carry the burden of bloodstained memories" (p.27). As she suggests, only then will we all be free.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Curiosity concerning the demise of South African English radio drama in 1999, its resurrection in 2006, and a conviction that the art form's development has been impeded by political ideologies, informed the initial impetus for this study<sup>418</sup>. The extent to which the research has provided a lens through which to observe issues affecting radio drama and the public broadcaster has, however, exceeded my original expectations.

The first phase of research attempts to capture the very nature of the first two political ideologies to affect broadcasting in general, and SAE radio drama in particular: English speakers at the helm initially, firm in an arrogant belief in the innate superiority of British Imperialist culture, technology, and ideology, followed by four decades in which Afrikaner Nationalist ideology confined SAE radio drama to a cultural, if not colonial, time-warp.

The National Party's exploitation of the public broadcaster's potential as a means of achieving social and ideological control has been widely acknowledged. The argument that the largely Afrikaans-speaking ruling party actively developed radio drama in their language, while imposing measures to contain it in others, is also hardly contentious. It was only in the second phase of research, as reasons were sought for the post-apartheid axing of radio drama on SAfm, that findings of a controversial nature began to surface.

In tracing the recent history of SABC radio, it appeared that the SABC's traditional top-down approach to decision-making had remained in place, despite the changed demographics and political affiliations of the board. Focus then fell on the actions and opinions of the public broadcaster's decision-makers, and a familiar pattern emerged: key positions allocated to chosen members of the ruling party, political influence and ideology affecting programming decisions, and the erosion of the broadcaster's public service mandate. The demise of SAE radio drama in 1999 represented the final act in

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<sup>418</sup> *Chapters 3 to 4.2.4 argue this point in some detail.*

one of many aimed at reducing the drama department's staff, and the airtime allocated to programmes falling under its ambit. As detailed, many factors played a part in the demise of SAE radio drama, but indications are that the art form's chief fault lay in its failure to fit in with SAfm's planned new image as a News and Information Service.

The re-introduction of radio drama on SAfm in April 2006<sup>419</sup> raised hopes that the positive statements made by station manager, Mapule Mbhalati, would be matched by generous funding and attract fresh stories from writers eager to develop a vibrant new form. However, the environment in which radio drama re-emerged was not one conducive to creative development. An earlier observation to the effect that the nature of the radio drama broadcast reflects something of the Zeitgeist of its station (4.2) is most relevant here: as discussed (4.7), the so-called "black-listing scandal" broke less than three months after the re-emergence of radio drama, to be followed by an SABC appointed *Commission of Enquiry into Blacklisting and Related Matters*. The SABC's refusal to make the commission's findings public, the broadcaster's failure to take action against Dr. Snuki Zikalala, and the sidelining and resignation of John Perlman, all indicate that freedom of speech has once more been under threat at the SABC<sup>420</sup>. Although the commission states that their investigation focused on the exclusion of certain analysts on SAfm, and the AM Live programme in particular, it notes that there are instances in which current affairs shows on television have been affected by controversial exclusions as well. (2006:25). As the political and editorial bias of week-day discussions and interviews on SAfm continued to escalate, I was drawn to the conclusion that the SABC's impressive post-apartheid mandate<sup>421</sup> had been eroded by the goals of that faction within the ANC who originally favoured the centralist, state broadcaster approach to broadcasting.

Divisions in the ruling party have contributed towards a new era of transparency in which the SABC's structural and economic difficulties have finally been open to scrutiny in the public domain. These developments, unique in the history of South African broadcasting, have taken place since the completion of this research. The historical significance of these unusual events leads me to list them, as follows:

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<sup>419</sup> In compliance with licensing regulations imposed by ICASA.

<sup>420</sup> The effect on staff morale, including those struggling to re-introduce radio drama, can be imagined. Bruce Millar, who had been left to close down SAE radio drama on SAfm in 1999, only to be assigned the task of overseeing its revival, is perhaps fortunate in his disposition, in that he describes himself as having "never had much interest in the political machinations that go on around me, preferring [sic] to just get on with the job" (2002:2).

<sup>421</sup> That of an impartial public service broadcaster, catering to all tastes and independent of the government of the day as recommended and adopted at the 1991 Jabulani! Conference, and accepted by the ANC (Horwitz 2001:132-134).

- In March 2009 the public broadcaster announces a budget deficit of R800 million. Financial assistance of R2 billion rand is requested from government (Mkhwanazi, 2009b:4).
- Minister of Communications, Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri states that the governance of the SABC is “fraught with deficiencies”, citing “poor controls over procurement” [to blame] (Sikhakhane, 2009:7). A report by auditors Deloitte & Touche at the Minister’s request, concludes that the disputes between SABC management and the board of directors has paralysed the corporation. The report is leaked to the *Mail & Guardian*. (Sikhakhane, 2009:7).
- In April the role of head of news and current affairs is left vacant by the departure of Dr. Snuki Zikalala, whose contract is not renewed (*Bizcommunity.com*. online. 2009, 29 April).
- In May a Special Assignment episode examining freedom of speech, and the use of political satire and cartoons, is cancelled only hours from its scheduled flighting on Tuesday, May 26 2009 (Jones & SAPA, 2009:3)
- SABC employees stage demonstrations and threaten strike action in support of wage demands (Mkhwanazi, 2009a: 26 May)
- In June it transpires that millions of rands are allegedly owed for television programmes delivered by independent producers and aired by the SABC. A TV crisis march, organized by the Television Emergency Coalition, takes place on June 4 2009 (Mbanjwa, 2009b:2, also Seale, 2009:3). The SABC threatens to undertake the production of all programmes in-house. Such action would eliminate a valuable source of income for private TV production companies.
- The SABC invokes the National Key Points Act, instituted during the apartheid era, to ensure that police are deployed at the SABC headquarters as unions stage a sit-in to demand the removal of acting CEO Gab Mampone and his top management. Jane Duncan, chairman of the Media and Information Society at Rhodes University, criticizes the SABC for invoking the apartheid-era act to protect SABC personnel (Molele 2009:4).

- Unions and the SABC fail to reach agreement on wage increases at hearings held at the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA)<sup>422</sup>. (Mbanjwa, 2009b:2).
- In July the SABC board chaired by Khanyisiwe Mkhonza is declared dysfunctional and dissolved, and the appointment of an interim board headed by Irene Charnley is made<sup>423</sup> (*IOL South Africa* online, 2009:3).
- In August The SABC pays more than R21 million in salaries, bonuses and legal fees in ending the legal tussle involving Dali Mpofu, the SABC's former CEO. Mpofu's legal tussle with the corporation began with a suspension by the former board at 1 am on May 6 2008 (Naidu, 2009:5)
- The SABC News International Channel, established by Dr. Snuki Zikalala, may be rescued by last minute negotiations with investors. Talks are currently being conducted by the former head of news and current affairs. SABC News International reports on domestic and international news from an African perspective as a pan-African 24-hour broadcaster to the world. Approximately R737-million has been invested in the channel by the SABC since its launch in 2007 (Underhill, 2009:8).

Acting GCEO, Gab Mampone, has identified the problems facing the SABC in a frank discussion on SAfm's *After Eight Debate* on June 8, 2009. He confirms that

- The SABC has requested a 2 billion rand loan from government.
- Specific controls have been put in place to ensure that there can be no re-occurrence of "what happened in the past 15 years".
- No more first-class tickets for air travel will be issued, and control will be implemented to ensure that "not too many people attend certain events". There will be an end to the "fun and games" enjoyed previously.

During the same discussion, the SABC Acting GCEO also admits that, over the past 15 years, certain key positions could have been better appointed. Competence should be a priority in future, as the appointment of competent people will enable the SABC to

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<sup>422</sup> The SABC's offer of an 8.5% wage increase is rejected by the Broadcast, Electronic Media and Alliance Workers Union (Bemawu), the Communication Workers Union (CWU), and the Media Workers Association of SA (Mwasa). The Unions demand the 12.5% increase agreed earlier with management.

<sup>423</sup> The names of Govin Reddy and Zwelakhe Sisulu are given as being among those being considered for nomination for the new board. Significantly, Sisulu states that he will not consider nomination due to "a conflict of interest" related to his interest in the TV Production Company, Urban Brew. (Naidu, E. *Sunday Tribune* June 21 2009).

succeed. Mampone also observes that it is important the appointment of a new CEO goes to someone who will “lead from the front” and is prepared to “get their hands dirty”.

Regrettable as the crises at the SABC have been, the analyses of their several causes by those closely involved do confirm my own findings, which might otherwise be called into question. In an interview with Fiona Forde (2009b:20), former SABC Board member, Peter Vundla, has identified the structural problems “crippling” the SABC, as follows:

- Politicians determine who sits on the board of the SABC. Amongst these board members are “party apparatchiks, taking instruction from somewhere else”. *Business Day* (2009:3) reports that former chairwoman of the SABC board, Khanyi Mkhonza, has stated that the public’s role in the appointment process has diminished since 1993, with every other board having been “tainted with a certain amount of political influence”.
- The Minister of Communications has “amazingly disproportionate powers in terms of the broadcasting act and the shareholder compact, and this takes away the independence of the board”. The Board cannot appoint a chief executive, yet the board is responsible if the CEO fails in his or her duties.
- Members of the management team are appointed, “not because of any marketing, business, financial or broadcast skills, but in terms of their political affiliations”.
- The SABC’s funding model requires urgent revision, with 75 per cent of the public broadcaster’s income currently coming from advertising, 2 per cent from government, and the balance from TV licence fees.

Vundla suggests that steps are taken to ensure that the SABC fulfils its role as a “real public broadcaster”. This would involve the appointment of a truly representative board, “with religious organizations, unions, NGOs, the disabled, the producers, and so on sitting on it”. Also vital to Vundla’s vision are “people who have broadcast, technical and business skills”. Governance of the SABC should be in the hands of the board and ICASA, he suggests, not that of government. If not, he adds “we are talking about a state broadcaster, not a public broadcaster”.

Jabulani Sikhakhane (2009:7) identifies the biggest challenge ahead as being how to free the SABC from the “clutches of the ANC”. More controversial is the argument put forward by Dene Smuts (2009:12) that the financial difficulties of the SABC has provided the pro-Zuma ANC faction “the perfect excuse to implement the Polokwane resolution to fund 60% of SABC requirements as a strategic asset directly from your [tax-payers] money”<sup>424</sup>. In view of the history of South African broadcasting, warnings of this nature should not be lightly dismissed.

It is difficult to envisage the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Communications appointing a truly a-political board in view of the committee’s past failure to prevent political interference. However, in the event of Vundla’s proposal for the appointment of a “truly representative board” being adopted, with governance of the SABC out of politician’s hands, the prognosis for the future of both the SABC and radio drama is hopeful<sup>425</sup>. The difficulties and potential of the latter have been discussed at length (4.7.2). In much broader terms, I suggest that the full potential of English language radio drama could be realized if the SABC’s new board and executive are prepared to invest in the art form’s future, and understand that

- by developing the listener’s imaginative and sympathetic identification with the other, radio drama can make a contribution towards the transformation of our society<sup>426</sup>;
- SAfm’s reliance on “repeats” of old productions<sup>427</sup>, and the predominance of plays and book readings with themes still tied to the apartheid era, keep the art form a captive of the past;
- new productions and “new forms of imagining” (Nuttall 2000:2) are called for.

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<sup>424</sup> Former SABC Chairperson, Khanyi Mkonza has (somewhat ironically) warns that “[t]here will always be a scrabble for control of the SABC and it is important that its independence is protected” (Magome, 2009:7).

<sup>425</sup> Already we can celebrate the fact that SAfm has enjoyed a Prague Spring during the interregnum created by the uncertainties of the past year. Presenters are friendly, rather than confrontational, and discussion programmes seem relatively free of political bias. The “repeat” plays on SAfm, although first broadcast in another era, are occasionally drawn from world literature. The SABC also earned praise for its balanced reporting in the run-up to the 2009 election, although it can be argued that this even-handedness was the result of the formation of the Congress of the People party (COPE), briefly raising some doubt as to which party would be in control of the broadcaster after the election.

<sup>426</sup> The term “transformation” has acquired (at least) two meanings in South Africa, both of which are valid. One describes “affirmative action”, and similar changes made in the workplace and structures of power in order to alter statistics of race in favour of the country’s demographics. (The plans outlined by Mapule Mbhalati for English radio drama on SAfm were, I suggest, loosely based on these principles). Another refers to the ANC’s formal aim of achieving a racist and sexist free society. I refer to the latter.

<sup>427</sup> Some first broadcast over 20 years ago, and since then repeated at least 4 times.

As a South African of European colonial descent, born into that privileged state referred to as “bourgeois Imperial whiteness”<sup>428</sup>, I feel free to criticize the racist ideology of the SABC in the apartheid era. Criticism of the current SABC is quite a different matter, accompanied by much introspection and, at times, fraught with self-doubt: is this the “ontological wiggling” warned of by Hill? I am mindful of Steyn’s (2001:171) observation that “the role of the unconscious in theorizing race is as powerful as anywhere else”, and Cohen’s (1992:70-71) argument, cited by Steyn, that

[All social theories are] traversed by narrative structures which form a hidden thread running through the argument”...in the case of *theoretical ideology* it constitutes the main organizing principle. For here a particular epistemology is subsumed within a rhetoric of special pleading for a chosen reference group...such groups are constructed as the bearers of privileged knowledge or agency by virtue of their social location. As such they are invested with a unique role as makers of history, or as critics of society. This is above all a narrative role, a role within a storyline which is unfolded as a teleology, that is a narrative moving towards a preordained conclusion, which structures the logic of preceding events.<sup>429</sup>

Although this study supports my stated hypotheses, arguably the most interesting findings are those that have not been “pre-ordained”. Obvious parallels have been found to exist between the broadcasting policies and practices of the past and those of today. These demonstrate that the SABC’s ideologues of old dictated the shape and direction, not only of radio drama, but of current broadcasting practice as well. Others have observed that “whiteness” is contagious, particularly in the postcolonial clime<sup>430</sup>. It seems the risk of infection is greater when one nationalist party hands power to another.

The public broadcaster could learn other lessons from history. Before following through on recent threats issued to independent production houses to produce all television programmes “in-house” (Gant, 2009:4), it should be borne in mind that similar steps were once taken to slash costs of radio productions to the detriment, and decline in the popularity, of radio drama.

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<sup>428</sup> López, A.J. (2005:18)

<sup>429</sup> Steyn comments that she is “unable to talk myself out of this one” (2001:171).

<sup>430</sup> López (2005) refers to the need to deconstruct “white cultural imperatives” as they manifest in nonwhite bourgeois communities (p.17), and to the formerly colonized subject “who simultaneously identifies with the white ideal and is radically alienated from it” (pp.17-18).

Finally, my enthusiasm for a new form of essentially South African English radio drama has now been tempered by pragmatism. It seems improbable, in the midst of the worst cash-flow crisis ever faced by the SABC, that the finance for more writers' workshops and enough new productions will be found. Yet without greater freedom and funding, the problems facing the art form seem overwhelming; a microcosm of the difficulties facing a South Africa held back by the past in its struggle towards a non-racist and non-racial society. Those who "continue to look to the situation in South Africa for evidence of how difficult but how necessary this vision continues to be" (Ware 2002:8-9), may find the image of a "rainbow nation" tired, even tarnished, but the multiple shades of black, white and grey that genuinely make up South African society present a far more interesting spectrum. The new English radio drama already draws on the palette of our cultural diversity. The challenge now is to find new work, and move beyond the race-based ideologies and stereotypes that have inhibited the art form's growth for so long.

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## **APPENDIX 1:**

### **INTERVIEW WITH K.E. MASINGA, FIRST ZULU ANNOUNCER OF THE SABC DURBAN STUDIOS (b/c 5 March 1970)**

**INT:** We introduce King Edward Masinga, first Zulu announcer of the SABC, and for many years chief Zulu announcer at our Durban studios.

**KEM:** Zuuuulu...Siyanbingelela mabandla kandaba.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, that is the way the Zulus are being greeted by their people when they start to address them in any sort of a meeting, which simply means to say that "I am greeting you, Zulus, on behalf of the early Zulu kings, Mjukwane and Indaba", of whom the Zulus up to this day are very proud of. Those were the greatest and the highest Zulu kings before Shaka was born.

**INT:** Mr. Masinga, for many, many years you've been a broadcaster.

**KEM:** Yes.

**INT:** But we would like you to tell us of those early years, before you became a broadcaster. Where did you grow up? Where did you receive your schooling?

**KEM:** I grew up at the Bantu homelands of the Ndwedwe District. My parents were the types, people, of that hinterland. As a matter of fact, my father was born at the place now called Dingaanstad, right in the heart of Zululand. My mother, too, was just born in those places. My parents were amongst the first converts of the white ministers, the missionaries. The doctor, the Rev. Dr. Lindley, who ministered to the Dutch people in the Orange Free State, had some trips to Zululand to come and preach the gospel of God to the Zulus. It was during that time that my parents were Christianized, they were taught the three R's of education, and they became the teachers of the time by the method of teaching the others the way they were taught themselves. And when the ministers or the missionaries of religion marched down across the Tugela, my mother and my father were there, but they were still girls, they were not married yet, they had not even engaged one another. So when they came

and settled at the mission station, which they afterwards called Inanda mission station where today there is a very big girls' college known as the Inanda Seminary, and thereafter there was a big college which is still there today, Omhlange Government High School. That is during the time when I was born. First of all I was a herd boy, as all the Zulu boys did. Something which some people used to call peculiar about me, not knowing that I was being prepared for broadcasting as I think today. I used to be a conductor of the boys singing the traditional songs and dancing the traditional dances on the hills and the slopes of Inanda Native Reserve right out in the Ndwedwe. I became the conductor, I became their leader, I became their all really, along the slopes of Bantuland. What strikes me really very deeply is that when I started broadcasting here there was not – there was hardly any Zulu song on the shelves of the SABC library.

**INT:** How did you go about collecting these?

**KEM:** I remember the first record was by Mameyiguda. Mameyiguda had the first group that recorded the Zonophone records. There are no Zonophone records now, I think they are extinct. The first record that was heard over the air was Malubuye ukhamba lami that is a drinking song of the Zulus as they drink around when this earthenware round dish goes around those to whom it has not come will say "Malubuye ukhamba lami, malubuye ukhamba lami" meaning to say "Well it must take its round 'til it comes to me again, let it take its round 'til it comes to me again". Well, that record became very much exhausted, I had to think otherwise. The manager of the SABC had told me that I was organizer of the Zulu – of the what was known as the Zulu programme. I spent a lot of my time outside trying to organize my choirs to come and broadcast every evening at 7.30. I had three nieces, right out in the country. I went out to them. I still remember their names: one of them, the first one, the eldest one, was Badudule, the second one was Nomsisi, and the baby of them all was Ntondo. Two of them are late now. I taught them the traditional Zulu songs, as I used to teach the herd boys right out in the mountains; I taught them how to dance them, I brought them to the SABC studios where they were recorded. Those were the first records that I made here, which were recorded, being sung by my three nieces. Well, oh, they were not paid anything. They as children, they were just given sweets. A Zulu child or a Zulu man, really, does not need – traditionally does not need – any pay for the any little bit of the message and kindness that he does. He always has some

satisfaction that he has done good to other people. In that way I went along, made the records, the records were still made on glass records.

**INT:** Were they cut directly on to the glass records?

**KEM:** They were cut directly on to the glass records, even when we went out for outside broadcasting, we carried the blank glass records and recorded on them.

**INT:** Yes, those were the primitive days before tapes.

**KEM:** Really, those were the primitive days.

**INT:** Tell us some more about those primitive days; the very early days of broadcasting for the Zulu?

**KEM:** er...The earliest days for the Zulus. The Zulus were surprised to hear the voice of a Zulu speaking in Zulu over the air, and they thought: "Well, the white people are bathakathi".

**INT:** (laugh) What does it mean?

**KEM:** Bathakathi means a wisened person, a very wise person, in other words it means a wizard. A wizard is a person who is so wise that he can do things that other people cannot do. They were very much astonished to hear somebody speaking in Zulu over the air. They were very curious to know. And when I went out at home they used to come to my home and ask me a lot about...er...broadcasting, about how the white man does this, and whether I had stopped to be a black man anymore. Am I...are you, Masinga, a black/white man now? How can you be heard over the air? And especially when my record was played when I was at home, that was something that really confused them a great deal, when my record was played there and they heard it at home. I thank the white people of that time, although some of them now are not there, they helped me in the organization of broadcasting. Some of them brought...bought sets for their kitchen girls and garden boys, they allowed them to listen in to these, and I used to go to the...to the compounds. And when I visited the compounds, I visited the hostel, I visited...I went as far as Empangeni, I went around

all those hostels and compounds collecting the reactions of the people, I wrote them and made them my replies. Each day at 9 o'clock I used to bring to the manager the reports of my reactions; what the people were saying. But the different...the very difficult people were the chiefs; I remember once upon a time talking to a chief, right out at Empangeni, the chief said to me: "It's not good to make people speak over the air because they would be spooks". I'll never again forget a person who passed me at the Aliwal Street and said to me: "Masinga, have you joined the club of the few, of the fools? All the people who get into this house here are fools, because I've always heard them at home when inkosikazi has allowed me to listen in, I heard them laughing at nothing and talking a lot". Well, I believe that he heard some drama being played. As a matter of fact, the aim of opening the Zulu programme for the Bantu, which afterwards became a boon and a blessing up 'til this day, it was during the war when the government wanted the people to hear the correct news of the war. And...er...really the correct news, not to hear just subversive propaganda from a man in the street. First of all I would read the news about how the war was going on, after reading the news for a few minutes, and then I would play one record or two records. It went on like that. I remember when war was declared finished, well, I thought that was the end of my career as a broadcaster. I thought, I thought I was going to be...to be terminated. I went to the manager, and I said to him: "Yes, baas, tell me now, what am I going to do now that the war is finished, is it the end of my appointment?" He only said: "Masinga, I really don't know but I'm still going to find out". I don't know where he found out, but the following morning he told me that: "Well, we can just go on until we are told that we must stop. And now what we are going to do, we are just going to entertain the people and tell the news as we are going to give them to you". It went on like that. The time was just standardized to five minutes. We started with hardly any five minutes, and now, when the war was over, my manager told me that "Well, we are going to take five minutes every morning and five minutes every evening, from 7.25 evening to 7.30 you must have finished all your broadcasting". Oh well, I was very happy, I thought I was doing something. It went on like that. And again I went to him when my people got used to the broadcasting, and they liked it, really they loved it now, they were getting used to it. I had organized the choirs, I said, "Look here my chief, my people would like to have their...their time extended". The time was extended up to ten minutes. And after that now it seemed as if I was talking to the rock if I respectfully remonstrated for the extension of time. Time could not be extended. I tried all my best. I went to my chief to send my representation of

my people. My chief said: "Well, this is all I think, Masinga, we can get". I had organized the choirs, I had organized the schools, but the time was rather too short. And not very long from there, my chiefs were changed. Now came the era of the Regional Directors. That was the time when I met Mr. C.D. Fuchs. I had never met Mr. C.D. Fuchs. I remember the first day when I met Mr. C.D. Fuchs, I saw him coming in the foyer. A quiet-looking man with a nice, round face, it was still his younger days than today. I went to him without being told, I was afraid to greet him as my very senior, I just took his two portmanteaus, I led him upstairs. I don't know whether, didn't know whether I was doing right or wrong, but I'd already been told somehow that he was my new chief. I took him up and I placed him at the office of the secretary who was a lady...by the way, who is the lady? Um...Cole...Mrs. Cole, as you may remember...Mrs. Cole. Mrs. Cole was very thankful, she took Mr. Fuchs to his office, Mr. Fuchs smiled at me and thanked, and I was very much encouraged and happy. I went back to my...to my work and worked there, as usual...

**INT:** Er...

**KEM:** Sorry?

**INT:** No, but I wanted to ask...when was the time when the half hour programme was started?

**KEM:** The time for the Zulu...for the half hour Zulu programme, that was during the time of Mr. Fuchs. Mr. Fuchs has worked a lot for that half hour. Before it was half hour it became fifteen minutes and we went on for fifteen minutes for a very long time. I went to Mr. Fuchs again, and I asked him to extend the time. Mr. Fuchs is a wonderful man; he is a person of wonderful fair play and fair game, he would telephone the SABC headquarters in Johannesburg when I was in his office, he talked to them when I was there, I heard them speaking myself, they used to tell him as I heard that the time was not opportune yet. It went on like that until one good day Mr. Fuchs called me at his office, to his office, and told me that, "Well, Masinga, now you can prepare your programmes for thirty minutes, you have got thirty minutes now". It was announced over the air to the Zulus, who were very much delighted to know that they were going to have half an hour every day. And for that reason I have always thought, and I have said, that Mr. Fuchs was the father of Radio Bantu, but Mr. Fuchs

– well, I wouldn't say he didn't like to say he was the father of Radio Bantu because really he liked Radio Bantu a great deal, and he is the man who has worked for Radio Bantu, as I say he has, when I was there. He feels – he felt – and he feels this today, that I am the father of Radio Bantu.

**INT:** Yes. So when the programmes were extended to thirty minutes you obviously had to provide much more material?

**KEM:** Yes.

**INT:** So how did you go about getting the material and the artistes?

**KEM:** Well, that was the time when Mr. Fuchs gave me the duties to go out into the country. I went out for six weeks once upon a time, it was the recording engineer and myself only. We went right up to Zululand, Northern Natal, er...Western Natal, right down to the borders of...of Pondoland, we used to make these glass recorded music records, and we sent them back to Durban each time, whenever we had made so many and so much, we railed them to Durban and the SAR was very careful not to break those records. And so that as we recorded in the country those records were brought down to Durban where they were being played, so that when we tuned there, we heard the results of our recording.

**INT:** What about writing stories for radio? Surely you must have had many Zulu legends and material of this kind?

**KEM:** Oh, don't talk about that! Legends. I had a lot of legends that I had been told by my grandparents and my parents. Before I go to that, I would like to say that I had been used by Mr. Hattingh, who was the first Afrikaans announcer. I told him these Zulu tales, Zulu tales in English. He wrote some plays in Afrikaans. Those plays went over the air. In the course of time there was a lady announcer who was known as Mrs. Swan, she came here from overseas, during the war. She was appointed as the announcer. Having seen and heard of the plays that we made over the air with Mr. Hattingh, she asked for some stories too. I gave her some stories in Zulu, some Zulu legends. She dramatized them, I participated in those stories, I saw how these plays

were written and when...before the sweeping boys threw away the papers, I used to pick the papers with the...with the...the...

**INT:** Scripts?

**KEM:** ...scripts that were being lost. I didn't only read them, I studied them. I read them really over and over again; I saw how plays were made. That helped me a great deal, when I looked at how the plays were made. After that I enrolled to a certain college for drama and radio journalism in Johannesburg. They sent me a lot of material to read and how to write a drama, and how to write plays and radio drama and that journalism. I was not interested in the newspaper journalism, seeing that I wanted to broaden up my scope in broadcasting: I wanted to know a lot about broadcasting. One day Mrs. Swan recommended to me a certain college of drama in England. I wrote to that college. I enlisted as a student of drama. They sent me lectures. I remember paying twenty-five pounds, and then they sent me lectures for a year. Now it dawned me how plays were being written, and my first play I wrote was about a girl who was about to get married, who was engaged, and she was getting ready to get married by the following day, but the previous day the bridegroom visited the girl. When she visited the girl, well, she – he didn't find the girl misbehaving at all, he was really passing to play a football game at Amanzimtoti. The man asked for his suit which was coming from the laundry. The girl did not like her husband to be to go to that football match, which was going to end in a very big social in the evening with a lot of ladies from many institutions and hospitals, and then the girl sat on the on the suit which was coming from the laundry, from the dry cleaners, the boy tried his very best to say: "Where is my suit, Jemima?" Jemima denied the knowledge of the suit when at last he pulled Jemima by the hand to find [s]he was sitting on his suit and the engagement was broken. I wrote some drama on that, it was very interesting. The heading was... *Yayisizoshada*.

**INT:** And what does that title mean?

**KEM:** The meaning, the simple meaning is "The girl who was about to get married".

**INT:** Now Masinga, you also translated Shakespeare into Zulu.

**KEM:** Yes, I translated Shakespeare after I had exhausted all the resources of folk tales, Zulu history, Zulu literature, creative stories that I wrote about. I wrote about...about many subjects in Zulu history, and literature, and I wrote some biblical stories, I wrote about road safety, I wrote about the "crime does not pay" serials. Those plays, I think, they are still there, the manuscripts are still there. I even translated *The Man of God*, which was a serial of the Prophet of God which had recently been broadcast in the BBC. I translated them, put them over the air. Mr. Fuchs was very proud of me. Mr. Fuchs was very, very happy about it. Mr. Fuchs was my push-wind. By that, meaning to say that he was my chief encourager. During the time of Mr. Fuchs I felt as though I was doing something; I felt love in my work because really I had somebody who was encouraging me every day.

**INT:** Yes.

**KEM:** Mr. Fuchs made me more than that. Nobody has ever been entrusted with a cheque book. I've got that pride in my life concerning the SABC and Mr. Fuchs. The SABC – well, I'm not sure of any other places, I feel like saying is the only place which can entrust a man, an ordinary servant, with a cheque book. I made cheques, I issued cheques to the - to my artistes. I made small cheques and the big cheques. At the end of the year the government....um...what will I call him? A bookkeeper.

**INT:** Yes.

**KEM:** A bookkeeper I may call him, and a checker, came and could not find anything gone wrong with the cheques that I had made. And then after that I thought that there are great white man's stories which my people have never heard except those people who had the privilege of having gone to the colleges, and that is Shakespeare. I took my Shakespeare's book; I read about Shylock. I thought Shylock was very good. I started translating Shylock into a play. I put it over the air. Oh, the people loved it a lot. The schools, the hospitals, the secondary schools, and the high schools, and the teachers felt as though it was a very good idea to teach Shylock in Zulu. It was encored, and encored every time over the air. Seeing that I had scored there, I thought of writing some more. I wrote about *The Tempest*, they liked it again. I've said that I wrote about *The Merchant of Venice*, I wrote about *Hamlet*, the Prince of Denmark, after that I wrote about *Macbeth*, after that I translated *Julius Caesar*, *Julius*

*Caesar* was one of the favourites. And *Romeo and Juliet* took Johannesburg locations by a storm, because on their, what did they call their...what did they call it again?...on their television, no, not television...

**INT:** Re-diffusion?

**KEM:** Re-diffusion. On their re-diffusion it was repeated over and over and over again. That was *Romeo and Juliet*. And yet I thought that I liked *The Comedy of Errors*. Also I translated *Antony and Cleopatra*. And my last one was *King Lear*.

**INT:** Would you say there was one out-and-out favourite amongst all these Shakespeares?

**KEM:** Um. The favourite for the schools was *Julius Caesar*. The favourite for the elite class of Johannesburg town folks and Durban was *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Macbeth* was the favourite of the rank and file of the Zulus.

**INT:** That's very interesting. There was another question I wanted to ask you about this translation. Did you actually translate it, shall we say, word by word, or sentence by sentence, or were they adaptations rather?

**KEM:** No, I didn't translate word by word. Shakespeare has got a style of his own in writing his English. He writes more idiomatically as Zulu is spoken. A person who knows high Zulu will just speak in idioms. Shakespeare writes like that.

**INT:** Yes. So it was actually not too difficult to translate the Shakespeare idioms into Zulu idions?

**KEM:** Yes, one thing I would say that it would only take a person who is good at his language to translate Shakespeare in any other language. Of course, one must know his language very well and love it.

**INT:** Did you encounter any particular problems with any of these plays? Was there any one of them that was perhaps more difficult than the others to translate?

**KEM:** Well, I wouldn't say...I think *Antony and Cleopatra*, there was some difficulties there a bit, until I had to go and buy a special Shakespeare's dictionary and commentary.

**INT:** Now let's talk about the artistes that you got to help and other announcers that were appointed later on. Surely you couldn't have done all that by yourself? I know you did for many years...

**KEM:** Yes...

**INT:** But when did you begin to get more staff to help you?

**KEM:** I began to get more staff...I don't know what year Sishi was employed. I had to work for about four years without any annual leave, because when Mr. Fuchs mentioned it to me that I was entitled to...to a leave, I didn't like to leave my work just by itself. I was partly afraid that when I had gone, my bosses would prove that Bantu broadcasting could be done without.

**INT:** In order to produce plays one needs actors. Would you tell us where you found your actors for the Shakespearean plays and all the other plays you produced for the Zulu broadcasts?

**KEM:** I had been a teacher before broadcasting, a very popular teacher too, and so I thought of my colleagues in the country. I went out to the country nearby Durban within the radius of, say, about twenty miles. Those teachers always come in for their weekends, they come to town every weekend on Friday. I asked them to come to me at the studios, all those who liked voluntarily to come and join me in doing these plays. I wrote the plays, I made the plays, the scripts. I handed them the scripts which I asked them to go and study at home, and when they came here on Friday we had a general rehearsal and all those who were good came on Sunday morning. And Sunday morning became the recording day. So that, when they left during the midday on Sunday, we had recorded the programme that was going to put over the air the following Sunday.

**INT:** Now those Shakespearean plays, they were fairly long. Did you break them up into episodes? Or did you do them in one piece?

**KEM:** I broke them...I broke them into episodes.

**INT:** Yes. How long did it take you to record a whole Shakespearean play? Three sessions? Two sessions?

**KEM:** About three or two sessions.

**INT:** And did you find that your actors were responsive to...your directions?

**KEM:** They were very responsive indeed. They liked it a great deal. They were surprised how I made it.

**INT:** Yes. Can you still remember the names of some of those people who acted for you? Who played Macbeth, for instance?

**KEM:** For an example, one of the men who played a part in those plays was Prof. Nzimande, the professor of psychology at the Ngoya University.

**INT:** Oh, yes.

**KEM:** Yes.

**INT:** He wasn't a professor then, though?

**KEM:** He wasn't a professor then, at that time. He was just an ordinary teacher at a local school in Durban.

**INT:** And now he is a professor?

**KEM:** Yes. Today he is a professor.

**INT:** And who played the Shylock?

**KEM:** Oo...Shylock was played by a Zululand man. He is a teacher now at Nongoma, a man of the Mtetwe tribe.

**INT:** Yes. And the ladies? Did you find it easy to get people to play, f'r instance, Ophelia in Hamlet, and a Portia?

**KEM:** I think it is very easy to train the ladies than men. I got the ladies from Inanda seminary, and some of them from Ohlange, Ohlange High School, and some of them Adams mission station. A Mr. Buthelezi, who is the head of the announcers at Johannesburg today, once came and ...er...he was one of my artistes too...

**INT:** Yes.

**KEM:** Before he ever dreamed of joining us.

**INT:** Now at one stage you were made a member of the Mark Twain society. How did that come about?

**KEM:** I don't know really how that came about. I only remember receiving a letter from the United States...that...for my outstanding literary works I had been awarded a membership of the Mark Twain society.

**INT:** And then you went overseas to the United States and other places. I wonder if you could give us a few of your impressions while you were overseas?

**KEM:** Well, perhaps it will be...it will seem as if I'm selfish to say some of my achievements overseas from South Africa. When I was overseas I thought I had gone to learn something about broadcasting, but I found that I had to teach them a lot about broadcasting. What they are keen to do overseas, really, is just to spin the discs. And they are called the disc jockeys.

**INT:** But there was no creative programme writing such as you had done?

**KEM:** None at all. No creative programmes. I used to write them programmes and they were surprised. And instead of me get...learning something from them, they had to learn from me how the programme was made, how the musical programmes were made, and how other programmes were made. They were surprised.

**INT:** What was their reactions to Bantu music there?

**KEM:** Their reactions to Bantu music? They couldn't understand – well, that is a question that my educated colleagues will not agree with me, because they don't understand it. There is a type of music amongst the Bantu in South Africa which is called Euro-African music. I carried a lot of such records, and I carried a lot of records from all musical categories of music, including the unsophisticated Bantu music, traditional songs, which I call the Zulu classics, because really a Zulu classic must be something that is the highest in one's culture. When I played the music that is played in the South African schools, by the schools, and they call it classical music or classic, overseas in America, and in England they didn't feel as though there was any music in that. They just called it...er...articles that are...that are not at all musical.

**INT:** Yes.

**KEM:** I tried to play the South African calypsos which are known as Mbube. That still, they still classified it under something as Negro folk songs, and the white man's songs, which is not at all something...er...with...

**INT:** Something genuine.

**KEM:** ...something...it's not genuine, it's not a white man's music, it's not a black man's music, it's something that is just an inbetween.

**INT:** In other words, there is a very big difference between the Bantu music, Zulu music very much influenced by the white man's music, and his own traditional music you call the Zulu classic?

**KEM:** Yes. Yes, yes. And when I played the records, the traditional Bantu music they all stood up and they liked it and they said: "Yes, this is music". Those were the

professors of music that I am talking about. The musicologists. The people who are doctored in music, who are treating music very scientifically.

**INT:** Where did you go in the United States and Europe? What places did you visit?

**KEM:** I landed in Washington. I'm sorry, I have no...no list of Universities and high schools that I visited in Washington, and around Philadelphia, and around New York. New York is a very vast estate, passing on to Chicago, Chicago is a very interesting place, and in Chicago the Negroes liked the Zulu traditional music.

**INT:** Did you get a chance to give lectures there? Addressing these people?

**KEM:** I lectured every day, and every night.

**INT:** Yes. Mostly at Universities and high schools?

**KEM:** At Universities, and high schools, and on the TV.

**INT:** Yes. What was your impression of the TV? Did you...did it frighten you to have the cameras on you? Or were you too good a showman to be put off by it?

**KEM:** Oh well, I was not terrified by the TV. I think I was rather of a drawcard, because...I don't know perhaps what your impression would be when I tell you that when I went to address the universities and TV, I was...dressed in the Zulu bhesu. Yes, I was dressed in a Zulu warrior's...

**INT:** regalia.

**KEM:** ...regalia. Really, dressed in Zulu regalia. Everything. I was...I was dressed as a traditional country Zulu speaking English.

**INT:** Well, that must have been something to see. Something which perhaps the viewers didn't often see.

**KEM:** I still have those photographs.

**INT:** Yes. And, on the whole, people were interested in what you had to tell them?

**KEM:** The people were very much interested in me. Once upon a time, once or twice, I visited the United Nations organization hall, at the glass hall.

**INT:** Yes. Were you in England also?

**KEM:** Yes. I went to England, just for a week. When I was on my way back.

**INT:** Now, if you think back on your long career as a broadcaster, what would you describe as a highlight, or some of the highlights, in your broadcasting career? The things that gave you greatest pleasure to do?

**KEM:** The things that gave me the greatest pleasure to do was writing plays for my people. There are so many stories. The Zulus they are some of the great story tellers, and when they hear their plays today dramatized, it's really one of their dreams come true. The great stories of the Zulus, the stories of Shaka, Cetshwayo, and some of the great people of the Zulus, when the Zulus hear them being told over the air they are very happy about them. To hear the great Zulu songs, which I call the great songs, over the air, is very nice indeed.

**INT:** Would you say that radio, and listening to the radio in their own language, has made the Zulu people perhaps more sophisticated; have they learnt things from the radio, has it changed anything for them, or would you say that it has merely established for them the things that are their own?

**KEM:** The Zulus have learned a lot from the radio. They are learning a lot today, too, from the radio. The Zulus have something to thank the white man for; for the radio. It has taught them a lot of things.

**INT:** Yes. And would you agree that the radio has also served to preserve some of the best things that are traditional?

**KEM:** Exactly. Exactly. When we go out to the country, and to the hinterland, to record some of those stories and come and keep them here, it is something that my great grandsons, they will have a library here, they will come and say: "My father visited Zululand, visited Pondoland". I have been to East Africa, past Lourenco Marques, collected the history of the Tongas and the Batshopis, whose origin is the Zulu, are the Zulus. My son, one day when he wants to be a Doctor of Literature and something else, will come to the radio, or my grandson, and say: "My father went - once went out for research. I would like to have in the archives some of these things so that I may learn". You see, that is the advantage of the radio for the black man.

**INT:** Yes. Now Masinga, at the moment you are retired, but you are working on a sort of part-time contract basis.

**KEM:** Yes.

**INT:** What are your duties now? I take it that younger people are now doing the hard work and you are enjoying a little bit of rest, but...er...tell us about the programmes that you are still doing now, for Radio Bantu?

**KEM:** Oh. Well, we have just got equal programmes with those young people you are talking about. I am doing a presentation of the great songs, Ezinkulu, the programme that is not very much a favourite with them, not popular with them, the Zulu nostalgic songs, I am doing Ezika ke, that is a personal programme allotted to me by Mr. Steyn and his committee. And I am also doing, I have been doing Amagugu Akwazulu, the Zulu heritage programme which has since now gone to Johannesburg. I am doing also Abasiki bebunda...Abasiki bebunda is a sort of magazine programme.

**INT:** Masinga, when one is in charge of a programme, and you have to provide the material to broadcast, you often have to be a talent scout. I imagine that you must have been a talent scout on many an occasion. Could you tell us something about that?

**KEM:** Yes, I had to be a talent scout in search of the artistes. I went about in the country searching for the best artistes, I recorded them and brought them here. I also went about in the different dorps, small cities and towns...Pietermaritzburg, Durban

and elsewhere, and I looked, I got the best of the singers there. I recorded them. I was allowed to go far and wide for talent scouting, I recorded all those people and brought them here. Some of the records were sent to Johannesburg. As a matter of fact, Durban started first to do these recordings and talent-scouting.

**INT:** What interests me is this: when you get to a small township, how do you go about it, how do you get to know the people, and know that there are artistes to audition them? How do you find them?

**KEM:** The centre is always in the town, in the big town, like Durban, at places known as the Bantu social centres. Those centres, those Bantu social centres, are a general centre for all the outside locations, that's where they meet almost every day, and every weekend, for the grand shows.

**INT:** So they, some of them appear there, and you hear them, and you...

**KEM:** Exactly. A talent scout must attend all those places and see those favourable and favourite artistes, ask for their conductors to come to the broadcasting and record them.

**INT:** Yes. Something else I'm interested to know. Do you find that the taste in music of the younger generation has...differs from that of earlier generations?

**KEM:** Oh yes. The taste of music changes every about two years or three years. Just now they are taken up by what's known as Umgqashiyo. Umgqashiyo is a Bantu township jazz. It is a Bantu township jazz, it is washing all the Bantu townships, the towns and the country. Its' origin is in Johannesburg.

**INT:** Yes. And you find that the older people still prefer the traditional songs?

**KEM:** Yes. The old people prefer the traditional, great songs, which will never die.

**INT:** Do you really think that they will go on, they will be perpetuated...?

**KEM:** They will never die, and here is my proof. Those town jazz musics, such as the Soul and the Boogie Woogies, and the Twist tunes, and the Rock 'n Rolls, and all those, they just keep on for about two or three months, and then they're passed away. Two or three months. It's very long if it has been six months, and they pass away. But over the air, in those nostalgic songs, they still play with interest the songs that Shaka used to sing.

**INT:** Tell me, do you get many letters from your listeners, from...?

**KEM:** Many letters indeed. Many letters indeed.

**INT:** And some of them I suppose complain, and others are full of praise?

**KEM:** Those which complain are complain about the inclusion of the white man's music.

**INT:** Oh really? That's interesting.

**KEM:** Really, yes.

**INT:** And when they are full of praise, what kind of programme is most popular with the...

**KEM:** The popular music, the popular programmes, I must tell the truth and say are those that play the Jozified music, knowing that those people who are able to write are in the majority and they write a lot, there are many of their letters here, than those people who are still illiterate and don't write. They just complain and sit down.

**INT:** Masinga, did you ever make programmes for broadcasting stations outside the borders of South Africa?

**KEM:** A lot, and many. I remember some time back that it was my pleasant duty on a particular day on Sunday morning, this was always on Sunday morning when I had to come to the studio with my groups for variety. I came with the groups of calypso singers, a group of jazz singers, of nostalgic song singers and a group of school choirs.

These were recorded on the glass records. They were sent to what was known as Nyasaland at that time, to Lusaka radio, they were sent to Salisbury, Mashonaland programmes, Matabeleland programmes, they were sent to Congo, to broadcast in Congo. I remember sometimes mailing the records that were going to New Zealand and Australia. When I was in England I found the records that I made here, some time in 1943, about the legend, it was a musical play entitled *Chief Above and Chief Below*. They are still there.

**INT:** Now were these programmes all done in Zulu?

**KEM:** They were all done in Zulu. And in the Johannesburg library, in the archives, in their archives, there are my translations of Shakespeare and all other plays that I ever wrote. And in Manchester.

**INT:** Yes. Did you find that people could understand the Zulu beyond the borders of South Africa?

**KEM:** People could not understand the Zulu beyond the borders of Africa, but music is everybody's language, they appreciated music, and therefore just enjoyed it as it is.

**INT:** So they listened to the music and the bit of Zulu that was inbetween the continuity script didn't bother anybody?

**KEM:** No, they didn't bother them at all. They wrote letters of appreciation.

**INT:** Yes. In other words those programmes consisted mostly of music?

**KEM:** Yes. Mostly of music. They liked my presentation, they said.

**INT:** Did you do, ever do, programmes compiled of Zulu music but with a script in English?

**KEM:** Yes. Yes. Once a week...

**INT:** Yes?

**KEM:** Once a week. That was, once upon a time, that was a feature, it was a feature once upon a time, every once a week.

**INT:** Er...in which programmes were those broadcast?

**KEM:** Those were broadcast first of all, they were broadcast in the English programme. And after that they were both in the English and Afrikaans programme, which were called A and B programmes. These...I wrote the script in English, then put some...punctuated it with some music, and it was the same thing also in Afrikaans.

**INT:** Were any of those broadcast overseas?

**KEM:** Yes, those were sent to CBS, Canada Broadcasting System.

**INT:** Oh yes. Let's just go back to the days of your youth, and talk about your schooling. Where did you go to school first of all?

**KEM:** I went to a Mission Station school, after that I went to...to what was called as the Intermediate school, the Intermediate schools went to Std. VI, in our time, after that I had to go through a high school. After a high school I went to a Teachers Training. After Teachers Training, seeing that I was coming from a very poor family, I went out to teach in Swaziland, and I went to teach in Rhodesia, back to Natal again, after that as a private student I took matriculation, after which I took post matriculation teacher's certificate.

**INT:** Where were all these places, these Teachers Training Colleges where you went to afterwards?

**KEM:** It was Ohlange Institute, it is still there today.

**INT:** Where's that?

**KEM:** It's on the North Coast. Have you been to Inanda Falls?

**INT:** Er – yes?

**KEM:** Just when you go through to Inanda falls you pass through Ohlange.

**INT:** Yes.

**KEM:** Along the way there is a big religious kraal of prophet Shembe.

**INT:** Did you enjoy being a teacher?

**KEM:** Oh, I enjoyed being a teacher a great deal, but I found myself relinquishing it in 1941 when something told me that I had better leave teaching, and on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December 1941 I came face to face with broadcasting. You know, I never applied for broadcasting.

**INT:** Yes?

**KEM:** There is a very...I don't know whether I may call a wonderful interesting story, when I left home on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December 1941, I was coming to attend a sport meeting in Durban, and when I was in Durban I didn't like to go back to teaching in 1942. I thought, well, I had my own ideas, I thought teaching did not pay me, I was just dissatisfied. As I went along Aliwal Street, I saw the two policemen guarding a certain building, one was white, and the other one was black. And I said to this Zulu-speaking one, "Sawubona mfowethu, greetings to you my brother. What are you guarding here?" And he said: "Well, I am guarding my chiefs here." And I said to him: "What building is this? Is this Indaba si Bantu, is this the Bantu Affairs Department?" And he said: "No, this is a place of fools."

**INT:** Really?

**KEM:** Really. This is where all professional fools are kept, and they are paid for their foolishness: meaning to say that it was the place of drama. My manager was very much tickled, and he laughed a lot when I told him of that after some years, and he said: "Well, that man was very true, one must imitate a fool in order to do a very good drama". And then I said to him: "I would like to see a manager here", and he said:

"No, you can't come here, this is wartime, we are guarding everybody who is here." I insisted. I didn't know what I was going to say to the Manager, well, until a white soldier came to me and he said: "Well, what do you want?" and I told him that I wanted the manager. "What are you going to say to the manager?" I told him I had not decided, I didn't know what I was going to say to the manager. Well, this looks like a very useless story, but it is the foundations of broadcasting of the Zulu programme. After very long time he allowed me to get into the foyer. I insisted that I wanted to see the Manager; he refused. I was a bit stubborn. I'm sorry that I've got to admit that I was a little bit stubborn. He was very soft to me, that white soldier was very soft for me, he didn't push me out, he didn't manhandle me, I just sat down on the floor and I said: "Well, I am going to see the Manager passing here, and I will talk to him what I like". He said: "What are you going to say?" I was not sure what I was going to say. "And how are you going to see that the man who is passing now here is the manager?" And I said to him: "This thing, this looking like a military office, you will have all to stand in attention and salute him. I will stand up to and will see that this has been a manager, and I will see that he is a great man, and then I ask to talk to him".

**INT:** And so did he come along eventually?

**KEM:** He came along and I saw them all standing in attention and saluting. And there and then he asked: "Who is this man?" And then they said they started telling him that: "This man wants to...he is coming here to see you". And he said: "Well, I see him upstairs". I followed him. "Good afternoon, young man." "Good afternoon, sir." "Who are you?" I introduced myself. "What do you want here?" "I said: "Well, I want to work, sir". Oh, he laughed.

**INT:** Yes?

**KEM:** Yes. Well, gracefully and kindly laughed. Not...he was not laughing to scorn at me at all. He said: "Oh no, no, no, young man, there is no work here, we are fully employed. What is your educational qualification?" I told him that I was a teacher, a qualified teacher by profession. "Oh, there is no place for the Bantu of your qualification here, we have just got just the sweeping boys and the tea boys and all that, no, there is nothing we can do for you. Go to school or to the Native Affairs

Department, and ask for clerical jobs", and all that. Well, I was very thankful to him, I gave my salute. I went out, I tried to go out and when I was at the door he said: "Come here, take a seat". I sat down. He said to me: "Have you ever seen a gramophone?" I said: "Yes, sir, I've got one". "Can you play the records?" I said: "Yes, sir". "Do you know music?" I said to him: "I know my music very well. And I know a white man's music as I was taught at school, and as I am teaching it to the children to have some idea of the white man's music".

**INT:** And then?

**KEM:** And then after that - he was a man who was very much interested in Zulu history and in Bantu folklore. He gave me a lot of questions. He must have done some of the researches himself in Zulu folklore and Zulu history. He found that in me I was a mine of all that information. And he said: "Look here, you come here at half-past seven tonight", and I said to him: "Am I coming to start boiling tea, sir, for your staff?" (laughs). And he laughed a lot, and he said, no, you come here, I'll tell you what to do. I came...I was...I came there at 7 o'clock, not only at seven, and at 7.15 he came and he told me that: "Well, you must always play the records here, here is this piece of news". I don't know what this piece of news, and he said: "I would like you to translate this". It was in English. I translated that, I wrote it, and he said: "You read it over the air". That was my first news read over the air, I read it over the air, he showed me how to play a record and I went away that day. He said: "You come to me tomorrow morning. I came tomorrow morning and he said: "Look here, I've spoken to the people concerned. I think it will be a good idea that you come every day and do that little bit of reading of the news and play a record or two". That was the foundation of all this fire which is burning today, and known as Radio Bantu, which will never get finished anymore.

Transcription by Margaret Logan.

The assistance of Dennis Mseleku of the SABC Durban radio archives is gratefully acknowledged.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **SQUAD CARS**

#### **"NEVER TOO OLD TO DIE"**

Episode 1

#### **SPRINGBOK RADIO**

30 August 1968

**FX: SIREN, GUN SHOTS**

**ANNOUNCER:**

*SQUAD CARS!*

**FX: DRAGNET MUSIC**

**ANNOUNCER:**

GENERAL MOTORS AND THEIR DEALER ORGANIZATIONS THROUGHOUT SOUTHERN AFRICA PROUDLY BRING YOU THE DRAMA, THE DANGER, THE THRILLS, AND THE FACTS, WHEN THE LONG ARM OF THE LAW TRAVELS IN...

*SQUAD CARS!*

**FX: MUSIC**

**ANNOUNCER:**

Now to introduce our series, General Motors are privileged to present the Divisional Commissioner of the Witwatersrand Division, South African Police, Brigadier J.P.D. Vorster.

**VORSTER:**

It is always a pleasure to introduce any new means of promoting the fine work done by the South African police. This is why I welcome the appearance of Squad Cars at

this popular listening time. A series such as this will increase awareness of our work in a compelling new way and, as it entertains, I know it will also bring home to you the vital role played, not only by our mobile police, but by every member of the South African Police force.

**ANNOUNCER:**

And now, *Squad Cars*. Johannesburg, outside the Magistrate's Court, July 21<sup>st</sup>, 3.20 p.m. Squad Car man, Warrant Officer Roos, is standing on the steps, watching the people leaving the building. At length he sees the face he's looking for.

**ROOS:**

Joe. Joe!

**JOE:**

Huh?

**ROOS:**

Hi, Joe. How goes it?

**JOE:**

Oh, it's you. What've I done now?

**ROOS:**

No, no. I'm not here to pick you up.

**JOE:**

Well, what then?

**ROOS:**

I told my wife about you. She made me parcel some clothes up and bring them to you.

**JOE:**

Well, now there's a thing. You know, all my long life I never had anything for nothing 'til now.

**ROOS:**

There's a blanket in there, too. It'll help keep you warm a bit.

**JOE:**

Why are you doing this for me?

**ROOS:**

Because we have a little more than you, and even after we've given these things to you, we'll still have enough.

**JOE:**

I've never known such kindness. Why?

**ROOS:**

I've just told you.

**JOE:**

There's got to be some other reason. You think I was hard done by?

**ROOS:**

I never believed you stole from that store. I thought the store detective was making a mistake and the manager was determined to lay charges against you.

**JOE:**

I don't blame you.

**ROOS:**

I know you didn't. But I felt bad all the same.

**JOE:**

No, it wasn't your fault at all. I never thought for a moment it was. I'm not one to bear grudges.

**ROOS:**

Anyway, we've decided to keep an eye on you. Watch your progress. I'm glad you got off.

**JOE:**

Good magistrate that. He knew I never stole them things. When a man gets to my age he becomes forgetful sometimes and when that big man stopped me at the store in Brixton I was very surprised. He says: "Will you please accompany me to the manager's office?" "What for?" says I. "You've stolen that shirt and vest", he says. "Not I", I says. Anyway, you're coming with me", he says, and that was it. Next thing I knew, you and that other policeman turned up and drove me to Park View Police Station. I forgot, man, I had money.

**ROOS:**

You don't have to convince me, Joe. I know how it was. It was the word of the manager and the store detective against yours.

**JOE:**

All me life I never laid a finger on nothing that didn't belong to me. I'm poor. I don't mind admitting that, but I'm clean and I keep me hands to meself.

**ROOS:**

Never mind, Joe, it's all over now, but my wife said with all this cold weather about you'd be needing something to put under that jacket besides newspaper. So she parceled these things up for you.

**JOE:**

Well, I've never known such kindness. I thank you for it.

**ROOS:**

Look after yourself, Joe.

**JOE:**

I will. Thanks very much. And tell your wife the old man sends his thanks to her, too.

**FX: MUSIC**

August 23<sup>rd</sup>. 8.43 p.m. Warrant officer Roos and his partner Sergeant Trudeau have stopped their squad car at the scene of an accident at the corner of Bok and Claim Street. They are in the process of trying to extricate the injured from the smashed vehicles concerned, when Warrant Officer Roos feels a tug on his sleeve.

**SFX: CROWD NOISE**

**ROOS:**

Who's that?

**JOE:**

It's me. Joe. Joe Leight.

**ROOS:**

Hello, Joe.

**JOE:**

How goes it?

**ROOS:**

Not so good. These people are badly hurt.

**JOE:**

Listen, man, you showed me great kindness and I haven't forgotten. I'm going to do you a good turn. I heard them planning a murder.

**ROOS:**

Alright, Joe.

**JOE:**

They're going to murder the old man and his wife. I heard 'em talking.

**ROOS:**

Joe, I'd like to talk to you some other time but not right now.

**JOE:**

**(Mumbles)**

**ROOS:**

Look, look, look. I tell you what. Meet us here this time tomorrow night. We'll be able to talk better then.

**JOE:**

On this corner. At quarter to nine, tomorrow night.

**ROOS:**

And it will be a lot better if you hadn't had so much of a party.

**JOE:**

Yeh, yeh, I'll see you tomorrow. **(Going)** You got plenty on your plate just now. 'Scuse me, please.

**ROOS:**

I think he's going a bit funny. It happens, you know, when people get old. Did you call an ambulance?

**PAUL:**

Yes, they should be here soon.

**ROOS:**

Well, give me a hand with the steering wheel. We'll pull together. Right, you ready?

**ANNOUNCER:**

August 24<sup>th</sup>, 8.40 p.m. Having dealt with a disturbance in Plein Street, Warrant Officer Roos and Sergeant Trudeau are cruising to their rendezvous with Joe Leight on the corner of Bok and Claim Street.

**PAUL:**

Listen. What would Joe know about a murder?

**ROOS:**

I don't know. Seems odd to me.

**PAUL:**

Oh, there he is.

**ROOS:**

Where?

**PAUL:**

Over there, on the left.

**ROOS:**

Well! He remembered. Pull up, Paul.

**PAUL:**

Okay.

**FX: CAR DRAWING UP**

**JOE:**

Is that you, Warrant Officer?

**ROOS:**

Yes, me, Joe. How are you tonight?

**JOE:**

Better than I was last night. Better than this morning. I was carrying a real babbelaas. My head and stomach was getting their own back from what I did last night. That was a bad smash here last night.

**ROOS:**

Yes, it was. The woman died in hospital.

**JOE:**

They drive too fast these days. It's the youngsters. They see no danger in it.

**ROOS:**

I'm afraid you're right. I'm sorry I couldn't talk to you last night.

**JOE:**

No, no, that's all right. I could see you was busy.

**ROOS:**

You said something about a murder.

**JOE:**

Yeah. That's correct, yes.

**ROOS:**

You heard someone planning something?

**JOE:**

That's right.

**ROOS:**

You're not setting us off on a wild goose chase, are you?

**JOE:**

No, no, I wouldn't do a thing like that. I'm just wanting to repay your kindness and when I heard of this thing I thought "Aha, here's something for me old friend, Warrant Officer Roos". It was lucky I bumped into you. I was in two minds whether I should phone, you know.

**ROOS:**

Here, get in the car. Out of the cold.

**FX: CAR DOOR.**

**JOE:**

Oo, that's much better.

**ROOS:**

So, tell me.

**JOE:**

The other night it was. It was bitterly cold, man. Now during the day I'd taken up with a man I met in Joubert Park. And then he said to me they was having a bit of a party later that night. He said he'd take me along. And it was in a boiler room of a place called Calloway Mansions in Doornfontein. Nice and warm there, it was. A lot of these Sherry Gang people sleep there.

**ROOS:**

Yes, we know about it. Go on.

**JOE:**

Well, anyway, we had this party, see, and it's too late to be going home, so what happens, this friend of mine suggest that I bed down for the night. Well, it seems the sensible thing to do, so I did. Now, I don't know what time it was when I woke up, but I heard these two men talking.

**ROOS:**

Hoboes?

**JOE:**

No, no, no. They was youngsters, early twenties I'd say. What do you call these lads with the long hair?

**ROOS:**

Hippies.

**JOE:**

No, no, no. They're okay. The others.

**ROOS:**

Ducktails.

**JOE:**

Yeh, yeh, that's it.

**ROOS:**

Go on.

**JOE:**

Anyway, they're thinking everybody is asleep, but I'm listening. Now, I make like I'm breathing heavy, you know, so I could hear them talking, and the one is telling the other about this plot, I suppose you'd call it that, out Bryanston way. There's an old man and his wife, they live there, see, alone. Now what was their names again? Yeh, Wilkens, that's it. Now apparently they got a bit of money, that's what these two chaps said anyway, and they keep it on the place.

**ROOS:**

These two are set on getting it, is that it?

**JOE:**

Yes.

**ROOS:**

Now where is this place?

**JOE:**

Well, I'm not quite sure, somewhere out North.

**ROOS:**

You said Bryanston.

**JOE:**

Yeh, I know I did, but I'm thinking now. Was it Bryanston? And what's that other place out there?

**ROOS:**

Ferndale.

**JOE:**

No.

**ROOS:**

Craighall.

**JOE:**

Yeh, Craighall. Apparently there's a plot or something by the river.

**PAUL:**

Shouldn't be too hard to find.

**ROOS:**

No, it shouldn't. Come on, Joe.

**JOE:**

These two skelms are going to kill these old people, see, for their money.

**ROOS:**

When?

**JOE:**

Well, they talked about Saturday night. That'll be next Saturday, I suppose.

**PAUL:**

Hmm. Our night shift, too.

**ROOS:**

Are you sure about this, Joe?

**JOE:**

Oh, I'm positive.

**ROOS:**

And how are they going to do it? Did they say?

**JOE:**

No, they didn't go so far as to say that.

**PAUL:**

You're not having us on, are you?

**JOE:**

Having you on? What, after what you did for me? Why would I do a thing like that?

**ROOS:**

Well, Paul's just checking, Joe. We don't want to go out rushing out there on a wild goose chase.

**JOE:**

Oh, no, no, you won't, it's definite. Ten o'clock at night, they said.

**ROOS:**

Yes. So I think we'll have to arrange a little reception for them. What do you say, Paul?

**PAUL:**

Hm. I think so. Should be fairly interesting.

**MUSIC**

**ANNOUNCER**

Saturday, September 4<sup>th</sup>, 8.55 p.m. Warrant Officer Roos and Sergeant Trudeau, accompanied by a native constable, "Thousand" Sithole, having ascertained the whereabouts of the few acres of ground owned by Mr. Wilkens, are dropped by a police car outside the gate.

**FX: CAR STOPS ON GRAVEL**

**ROOS:**

Well, Paul, it's certainly out the way.

**PAUL:**

Yes, very isolated.

**ROOS:**

Can you see anybody about?

**PAUL:**

Mm-mm. Oh, there's a light at that window, though.

**ROOS:**

Come on, let's go and see.

**SFX: FOOTSTEPS ON GRAVEL**

**PAUL:**

Eh, what are you going to tell the old man?

**ROOS:**

I don't know. We don't want to alarm them.

**FX: DOG BARKING**

**PAUL:**

Hey, what's that?

**ROOS:**

An Alsatian.

**PAUL:**

You know, I don't know why they're worrying. With a dog like this to protect them they could only be safe.

**ROOS:**

You think so, hey? Watch. **(Whistles to dog.)** Here, boy, come, come boy...

**SFX: DOG PANTING**

**ROOS:**

...that's a good boy. You see? He barks to begin with, but you can quickly make friends with him. Now watch this. Thousand!

**CONSTABLE:**

Sir?

**ROOS:**

Make to pat the dog.

**CONSTABLE:**

Hey, he'll bite me, sir.

**ROOS:**

How can he bite you man, there's a wire fence between you.

**CONSTABLE:**

Here, dog.

**FX: DOG GROWLS FEROCIOUSLY, ATTEMPTS TO ATTACK THE CONSTABLE**

**ROOS:**

That's enough. That's enough, Thousand. There you are. This chap would be useless against tonight's visitors. He likes Europeans.

**PAUL:**

I see.

**ROOS:**

You stay here, Thousands, while we get the dog locked up. Come on boy, come on, come on, boy.

**PAUL:**

You know, it beats me how an old couple can live in such an isolated place. I don't know, I'd be scared stiff.

**ROOS:**

You forget, Paul, the people haven't seen what you've seen.

**PAUL:**

Yes, that's true.

**SFX: KNOCK ON DOOR**

**ROOS:**

I'll do the talking.

**SFX: MORE KNOCKING**

**FX: DOG PANTING**

**PAUL:**

Hm. There's somebody coming.

**WILKENS:**

(Off) Who's there?

**ROOS:**

It's the police, Mr. Wilkens.

**WILKENS:**

What do you want?

**ROOS:**

Open up the door please, we want to talk to you.

**SFX: DOOR OPENING**

**ROOS:**

Good evening.

**WILKENS:**

Good evening. What's the trouble?

**ROOS:**

I wonder if you can help us?

**WILKENS:**

Eh?

**ROOS:**

We need your help.

**WILKENS:**

Oh, what for?

**ROOS:**

We want to set a trap. We'd like to do it in your kitchen.

**WILKENS:**

Oh. Well, what's going on then? Is it chicken thieves?

**ROOS:**

Something like that.

**WILKENS:**

Yes, yes, of course. Come in.

**ROOS:**

If you'd just hold your dog while the police boy comes in, then we won't have any casualties.

**WILKENS:**

What's that? Oh, yes, yes, of course. Here, Cheeza. Now you can let the boy in.

**ROOS:**

Thousand!

**CONSTABLE:**

(Off) Sir?

**ROOS:**

You can come in now.

**WILKENS:**

It's not often we have excitement in these parts.

**ROOS:**

I think you'll find there'll be enough excitement later to last you a lifetime.

**ANNOUNCER:**

The Wilkens's smallholding, Craighall, 9.15 p.m. The three policemen are in the kitchen of the house, talking to the old man.

**ROOS:**

Where's your wife, Mr. Wilkens?

**WILKENS:**

Well, we were just going to bed. She's through there.

**ROOS:**

Sorry to keep you up.

**WILKENS:**

No, no, that's alright. Now what do you want to do?

**ROOS:**

We'd like to get settled in the kitchen to wait for these visitors.

**WILKENS:**

Oh, you know they're coming?

**ROOS:**

Yes, we've been tipped off. A police informer.

**WILKENS:**

Well just make yourself at home.

**ROOS:**

Thank you, Mr. Wilkens.

**WILKENS:**

er – What do you want us to do?

**ROOS:**

You can go to bed. We won't be needing you. We just want to sit in the kitchen here.

**WILKENS:**

Well, you won't be very comfortable. I'll get you some chairs.

**ROOS:**

That's very kind of you. Don't put yourself to any trouble.

**WILKENS:**

Oh, it's no trouble. There's nothing to sit on here. (off) Rina!

**RINA:**

(Off) What is it?

**WILKENS:**

We've got visitors. Come and see. She's been wondering what on earth it is. The only people who come here are my son and his wife. They sometimes drop in at the weekend.

**RINA:**

Goodness gracious, what's all this?

**WILKENS:**

It's the police.

**RINA:**

Yes, I can see that, but what do they want with us?

**ROOS:**

Nothing to be alarmed about Mrs. Wilkens. I'm Warrant Officer Roos and this is Sergeant Trudeauux.

**RINA:**

Is it our boy you're after?

**ROOS:**

Oh, no, no.

**RINA:**

I was going to say, he's a good boy, he never gives us any trouble.

**WILKENS:**

He's too old. (Laugh)

**RINA:**

So, if it's not the boy, what do you want?

**WILKENS:**

It's chicken thieves.

**RINA:**

Oh, I didn't know we had any round here.

**WILKENS:**

Apparently we have.

**RINA:**

What will they get up to next?

**ROOS:**

Nothing to be alarmed about, Mrs. Wilkens.

**RINA:**

But what's it got to do with us?

**ROOS:**

Well, it's just that your house is conveniently situated. They come down this way. We've heard that they're coming tonight, and we want to be on hand to meet them.

**RINA:**

Oh, I see. What time are they coming?

**ROOS:**

Our information says ten o'clock.

**RINA:**

Have you had something to eat?

**ROOS:**

Yes, thank you, we had supper before we came on duty.

**RINA:**

Would you like some tea or coffee?

**ROOS:**

No, no thank you.

**WILKENS:**

(Approach) And here are some chairs.

**PAUL:**

Mr. Wilkens, let me take that.

**WILKENS:**

Oh, thank you.

**RINA:**

Well, if you'll excuse me, I'm going to bed. I don't want to be in your way. If you want anything you must just ask.

**ROOS:**

Alright, Mrs. Wilkens, thank you.

**RINA:**

(going) Goodnight.

**WILKENS:**

Here you are, here you are, now you've got seats.

**ROOS:**

Constable...

**WILKENS:**

There's not much an old man like me can do, so...so I'll be off to bed too.

**ROOS:**

Don't be alarmed if you hear anything unusual.

**WILKENS:**

Oh, that won't worry me. I'm getting deaf, you see.

**ROOS:**

Goodnight, Mr. Wilkens.

**SFX: DOOR**

**ROOS:**

Now then, Thousand. Can you see the dog?

**CONSTABLE:**

Just a minute, sir. Yes, sir.

**ROOS:**

Good. He's our early warning system. He's sure to bark when they arrive.

**PAUL:**

*If* they arrive, Joe may've just been an old boozer. Perhaps he heard something, but he's got it all wrong.

**ROOS:**

We'll soon see. What's the time?

**PAUL:**

Twenty-five to ten.

**ROOS:**

Now listen, this is what we do. Thousand. Put your chair behind the kitchen door. I think that's the way they'll come in. Even though the old folks keep it locked and bolted, it doesn't look very secure to me. A couple of good shoves it'll be in. So put your chairs behind the door. Go on.

**SFX: CHAIRS BEING PUSHED BEHIND DOOR.**

**ROOS:**

That's right. You sit down. That's it. When they come, when they've opened the door, I want you to close it quietly and then get down on the floor and use your body to stop them opening it again. Do you understand?

**CONSTABLE:**

Yes, sir. I get it. Like a doormat, sir.

**ROOS:**

(Chuckle) Yes, that's it. That'll keep you out of trouble. That's all I want you to do. Close the door quietly, lie down on the floor so they can't open it again. That'll keep them in. You'll also be out of the line of fire.

**PAUL:**

And us? What do we do?

**ROOS:**

Well, we'll take our chairs...

**SFX: MOVING CHAIRS.**

**ROOS:**

Come on. And we'll park them in the pantry. (Effort)

**PAUL:**

Is this headquarters?

**ROOS:**

That's it. Centre of operations. Sit, Paul.

**PAUL:**

It's now...twenty to ten.

**ROOS:**

Let's hope they pitch up on time. You settled there, Thousand?

**CONSTABLE:**

Yes, sir.

**ROOS:**

And for goodness sake, when they come you keep your head. You don't panic. You do exactly as I told you!

**CONSTABLE:**

Yessir.

**PAUL:**

Smoke?

**ROOS:**

Yes, thanks.

**SFX: LIGHTS CIGARETTE**

**PAUL:**

I wonder what they'll have with them?

**ROOS:**

In the way of weapons, you mean?

**PAUL:**

Mmm.

**ROOS:**

We won't know 'til they get here.

**PAUL:**

(Exhale) No.

**ROOS:**

Nervous?

**PAUL:**

Huh! Aren't you?

**ROOS:**

Yes.

**PAUL:**

Nice old couple, aren't they?

**ROOS:**

Mmm.

**PAUL:**

Y'know, what's the son doing, letting them live off the beaten track like this?

**ROOS:**

I don't suppose it ever occurred to him that they could be in danger.

**PAUL:**

Wait 'til we tell him.

**ROOS:**

(Exhale) I only hope we're not wasting our time.

**MUSIC**

**ANNOUNCER:**

Ten p.m. Zero hour. With strained ears, the three policemen sit and listen. They hear nothing. And so they wait.

**MUSIC**

**ANNOUNCER:**

Ten thirty-five p.m. Sergeant Trudeau shuffles to relieve a stiffness in his knee.

**PAUL:**

Argh.

**FX: CAR DRAWING UP.**

**ROOS:**

Sssh. Listen

**PAUL:**

Do you think it's them?

**ROOS:**

It's about time, they're long overdue. Sit tight, Thousand, this sounds like it.

**CONSTABLE:**

Yes, sir.

**ROOS:**

I wish there was a window in this place.

**FX: DOG BARKS**

**ROOS:**

There goes our early warning system.

**PAUL:**

He didn't worry them at all.

**ROOS:**

Just the way I said. Sshshhh.

**SFX: DOOR OPENING.**

**PAUL:**

Two of them.

**ROOS:**

Mm. Sounds like it.

**PAUL:**

(Whisper) Hey, they're right outside the door.

**ROOS:**

Thank heavens they didn't go round to the front.

**PAUL:**

What are they doing?

**ROOS:**

Sshshshhh. Look at the light from the torch. Through the fanlight on the ceiling.

**PAUL:**

Ja, it's gone now.

**ROOS:**

Hold tight, this is it.

**FX: DOOR BEING BROKEN DOWN.**

**ROOS:**

That door won't hold long.

**PAUL:**

One more and they'll be in.

**SFX: DOOR OPENS.**

**BURGLAR 1:**

What was that?

**BURGLAR 2:**

The door. What did you go and do that for?

**BURGLAR 1:**

I thought it was you.

**BURGLAR 2:**

Wait a minute. Somebody's here. Shine the torch. You see? Hit him!

**CONSTABLE:**

No, no, baas, no!

**BURGLAR 2:**

Hit him again. What are you doing here, hey? I'll kill you!

**MUSIC STING**

Ten thirty-nine p.m. In the excitement, Constable Thousand Sithole forgot to close the door quietly behind the two intruders. The discovery of Sithole and the subsequent beating all happens very quickly. The two policemen in the pantry run through to the kitchen.

**ROOS:**

Shine your torch, Paul. Stand. This is the police.

**BURGLAR 1:**

It's the cops.

**ROOS:**

Get him.

**BURGLAR 1:**

We've killed your boy, we'll kill you too. Like this!

**ROOS:**

Argh, my shoulder!

**BURGLAR 1:**

Next time it's the head.

**ROOS:**

Paul, the torch. Shoot. Shoot, Paul. Man, make a flash. Give us some light.

**FX: GUNSHOT.**

**ROOS:**

That's it, see them.

**FX: GUNSHOT.**

**BURGLAR 1:**

Let's get out of here.

**BURGLAR 2:**

Where's the door?

**ROOS:**

Nice shooting, Paul.

**PAUL:**

The other's by the door. Watch.

**ROOS:**

Yes, I've seen him.

**SFX: SCREAM**

**PAUL:**

He's down.

**SFX: DOOR OPENING**

**WILKENS:**

(Off) Hello. Let me put the light on. Good gracious me, what's all this?

**ROOS:**

Nothing to be alarmed about, Mr. Wilkens.

**WILKENS:**

I thought I heard people clapping their hands or something.

**ROOS:**

There's been some shooting.

**WILKENS:**

I say, they are in a mess, aren't they?

**PAUL:**

The constable's been hit.

**ROOS:**

Where?

**PAUL:**

In the stomach.

**ROOS:**

He's not dead?

**CONSTABLE:**

No, sir, I am not dead.

**ROOS:**

Must have been a ricochette off the wall. Must get him to hospital.

**WILKENS:**

We'll take him in my car. I'll go and put on some clothes.

**PAUL:**

D'you want me to go with, Mr. Wilkens?

**ROOS:**

You'd better.

**PAUL:**

What did they hit you with?

**ROOS:**

This.

**PAUL:**

Wow! An iron-shot pick handle. Where did they get you?

**ROOS:**

The left shoulder. I think it's broken. Hit me across my right forearm, too. You'd better hold my gun. And you?

**PAUL:**

Not a scratch

**RINA:**

My husband says you made a mess in my kitchen!

**ROOS:**

Yes, I'm afraid we have.

**RINA:**

Oh, so you got them, did you?

**ROOS:**

Yes, Mrs. Wilkens.

**RINA:**

Skelms. Would you like a cup of tea? Well, if you'd like to change your mind, just put the kettle on and help yourself. I'm going back to bed.

**PAUL:**

Amazing, eh? She didn't even bat an eyelid.

**ROOS:**

She didn't know they came here to kill her and the old man.

**PAUL:**

There's no reason they should ever know. They'd never feel safe here again.

**WILKENS:**

We're all ready. Now we can put the boy in the back. I'll just go and get the car out.

**ROOS:**

Hm. One of these monkeys is still alive. See?

**PAUL:**

Yes. His eyelids are fluttering.

**ROOS:**

I can't see any wound on him.

**SFX: GROANS**

**BURGLAR 1:**

My back.

**ROOS:**

No, no, don't touch him, Paul. Can you move at all?

**BURGLAR 1:**

I can't feel my legs.

**ROOS:**

He's paralyzed. Must've got him in the spine.

**BURGLAR 1:**

No hard feelings. You mustn't feel badly about it. You see, I would have killed you.

## **MUSIC**

### **ANNOUNCER:**

The Bantu constable, Thousand Sithole, had been hit in the stomach by a bullet fragment. It had travelled round his ribs and lodged in his back, just beneath the skin. It required a relatively minor operation to remove it. The Bantu Constable made a rapid and complete recovery. One of the two would-be murderers had died immediately. The bullet that struck him traveled the length of his thorax, went up through his neck, and came to rest in his brain. The other man, paralyzed from the neck down, eventually died in hospital some months later. Mr. Wilkens and his wife Rina never knew that they had been potential murder victims.

## **MUSIC**

### **ANNOUNCER:**

They prowl the empty streets at night, in fast cars, on foot, living with crime and violence. These men are on duty twenty-four hours out of every twenty-four, they face dangers at every turn, expecting nothing less. They protect the people of South Africa, they are the men of...

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## **MUSIC**

Transcription by Margaret Logan

CD of *Squad Cars*, Episode 1, provided by Frans Erasmus.









