

Mandie van der Spuy

12th April 2014 10am Parkhurst

Interviewer Vanessa Cooke; assisted by Carol Preston

VC: Mandie, what, how did you get to the Market Theatre? What was your path?

Mv: Um... well I had some, apart from my other studies – I'd always had a passion for theatre and really wanted to get involved and I did. Because of that, when I finished in Johannesburg I decided to do a post grad, just one year post grad course at UCT. In those years it developed onto that but in those years it still included the normal drama course but, remember now this is a post grad one so it was all pretty concentrated, and we were, there were about seven of us, and we were actually thrown together for a large part of it. Then the third year students, drama students so of course it included a bit of the practical, the acting side, but the course was really more on management etc.

VC: who were your lecturers?

Mv: Yes Robert Mohr was still there. It was pretty much his final year. Mavis (Taylor) was very much there (she laughs).

VC: She's in everyone's interview.

Mv: And who else? Goodness. Esther van Reyswyk was still there. They were old – this was in '72 so I thought I if don't do it then, you know, then I'm never going to get around to it, and I wouldn't know if it was something that I really wanted to pursue?? If it was just a love of the theatre world. I mean, I know I wasn't going to, to end up on stage, but I wanted to be involved in some way. And then I finished there, because I had done my honours degree here, my focus had been languages . I'd done my honours degree in French. I was lucky enough to get a bursary to study in France where again then I decided I was not only going to study language per se, I combined that which the, well, the focus was then on French Theatre Literature and also a practical side to it where I worked. I had to do my thesis on a production. It was one of Ionesco's productions. The, the director that was there at the time also so there that practical part. And I got my masters degree and came back towards the end of '79, oh no not '79 – end of '78 and I remember my Dad being, not I mean, he was always very supportive of whatever but he was a bit doubtful because I was 22. It was just very good timing and of course the year I left, it was it ??? was the end of '76 when I left September '76, when I had to start there, which of course was a momentous year, in any case. The opening for the Market.

VC: The Soweto riots.

Mv: Exactly. Was so... I mean, other the theatre opening, although I wasn't involved one read a lot about it. Very exciting. So when I came back in '78 um it was just fortuitous. I can't remember if it was purely through an ad, or whether somebody had said something but the Market was looking, and I didn't really know Mannie. I mean I knew who Mannie was from ...

VC: ??

Mv: But I didn't know him personally um... but the Market was – Janice had just come back from London and was starting the young, the young Market.

VC: Oh yes, the HARDY FOLK and all that.

Mv: Yes that's right, that was about to be launched in that January with a company of about 8 to 10 young actors and the Market was looking for someone to be really, the general dogs body, from company manager for the admin to you know organizing schools for the company to go to. The Market Cart, I'd forgotten that, went through the book.

VC: Yes the Cart.

Mv: I suddenly read about it, oh yes it was called the Market Cart for performances at schools etc. and um I went for an interview with Mannie and Janice and I got the job (she laughs) Janice swears that she can still remember what I was wearing that day (laughs) I can't.

VC: (laughs).

Mv: So anyway, so there it all started. I joined on the 2nd January, my Dad was a bit sceptical saying, "you know you have just come back from France with a Masters Degree, are you sure you want to do this?" and of course the peanuts we were earning, in any case. Anyway I said "No I want to do it and see. If it doesn't work then I can do on to something else". And that was it. And of course then the Market, the Young Market, didn't last all that long due to funding.

VC: Ja.

Mv: And there was also again, through the book, because that refreshed my memory. I mean the funding was always an issue, well it was a problem generally at the Market.

VC: Always.

Mv: We went through so many ups and downs where nobody knew if they would be paid um um... in a particular week or month. But it was when the Publications Control Board stepped in with HOLY MOSES AND ALL THAT JAZZ, because there were religious connotations.

VC: That's right.

Mv: ..etc and, even though it was thrown out there'd been such, they couldn't perform for a while so that really put, you know. The momentum came to a stop. And it was a big production. It was a musical.

VC: A lot of people in it. I remember.

Mv: And yes, and that was the death knoll for, for the Young Market. And, what happened though, it was again just the timing. Lorraine (Jaffit) um... had been there all along of course, as Mannie's right hand woman, and she was leaving and I'm not, I can't remember for the life of me, why she was leaving. Whether she wasn't well. And funnily enough I met her daughter earlier this year, in Cape Town. And I mean, look you know that Lorraine is...

VC: Yes, yes.

Mv: Yes, she's very bad.

VC: I was just thinking did she leave and come back because she –

Mv: I think she may have come back but she...

VC: I think she came back.

Mv: I think she came back later on.

VC: Ja.

Mv: But it was just at that time when she was, for whatever reason, or whether it was her health, I really don't know.

VC: I can't remember either.

Mv: And so Mannie said "Oh there you are."

VC: ???

Mv: Straight into that. And that to me was yes. Challenging, but really the best time ever. Coz I mean I worked hand in hand with him and the production side, the contracts, the planning, the budgeting, everything.

VC: You learnt everything.

Mv: Everything, you really do. And in those days as you know one did everything at the Market in any case, regardless of what your job was. I mean I did, once a week at least and then a week became just part of the job, Front of House.

VC: Oh that's right you did the one night.

Mv: And that was everything from cashing up afterwards. You know you lock yourself in. I can remember those awful nights when you set the alarm upstairs and then you walked down through this dark theatre and then as you, as you now are ready to go out the, the alarm goes off and then you have to...

VC: Wait for the Chubb to come.

Mv: Oh God, it was, ja, it wasn't pleasant. And it was...

VC: Dark.

Mv: And it was dark. (laughs) I mean in this day and age there was no way that, that one would do that. Simply too dangerous. (noise) Sorry that is the pool objecting. (laughs) um...

VC: So then you, you must have met Alan when you started the first Young Company.

Mv: Ja, when um... if Alan had then been there as you say, in '76 I wasn't sure if he'd started a year later and when I started in '79.

VC: It must have been in '77 but he was definitely around in eight.

Mv: He left Durban because he started, he joined the Lindbergs. With the Black Mikado.

VC: That's right.

Mv: And then that toured and he ended up in Joburg and when that season finished I think that's when the Market made him an offer.

VC: Ja he was friends with Sats (Cooper) and Benjy (Francis) and everyone.

Mv: All those guys.

VC: Coz in the early, coz we toured once to Durbs with DEATH OF BESSIE SMITH – long before the Market.

MV: Oh Okay

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VC: And I think I met him then.

Mv: Mm.

VC: But they were all young.

Mv: Mm.

VC: Very radical. SASO.

Mv: ja, ja.

VC: Ja.

Mv: And I mean, in those years he wasn't in Durban. He was very involved in theatre, but he wasn't working in theatre full time. I mean there just weren't really opportunities in...

VC: No one was at that stage.

Mv: So, yes I met him in '79. He was then Production Manager at the Market and it was '79, and then in 1980 I mean it's not as if we started a relationship right away.

VC: Just friends.

Mv: Ja and colleagues. And then especially in 1980, well it must have been 1980, in that sort of mid-year that is when Mannie and Lesley (Nott) got married if I recall.

VC: Oh yes.

Mv: They went off their honeymoon overseas and Mannie said, "OK". I mean, Barney was there, obviously, the artistic side, but the management side, Alan and me. So in that period, it was about 6 weeks I think that they were away. He was away.

VC: So Alan ran the...

Mv: That Alan and I managed the Market.

VC: Weren't we doing "Arabian Nights" then?

Mv: No that came later. I think it had started. I know it started in that year.

VC: Coz I remember Alan was the one who decided to move it to the Main Theatre.

Mv: Right, ja.

VC: Mannie wasn't around.

Mv: No, he wasn't there. That's right.

VC: Which was a very good move.

Mc: Yes ja.

VC: It ran for the whole, half a year.

Mv: Absolutely ja – anyway in that time we worked closely and obviously got to know each other a lot better and then, ag well, just happened and it hap... that we now suddenly – here we realized that it was a bit more than just being colleagues.

VC: Wasn't really...

Mv: Ja it was also happened at a time when it really, I mean, it was almost as if right from then it was doomed um... for failure because it was the weekends when it started kind it started off quite... I mean I remember very well. Suzette [LeSeur] and Jill [Roberts] and I were having drinks at the bar and then Alan joined and, somebody else joined and we all went for dinner later on um...

VC: Which wasn't as easy as...

Mv: Well ya, I mean (laughs)

VC: As just having dinner.

MC: Dinner um and Alan then announced to us but it was all very confidential, on the Monday he was talking to Mannie, to tell him that he'd, he was planning to resign, because he, that 's when he joined the, Saira Essa wanted to start the Upstairs Theatre Company.

VC: Yes in Durban.

Mv: In Durban and Alan wanted to, you know, become involved in a new venture. (bell rings) Sorry that must be the Telkom man sorry.

(Tape paused)

VC: So Alan was going to resign.

Mv: Alan was planning to resign. I mean, his decision had been made, nothing was really going to reverse that and , and then it was really that weekend that, suddenly you know I mean it was crazy. And quite frankly I didn't – in terms of the relationship, for the next 8, pretty much close to 8 years, because it was 1988 um... Oh it could have gone either way, way, I mean, I, I think we both knew, I'm sure you don't want all of this in your story so I shouldn't be telling you this.

VC: Tell me what you want.

Mc: Anyway, we had, but it was of course, apart from it generally being a challenging time um..., politically and you know, what was allowed and what wasn't. We were apart because now we'd started this, out of the blue and it could have blown over in no time.

VC: But you didn't stay together.

Mv: No, no, no, no. No because Alan was now due to leave in a month or so's time and I think he finished at the Market in, possibly in December. He had to give notice um... and ja off to Durban.

VC: And he had to go.

Mv: Yes.

VC: Coz I remember we went in February.

Mv: Yes then he said... I think the theatre opened with ARABIAN NIGHTS.

VC: Yes February.

Mv: Mm.

VC: In February. In Durban.

Mv: February in Durban in that heat.

VC: No air-conditioning.

Mv: In a small theatre. God. (they laugh).

VC: It was hideous.

Mv: Remember that was when David Eppel did a back flip into the pool or something and hurt his back and then...

VC: Janice

Mv: Janice had to step in.

VC: He was this shape (indicates) the bottom half was there, and the top half was like that.

Mv: (laughs)

VC: Janice had to take his part.

Mv: Janice had to. (they laugh). Ja anyway those days it did very well and then it moved to Cape Town if I recall. I think I recall. Yes anyway so I stayed on um... at the Market obviously. Alan was in Durban. And I'd always, from the time I left France I always wanted to go back. So the following year um... I had an opportunity to go and work there. And I decided well I'm going to go.

VC: Alan's not there.

Mv: Um... so again so he was in Durban. I was back in Paris for a while. But I didn't really enjoy the job and when I saw Mannie, it was not even a full year after I'd gone to Paris but I thought no, I can't just for that, for the sake of that, do something that I'm really not into. Um... Mannie was in London with, can't remember which production, or was it just business, or something else was on in London, and I said to him, he said "Oh do you want to come back?" I said "Yes when?" (laughs) and then I rejoined the Market as PRO for the Market, oh, that must have been, if I left in '81, a year later, '82.

VC: And Alan was still in Durban.

Mv: Alan was then.

VC: He didn't stay that long.

Mv: Yes that's right. No but he was still in Durban at that stage. Um... and in fact he was still in Durban until '83. Because and then I now we were still I mean, whenever we could we saw each other, but it was intermittent and of course being difficult in those days.

VC: I mean in those days...

Mv: Then in '83, I know it was just when the whole revival of the Playhouse started with the new, well the revamped, refurbished theatres, the complex as a whole, and all the companies so it was going to be a very exciting time. And, I got the position as, as head of Publicity and Marketing at the

Playhouse and I'll never forget Mannie's reaction when I went to tell him that I'm going to be leaving the Market. Because he of course assumed immediately the only reason I was doing it was because Alan was in Durban, which, of course, had...

VC: Partly that.

Mv: Partly the reason. But it wasn't just that. I really thought, you know, this is a new opportunity, working in a different environment, at a different theatre space etc etc and because of all the developments that were going to happen I'd be getting an ideal, good exposure and experience.

VC: You going to work for the government!

Mv: Ja yes exactly. (laughs) Anyway so ja, he wasn't very happy and he still said to me and that I remember. He said "Well you do realize that by the time you get to Durban Alan probably will be overseas, on tour." Because Mannie had, which I wasn't aware of, Mannie had approached him to do the WOZA ALBERT tour er..., which was going to first Edinburgh and...

VC: That's over, he was away for two years.

Mv: Exactly. That's what happened, ja no, no precisely.

VC: How that would have helped you.

Mv: No, no.

VC: ??

Mv: By the time I got to Durban, he was I mean –

VC: Gone.

Mv: Was whoop – touring.

VC: Wherever you'd been – Joburg, Durban he wouldn't have been there.

Mv: Precisely so no, it didn't make any difference (laughs). And then whenever the tour, it was about two years that he was away.

VC: It was a long time. ??

Mv: It was Edinburgh then it was, was the Riverside (Studios), and then they toured Europe.

VC: Ja.

Mv: And then it ended up on the West End so it was a very long.

VC: I remember we all travelled together. He was at that stage looking after ASINIMALI – or BOPHA or something and then he was gone for another whole long time.

Mv: Time, ja, no that was a very lengthy period. He was then sort of back at the Market but...

VC: But but...

Mv: Touring. Touring Manager. And then I was in Durban and because it was an exciting time with all the first the launch of the orchestra and the Loft Theatre Company and the Dance Theatre Company and the tours and the that etc. So I didn't want to, I mean, I by no means had any intention of

staying in Durban but I didn't want to come back for any reason. And then Alan in fact, and that was the first time that we were then in the same place for a reasonable um... length of time, when he came back to Durban and that was just when Durban City the municipality did this big Durban Expo and he was appointed as Entertainment Director. So he was then back in Durban for probably about a year and a half. Um... which would have been ja, '85. Durban Expo was '85. It ran for a long time.

VC: Mandie, we went with Alan '86 I think to England.

Mv: To England, when it.., with the, when you went to...

VC: Edinburgh

Mv: Edinburgh. Several productions ja, ja.

VC: Ja.

Mv: Mm. So you see in that time we were back there but, I mean, alright, we saw a little bit more of each other but it was still it, you know you couldn't just really have a, have a normal life but at least it was still, you know, our relationship was...

VC: Was it difficult?

Mv: ...still there.

VC: That you couldn't go out or –

Mv: We could go to certain places but it wasn't, it wasn't, still wasn't...

VC: ...easy mm.

Mv: It was in that time. I think it was in '86 when, when it was legally abolished. That, you know, you couldn't um...

VC: Shame you had such restrictions.

Mv: No it was, it wasn't er ja, um... Anyway and then of course, at the end of Durban Expo Alan, that's when he rejoined the Market and became General Manager for the Market Theatre Foundation.

VC: That's right.

Mv: So he was back in Joburg from I think '86, can't remember exactly when in '83 but it literally worked from. He finished Durban Expo. The job was already...

VC: (inaudible)

Mv: He went straight there. And I wanted, at least wanted to see the Playhouse, you know the full period of all the theatres opening. Coz they were opening in phases. Um... So by mid '87 I then came, I finished there and I came back to Joburg and um... When Lynette Marais who was then head of PACT Drama, when she heard I was coming back she immediately said – come and talk to me um... yes so I joined the Drama Department but I was based at Windybrow because Windybrow was part of the PACT um in Drama theatres, but I was again heading up the Publicity Department for PACT Drama.

VC: Mannie liked that too (Laughs) your working there, hey?

Mv: (laughs) Yes exactly.

VC: It wasn't.

Mv: it wasn't (laughs) so then ja from '87 at least Alan and I for the first time were back in one place (laughs) for the foreseeable future.

VC: Amazing that you survived.

Mv: Under the challenges of you know, circumstances in the country.

VC: Did your family know anything?

Mv: At that stage no. You know, I just never got around, because it was uncertain. I mean it could have gone, we saw so little of each other. I just decided what's the point in telling them.

VC: And getting everyone into...

Mv: And getting everyone into a tizz or a state or whatever they would end up being in, especially at the time, that it was more the fact that it was illegal. I knew that would have been a problem. I mean my Dad was long retired so wasn't an issue.

VC: Wasn't a problem for...

Mv: Ja but still, and of course the fact that I never...It was such a long period of time that I hadn't told them, coz once you do that, it becomes more a more difficult, eventually to do so.

VC: Yes.

Mv: In '88 Alan and I went on our first long – we were away for about five weeks. We went to America, touring, just a holiday. And I told my Mom then, and she even met him. Now she's, she knows something that my Dad doesn't know.

VC: Ja shame.

Mv: They wouldn't have secrets, you know , amongst the two of them. That became...

VC: Causing trouble.

Mv: ...an issue. And, I mean, I remember very well, because, forever, whenever we were going anywhere what do you, in South Africa you can't really holiday together, so it would be off to Swaziland and thank goodness the Transkei was still the Transkei.

VC: Yes.

Mv: Supposedly Okay. (laughs) So that was where one went to. Um... and, I mean, I remember very well, I think it was Suzette who said - you know, you'd better be careful because your parents are, you're forever going off with your girlfriends. Your parents are going to start think that you're gay. (laughs). So, anyway (laughs) and then um...

VC: When did Alan...

Mv: Alan, no, what came after that, so this was not '87 that I was back. We were both back here. In '89, he came back at the end on '91. Let me just work back sorry I made notes. Why do I refer to my little notes here. In '90, ja, in '90 um he got a bursary from the British Council to go and do his Masters Degree in Arts Administration at City Of London University. So he left in 1990.

VC: That's when Mannie left as well. The Market.

Mv: Ja.

VC: Ja.

Mv: Ja, it was just after that he then left. So Mannie's left and...

VC: And Alan

Mv: And Alan left. Alan was then still General Manger and then he was away from 1990. I'm not sure actually when. It wasn't only September I think he left a bit earlier um..., and he came back the end of the following year which was then '91 when he finished his degree. And the Market had obviously, I mean, they couldn't, and he didn't expect for a moment that they would now keep his job as is.

VC: Right.

Mv: But they did say that, depending on the circumstances – of course they would, you know they would.

VC: They would want him back.

Mv: Would want him back – particularly with him having finished his, um... degree so he was then, remember well, you would remember very well. There was the Market Theatre Company and the Foundation.

VC: Mm.

Mv: And he was then appointed the director of the Market Theatre Company so he was the Producer.

VC: After Mannie.

Mv: After Mannie left. So he became a producer. I'm not sure who was there in between. Was it John Whitespunner.

VC: Might have been.

Mv: That was the third time that he came back to join the Market. And that then lasted, from, well. End of '91, '92, '93, well into '94 when the Civic Theatre offered him the job.

VC: Right, while Janice was there.

Mv: No he appointed Janice.

VC: Oh he appointed her.

Mv: He appointed her as artistic director.

VC: Right.

Mv: And when he left she stayed on and they made the position a combined on, artistic, CEO and artistic director. All in one.

VC: And then he went to PACT.

Mv: Then he went to Pretoria.

VC: Right.

Mv: Ja.

VC: Right, now I know just from my own working with Alan, what he contributed. What would you say were his best attributes in terms of theatre?

Mv: Well just all I think, well I would say, that Alan was 100% dedicated to theatre. For him what mattered was theatre and the arts and, you know making sure that it was done as to everyone's best possibility, looking after the artists and all of that. It was never about himself and I think that what's why the saga and the State Theatre really finished him and I know contributed to his death.

VC: So horrible.

Mv: It was a really horrible time. Um... Ja. So he wasn't, I mean he was, because of his size (laughs) he was bigger than life. I mean, that's why people called him The Gentle Giant and probably the nastier things got, and I'm not really talking about the Market Theatre days, but you know – the, the-one deals with so many different personalities and challenges and – um – you know specially things become far more, more challenging.

VC: Ja.

Mv: But I mean that was at the Market to a degree, but not...

VC: Not like...

Mv: Not really as bad, so looking at the Civic where you deal with all kinds of people.

VC: The Civic Board.

Mv: The City Council, um... but that he didn't have a problem with that. I mean that he really had, he ? had a challenge, and he dealt with it very well, um... but I think it was really at the time, now, if you think that was. This was the first change in a real, in management structure at the State Theatre when he...

VC: Yes.

Mv: ...when he came in.

VC: What year was that, can you remember?

Mv: Um... '94 (laughs) ja it was actually...

VC: Before the elections.

Mv: It was too soon. No '94 was the Civic, '96 '96 it was in '97.

VC: Ja it was later.

Mv: Because he, he I think there was still at the State Theatre, that interim period, er, you know just to kind of tide things over, um... and –

VC: Because the State was a problem.

Mv: Mm.

VC: I remember in '92 we marched.

Mv: Mm.Mm.

VC: Because they hadn't even begun to think of changing.

Mv: Changing yes.

VC: And they had us all arrested.

Mv: Really.

VC: Ja well Ramolao (Makhene) was doing DEATH AND THE MAIDEN.

Mv: Good heavens.

VC: He never made it to the show, that night.

Mv: Good Lord.

VC: (laughs) We were in Pretoria prison.

Mv: Really.

VC: Mm and that was an indication of how behind they were.

Mv: Ja ja.

VC: Ja '97 would have been about right.

Mv: Good Lord, well I am so glad I wasn't there anymore.

VC: Mm. Ja (laughs).

Mv: I'd joined the bank by then.

VC: It was quite bizarre.

Mv: Ja.

VC: Disturbing actually. And then we were all happy that Alan went.

Mv: Ja.

VC: But it still wasn't right.

Mv: But he really did. First of all he felt that he'd, having been at the Civic for just ah it was three years, three and a bit, he'd really only just started making a difference there. Um...

VC: Ja that's?

Mv: Janice had started, things were beginning to go well. The changes in terms of the board and...

VC: And I think the whole management. Tale (Motsepe) was there as well.

Mv: Structures. Tale had joined.

VC: Ja.

Mv: Mm. All of that, it was just beginning to come together, so he really, he didn't see himself leaving that soon. He certainly didn't want to.

VC: Did they er...

Mv: I promise you they pursued him.

VC: Head hunted him.

Mv: Yes Roger Jardine who was then Director General.

VC: Oh ja.

Mv: And Carol Steinberg was, was, well – what – director of – they persuaded him. It's now all coming back. We were, we were on holiday in the Transkei – now that was, was now also days without cell phones or anything, if you had a cell phone.

VC: ??

Mv: In the Transkei there wouldn't have been much chance of ...

VC: It wouldn't have worked in the Transkei (they laugh).

Mv: That's right, and I remember phoning my Dad and he said to me – um – please tell Alan that he must phone Ekhard van der Hoven because Ekhard was acting CEO then. There wasn't, you know they didn't want to make another appointment, he was at least he was one...

VC: It was really affirmative action kind of stuff.

Mv: Yes, ja, absolutely. Um, cos, anyway they were desperately wanting you know, to get him in for um...

VC: Were you guys married by then?

Mv: Yes ja we got married in '94. Um... I mean we could have by then, have got married earlier but you know, by then one had become so used to, we were living together. When Alan came back from London. We just decided, well either we, now you know, go for it.

VC: Ja, do this.

Mv: Otherwise we just go back to the life we had before and you carry on like yes..

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VC: Eventually it would have petered out, probably.

Mv: Ja, ja so we decided, and we moved in together and um... but we didn't get married right away. Until '94 it wasn't for any other, I mean it wasn't because of '94 being, you know...

VC: The change.

Mv: Change. Just happening in '94. But ja, so that's how it came about that Alan then was literally...

VC: I didn't realize that.

Mv: I mean to the extent that um, if he, if he was in a state, joining the Civic you can imagine what...

VC: (intake of breath)

Mv: What a state he was then.

VC: I don't believe...

Mv: Coz he knew he...

VC: ...by then (laughs)

Mv: So, and of course, he knew that it wouldn't be easy sailing. Well, I mean, He didn't expect that, but that it became such an absolute nightmare, with Board Members, really, no ,no.

VC: Was it horrible.

Mv: Horrible.

VC: Wasn't it a pyramid scheme or something?

Mv: Pyramid scheme, ja, ja. Well that was Alan's saving grace, and not many people knew about it, or remember because the Board was fully supportive of, of this...

VC: Well they couldn't have done it without the Board surely?

Mv: Ja they went, it went, and I mean, of course, initially, as with all pyramid schemes it works very well. You invest your money and you get these wonderful returns etc, etc and because it went so well the Board was very anti not continuing of cutting back on the investments and Alan said to them at a Board meeting - you are really, we are really, you know, playing with fire here and it was minuted.

VC: Should be stopped.

Mv: Ja, and they still said no you know, it's the only way we can keep it going. I can't remember if John, no I don't think John was the chair – you know coz John was appointed Chairman.

VC: Yes.

Mv: Of the Board.

VC: But I don't think...

Mv: But I think at that stage he'd stepped down and I can't like remember who was Chairman. And of course when the shit hit the fan...

VC: Oh it was all Alan's fault.

Mv: It was, well I mean, you know. I suppose as CEO you have to take the rap. But the Board members were all very shtoeep – not a word, just disappeared no support on the media etc etc that's...

VC: Broke his heart hey.

Mv: No it just it finished him altogether. So...

VC: And it had nothing to do with him, with his love of theatre.

Mv: No, I mean, I think that's what really finished him. And of course artists' lives were affected um... So they kind of all started pointing fingers at who else but the um... the CEO you know etc. You weren't going to go out. Alan wasn't going to go public.

VC: No.

Mv: That this and this and that.

VC: But he should've actually.

Mv: But anyway, but anyway, so it's how it all goes, ja.

VC: And what did you, what did you... What did the Market mean to you Mandie?

Mv: Oh the Market to me was, because, as I said earlier, was I really wanted to work in theatre um..., and to me it was just the most wonderful, wonderful opportunity and experience when I, when I came back and straight into it and it was, was such a , an exciting, challenging, vibrant time. I mean, I know it wasn't '76 when I started.

VC: But it was still early.

Mv: But it was still early days and that total – which one doesn't find anymore, these days, that total commitment, that, I think that pretty much everyone. Didn't matter who or what position you had at the Market from the cleaners to um, dear, I saw him the other day again, he was the the messenger, um...

VC: Reuben(Myanga).

Mv: Reuben, yes. I mean everybody.

VC: He's now in accounts department.

Mv: Everybody was just so committed and into it. As I said, you did absolutely everything. I mean if the ushers didn't pitch, well, you know we all, Mannie, we all chipped in and we ushered. We...

VC: No we all did everything??

Mv: We worked and we worked, flat out and what I really, really enjoyed um... of all the theatres at the time I'd been, that I was involved in, I think the Playhouse came, was second. Because it was also a new dynamic.

VC: ??

Mv: Starting something new from scratch and building it, in spite of the fact that it was government funding, (they laugh), it was still exciting at the time. Mm and so it, it really played, you think, here we are, how many years later?

VC: Ja.

Mv: Forty years almost. And the major role that the Market has played in the shaping of South African theatre, the contribution it's made, and the number of artists that it's given a platform to perform and to build their careers and become international artists.

VC: Mandie you weren't involved at all with the Art Gallery at the Market hey?

Mv: To a very small degree um... it was, because I was PRO that, whatever, two years I was back um... I was involved in that aspect of it. But um... not directly the running of it no.

VC: But your love of art was always there.

Mv: That has always been there, yes. I mean having it, sort of in the family it was there and then ja. So but I wasn't directly involved in the running of it. I can't even remember who, in the times I was there um ??

VC: It must have been Wolf and then at some stage.

Mv: No Wolf certainly.

VC: Stephen Hobbs. He wasn't there yet.

Mv: No, no but I mean all the, there was, later on. Not immediately, but later on the Market appointed somebody to run with the admin um...

VC: Yes.

Mv: I can't, I can actually picture the one woman, but I can't.

VC: ?? I can't either.

Mv: Mm, mm.

VC: Coz by then I think we weren't so involved with the art gallery.

Mv: J ja, it was sort of changed, it wasn't the main focus of the Market.

VC: No.

Mv: In any case, it was a 'nice to have'.

VC: Ja.

Mv: As a secondary activity.

VC: OK. Anything else that you'd like to – anything that you remember that...

Mv: ??

VC: Fun or ??

Mv: So many things to say (laughs) Oh we spoke so...

VC: Mannie's moods on Monday.

Mv: (laughs) Yes oh my goodness.

VC: Oh.

Mv: Oh no.

VC: It was worse when he wore a dark shirt, or jersey we always said.

Mv: Chips here he comes.

VC: Ooooh he's in a dark shirt. Oh God.

Mv: Tantrums that he had. Not tantrums but he, heavens he had a temper.

VC: Terrible temper.

Mv: I'll never forget it was when, you know. Mannie obviously understandably he was always very sensitive about making sure that the black artists were treated the way that everybody was treated-the same, which was understandable. When WOZA ALBERT started and of course Percy (Mtw) and Mbongeni (Ngema) became overnight hits and at that stage I was working hand in hand with Mannie um... one issue came up where, it had something to do with their expenses, and they felt, Mbongeni of course was always the driving force. You know he was the spokesman. But it had to do, whether it was their laundry when they were on tour, I mean it wasn't anything major but nevertheless. And I said to Mannie I'm sorry there is no way that we have to pay for this.

VC: ?? Don't pay for other people's

Mv: Yes but then it became a major issue. Mannie thought no-one. I said Mannie you're now doing the reverse.

VC: We're all going to want our laundry done.

Mv: Yes, yes exactly. Just because they are claiming it, and something else that became an issue. Well I wasn't initially part of the discussion, then he actually called me in, and I agreed with whoever else was when that, Saira Essa played a role. It was a couple, a mixed race couple um... was it a play by Mario Schiess? Two hander if I'm not mistaken.

VC: Ja, ja.

Mv: Wasn't a major, major play.

VC: You can't remember the name of the play?

Mv: But anyway, it was that who, they just couldn't find the right actress, and then there was even talk about putting a white actress into that role. Alan objected and whomever else. Barney obviously did. Mannie I think was just desperate because it was, they were about to start rehearsals in few days' time. And then he called me in, thinking that I – I said to him no.

VC: No way.

Mv: ?? you can't do that. ??

VC: Black someone up. Great for the Market.

Mv: So these things came back but ja, but all in all very special.

VC: OK.

Mv: And I'm so glad that the Market is you know. Of course we all know it went through a dip, when things started changing in the country but at least it's –

VC: Come back again.

Mv: Back on track.

VC: OK thank you.

Mv: Pleasure. Pleasure I hope that's some of what you were looking for.

VC: Ja.

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