

SOCIAL LIFE AND ENTERTAINMENT IN JOHANNESBURG

- By Robert Langford -

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by

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ADDRESS:

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- by Robert Langford.

I find my opening plea is somewhat the same as that used yesterday morning by Professor Kleu, if stated in another way. Some years ago, before I came to South Africa, I was helping the Management I worked for to run some auditions for young and rather inexperienced actors. One young man came onto the stage and proceeded to tear a passion to tatters .. at least he appeared to do so, for although his gestures were big and his face seemed to register every possible emotion, he was entirely inaudible. After a few moments of this, the manager walked down to the orchestra rail and holding up his hand said, "Excuse me, but although the producer and I have been sitting only half way back in the stalls, neither of us has been able to hear a word that you have been saying." The young man eased forward to the front of the stage and shielding his eyes from the footlights replied, "All right apart from that?".....Well, I hope you will put up your hand if there is something you can't hear or can't understand.

As we saw yesterday, very often some of the most valuable stuff comes out of the questions and the discussion time, so if I only touch on some subjects, which you feel should be developed, forgive me, but let us make the best of the time between this address and our morning tea.

What exactly has Johannesburg to offer in the way of Entertainment and Social Life, and how does it match up to the opportunities offered in other fields such as industry and finance. Superficially a great deal - and in some sections it is deeper than superficial.

As the object of this symposium is to suggest a blue-print for tomorrow, let us take a quick look at what Johannesburg has to offer today and what foundations from which we can build can be retained.

I think Music must take pride of place. Thanks to two independent organisations - Musica Viva and the Johannesburg Musical Society, both of whom receive small Municipal grants - many of the world's greatest soloists and small ensembles have been heard in Johannesburg and a regular and knowledgeable audience has been built up.

The SABC maintains a full symphony orchestra which can often excel itself under the baton of one of the frequent visiting conductors.

A growing number of concerts are given by the recently formed Performing Arts Council Orchestra, but this is a Provincial concern and although the Municipality provides a large annual grant towards the running of PACT, Johannesburg can take very little credit for the actual work of this organisation.

On the lighter side, and principally for the younger citizen and visitor, there are a number of discotheques and coffee bars where the local groups featuring either pop or progressive jazz and also the folk singers can be heard. Two of the younger folk singers, Paul and Andrew Tracey flourished so well that the Minim show which they helped to conceive has been the major artistic export from Johannesburg over the last few years.

Four managements, African Consolidated Theatres, Teorien and Ruben, Phoenix Productions and the Quibbell Brothers are mainly responsible for bringing the "tops" in the world of variety, and we have had or will shortly be seeing such artists as Marlene Deitrich, Max Bygraves, Trini Lopez, Frankie Laine, Liberace and many others.

Opera and Ballet are seen rather "by courtesy of". Johannesburg used to support a young and enthusiastic ballet company, but now has no company of its own, and relies on regular visits by the PACT Ballet and unfortunately, less regular seasons by the Cape Town City Ballet which under the direction of Miss Dulcie Howes has a national wide reputation. We must be grateful for these visits. The rise of the PACT Ballet has been meteoric. They are now one of the best box-office attractions. From a slightly dubious and shaky start they are now respected for their artistic output. This has certainly been helped by the visits of such ballerinas as Samsova, the choreographic genius of Roland Petit and also the considerable brilliance of the indigenous ballet, RAKA, which was recently introduced into their repertoire.

The PACT opera is not quite of the same standard, but some of their productions have had deserved success.

The world of the film is adequately catered for from the lush and plush of the latest cinema to whatever conditions your own car may be in at the Drive-in. The trend which cinema followed in South Africa has been created in other countries where T.V. is a force to be reckoned with. The pattern would seem to be this, in Urban areas concentrate on the large houses where greater comfort and facilities can be provided and which are equipped for the showing of the super-colossal in film size, whether it be full cinerama, panavision 70 or any of the large screen methods. Many of these films are called "road shows" and are shown for long runs at high admission prices. I'm afraid I personally feel that all too often, "road show" is just another term for "ballyhoo". The urban area also maintains a few small "art" houses where foreign films, or films of artistic merit if not guaranteed commercial appeal can be shown.

Outside the central area the move is to the Drive-in. Here the thinking is, land available at a lower ground rental or rateable value, low maintenance costs ... and what is more important, the establishment of a new entertainment medium. Psychologically, going to the Drive-in is quite different to going to the cinema. It is the popular family entertainment... whereas in order to compete with the threat of television, going to the urban cinema has been made more of an occasion and moved nearer to that of live entertainment. As a further example of this, the urban cinema is part of the evening out and may be tied to a dinner invitation, or at least a snack and a drink after the show. In consequence, the urban cinema hopes to average 20c per head of audience over ticket

sales for the sale of chocolates, cold drinks etc. But at the Drive-in, where the visit comprises the entire evening's entertainment, there is likely to be an enquiry as to what is wrong if the average sale per head for food etc. is less than 38c.

But however you like to see your films, Johannesburg has some splendid venues.

What of the live theatre. Quite apart from the mass of Amateur endeavour which caters in the main for their own public, there are 9 to 10 professional managements actively engaged in the presentation of plays in Johannesburg. Plays which range from Shakespeare to the latest West End or Broadway success. For most weeks of the year, professional theatre can be seen at the Academy, the Alexander, the Brooke and the Intimate Theatres ... with further occasional productions at the Library, the Civic and the Jewish Guild. Also, the new Adam Leslie Theatre is catering for a rather more specialised form of entertainment.

A long and reasonably impressive list of visiting artists and producers can be cited including such names as Moira Lister, Dulcie Gray, Ian Hunter, Dennis Price, Albert Ninnio, John Fernald, Sir Donald Wolfitt.

There are now two established bodies which control the administration of Professional Theatre - the South African Association of Theatrical Managements which was formed in 1956 and to which the majority of the managements belong, and S.A. Actors Equity Association which was formed more recently and which is a registered Trade Union representing the artists. These two bodies have negotiated contracts establishing conditions of employment which are used by the bulk of the professional presentations in the Republic.

And the other constituent of an evening out in Johannesburg - Eating. The city is prepared to cater for all tastes as you would expect with a cosmopolitan city. You can find restaurants which specialise in French, Italian, German, Spanish, Dutch, Dutch East-Indian, Indian and Chinese styles of cooking. Whole streets in Hillbrow which have striven to attain the "with-it" look appear to be filled with pavement cafes and steak houses. The city's major hotels boast elegant á la carte restaurants and several dinner or night clubs are prepared to keep their doors open into the small hours for those who have no thought for the office desk in the morning. In fact, the Diners Club directory lists 84 places in Johannesburg where you can eat.

Yes, on the surface, Johannesburg after dark would appear to hold its own with many major cities in the world, but what of tomorrow, and why is it that so often the visitor and the resident who sets off for an evening out with a light step and a sparkle in the eye, ends with the feeling that the champagne has gone flat? My personal answer is two pronged. For all its surface sophistication, Johannesburg needs to find its soul, and has a desperate need for education.

Take first the eating habits. Surely one of the benefits of civilisation is that we have advanced from the beast of the forest who kills and eats purely as a reflex response to the needs of his stomach. Civilisation should have heightened the appreciatory senses of not only the eye and ear, but also

the taste-buds and the sensory pleasures of good food and wine. But to be a conscientious restauranteur in Johannesburg must be a soul destroying business. All too often the criterion of values would appear to be - size of helping (which can depress as well as stimulate the appetite) - speed of service (which often betokens the deep-frozen and the pre-cooked and the consequent deterioration of quality) - and the size of the Bill (it cost enough, so it must have been good).

You may think this is an exaggeration, but I don't think it is. Dining out, as opposed to the "lets have a quick bite before the show" should be an entertainment and an experience in itself it should be the added stimulation to good company. That is why many of the best restaurants in the world refuse to allow music in their dining rooms. But in Johannesburg it is difficult to find somewhere to eat without the insidious background of taped music which lulls rather than stimulates the senses.

You see, the lack of soul has virtually destroyed the reasoning for why we are going to "eat out". We are not starving. Those two whisky and sodas or gins and tonics which we downed the moment we got back from the office have provided more than enough calories to keep us going until breakfast tomorrow. So why are we going out? The Joneses took us last week and we must return the compliment. A social habit, but soul-less.

The lack of education in eating has led to the virtual standardisation of menus and prices whether the cooking be good, bad or indifferent. The lack of education which causes our eating houses to fall into virtually two groups only, either the Steak House where the object seems to be to consume an all too often tough T-bone steak in the shortest possible time, or the classy restaurant which works on the assumption that we are all in the upper income bracket. Where are the middle class restaurants where the middle class family, and I mean family Mum, Dad and 2 or 3 children, can eat; not caring about the lack of crystal glass and double damask, but enjoying it because the food is good and well cooked and at the right price - this type of restaurant which is such a feature of any continental city.

The unenlightened tourist, whose main object would appear to be how many cities and countries can be ticked off the list in the least number of days, may well be delighted to find that "My dear, you're quite safe in Johannesburg, they've driven all those lions and things into a park way out of town, and the food is much the same as you get right here at the Waldorf-Astoria", but the intelligent visitor often finds the best feel of a city **is** in its restaurants.

I know we are dealing with Johannesburg, but the visitor is liable to move about the country, and in the small towns the lack of education in eating is even more apparent. When will our country hoteliers learn that it is not only impossible but also un-necessary to try to put on a 7 course lunch for 95c, and that 2 or 3 courses of higher quality is much better value.

Our licencing authorities would also appear to be in need of education. For example, Adam Leslie, who has gone to infinite trouble and expense to try to re-create the atmosphere of the

turn of the century in his theatre restaurant, has had a licence refused and, I gather, one of the reasons was that the premises were very old fashioned!

To the casual observer, theatre since the war would appear to have come a long way, but many of these strides are superficial. What are the snags?

Finance. Theatre may certainly be a more precarious investment than many Johannesburg has to offer, but the presenting Commercial Managements in South Africa are the only ones in the English speaking world who are entirely responsible for the entire capitalisation of their productions. I worked for some 10 years before coming to South Africa for H.M. Tennent - probably the largest play presenting firm in the world - and I think it is true to say that it is the exception for them to hold more than 15% of the investment required on any one show. I am not suggesting that vast financial support would improve the end product out of all recognition, but it is a fact that the constant worry of a personal bank-roll can often clip the artistic wings of a management.

The Availability of Material. Owing to the attitude taken by either bodies or individuals to the internal policies of the Government of the Republic, the Managements and consequently the public are deprived of the right to see the bulk of the most successful dramatic output of England and America. The Government is so conscious of this that a clause in the new censorship Bill offers us recourse should plays be forbidden to us on ideological grounds. But, so far, the regulations governing this clause have not been published and in consequence there has as yet been no test case to examine the reaction of authors and play agents should they be forced to call on this legal remedy.

We, in Professional theatre feel somewhat bitter over the existing situation on two scores. Firstly, many authors who refuse their plays do nothing to refuse to South Africa those same plays when turned into firms. And secondly, there is the incredible anomaly between the professional who is trying to make his livelihood, and the amateur. All too often, a valuable property is refused to the professional and then, sometimes only weeks later, because they deal with another agent, the rights of that play are released to some amateur company.

On top of these troubles, there is also the question of our own censorship board. Although on the whole they would appear to take a reasonable view, there has been the example of Virginia Woolfe where the enforced suspension of this play turned what had looked like a reasonable profit for the presenting management into a considerable loss.

And a further battle for live theatre is the actual venue itself. In an age when the public requires to be lulled by deeper and deeper foam rubber, what can we offer the theatre patron? Well, in some respect we can be grateful for the Civic Theatre - but this is by no means ideal for straight theatre - for, quite apart from its size, not even the combined front of Manfred Hermer, the architect, Pieter Roos and the entire management committee will convince me that the acoustic problems for the spoken word have been fully overcome. Further, the theatre was built with no work-shop

space and for a production which is scheduled at the theatre in a month or so, a section of the parking garage has had to be taken over for the construction of scenery. For the rest, the Academy Theatre - part of the building where we are now, a converted general purpose hall with bad stage facilities; the Intimate Theatre - a very small seating house, part of the Y.M.C.A. building with very inadequate facilities for both the actor and the audience; the Library Theatre - part of the public library with totally inadequate facilities; the Jewish Guild - a converted hall; the Brooke Theatre - a converted church; the Adam Leslie Theatre - a converted spaghetti factory. Which leaves just one venue with a reasonable seating capacity which was actually build as a theatre, the Alexander.

And what of Afrikaans Theatre. Here certainly the movement has been retrogressive. There is no longer such a thing as an independent Afrikaans Company, and were it not for the Performing Arts Council, Johannesburg would see no Afrikaans drama.

Our theatre also suffers from the same failings in the public as I have mentioned with regard to catering. There is really no need for live entertainment in the heart of the average citizen. If every live theatre were to close today, there is only a handful of the population which would be accutely conscious of the fact. Theatre is purely a social habit, and the more social, the more successful. A society gala or premier will draw, not because of what is being seen, but because of who you will see, and what is being seen, but because of who you will see, and what is more important, who will see you.

Some years ago, Leon Gluckman brought a Greek Company from Athens to perform in Greek at the Civic Theatre. He admired their work and wished them to be seen in Johannesburg, but he didn't expect them to be anything except an artistic success and I think he was prepared to lose a little financially on the presentation. The loss could have been placed against the profits on Wait a Minim and possibly the only real loser would have been the Receiver of Revenue. It didn't work out like that. It became a social Must, and although I doubt if more than 5% of the audience understood a word, there was no financial loss. Marcel Marceau who had already done one tour of the Republic and was returning to the Civic Theatre - his show was a social Must. He had been acclaimed as the world's greatest Mime. One society lady, doubtful of the Civic's acoustics, insisted on being reassured by Mr. Tucker of Show Service that she would be able to hear from the seats she had purchased. One can go on endlessly

Certainly South Africa is a young country without an artistic heritage, but an effort must be made to establish the need for the interpretive arts. The talent is here as is proved when our artists go overseas. Gluckman and Leonard Schach have established international reputations as directors. Janet Suzman and Estelle Kohler are the successes of the Royal Shakespeare Company, Brian Murray - who was known here as Brian Bell - is now starring in New York, the critics have called Joyce Grant the funniest woman in London. Laurence Harvey, Sidney James, all learnt their business here and the list can go on.

Through our rates, the citizens of Johannesburg are contributing to the arts, a large annual grant to PACT, the building of the Civic Theatre, small grants to the musical societies. Is this enough and does it fulfil the needs of the City. Although our

contribution entitles Johannesburg to have a member on the board of PACT, it is difficult if not impossible for him to sway the policy, and in consequence we get what PACT decides to give us. The Civic Theatre Association has recently become a body which can present and not just let the theatre, and shortly they will be presenting an indigenous musical. Fair enough, but is it enough. Where is the education which will create the need. Some years ago, Johannesburg boasted a Childrens Theatre. It was forced to close down, not through lack of popularity. The prices they were able to charge to children could not possibly keep it solvent and although several approaches were made to the City Council, the grant they received remained ludicrously small - in fact, barely a token of recognition.

The adult education to create the need can be helped by the newspaper critics. But the critics would appear to be the poor relations of the newspaper staff. To have the ability to make true critical assessments of the Johannesburg scene, they should be sent regularly by their papers to see the best that England, the continent and America can offer. Within this country, facilities should be there for them to see all the major productions in other centres, even if they do not write long critical appraisals of the work, it would at least afford them the chance to see where Johannesburg leads and where it lags. At the moment, the presenting management in the search for publicity, may fly the critics to Cape Town or Durban. But this should not be at the whim of the management. A true sense of the responsibility of their work should make the management of the newspapers insist that their critics see all that they can. It is excepted that the Sports Editor is liable to cover all major events in the country, and so should it be with the Entertainment Editor. The broadening of outlook and the stimulation which the critics would receive would add validity to statements such as one young critic made some years ago about the production of a Chekov play. He stated that it was the best production of the play that he had seen - it was probably the only one.

The education and stimulation given by the critics can lead to the realisation by the tired business man that it is not only bottoms and bikinis and red-nosed comedians losing their trousers that can provide relaxation, but that the re-discovery of the art of listening. The lending of the ears to the spoken word and the sound of music can revitalise and provide a sense of well-being and remove the tensions just as successfully as the psychiatrists couch.

What do we need to make Johannesburg be looked at by the visitor with amazement and the resident with pride?

Venues. A concert hall. The City Hall is uncomfortable and acoustically hollow. Good music needs good surroundings, and if anyone tells you, for example, that the greatest music they ever heard was in the early days of the Hallé Orchestra at the old Free Trade Hall in Manchester, you can be sure it would have been even better at the Festival Hall in London or in the new Lincoln Centre.

An Opera House. Grand Opera is a financial impossibility at the seating capacity of the Civic Theatre.

A properly equipped and artistically directed theatre of some 600-750 seats. For years the Hall-mark of a respectable continental town has been the standard of its resident company. In England, the Civic Theatre movement is growing and more and

more cities are now being remembered by the excellence of their theatre. Nottingham for example, is no longer thought of for its lace, but for the work of John Neville as director of the Playhouse.

In America, the heart of theatre has shifted (or today should I say, has been transplanted) from Broadway to the Civic Theatres and Professional University Companies throughout the country.

Some years ago in a television programme in America, Tyrone Guthrie stated that he would be prepared to dedicate some years of his life to establishing and running a civic theatre with a resident company and a creative programme. Before he had finished the T.V. interview, 6 major American cities had phoned to say that they would build him that theatre. After consideration, he chose Minneapolis. Within days of the announcement that the theatre would be built, the subscribers list for season tickets had to be closed. Full houses were in consequence guaranteed before the project had even got as far as the architects drawing board. How likely is that situation in South Africa? And yet it should and could happen. But if it did, I have a feeling Johannesburg would be the first city to try and avail itself of the offer.

And how should that theatre be run. A theatre needs a dictator. A dictator in complete control, as a ship at sea needs a captain whose word is law. Far too much artistic endeavour in South Africa is bogged down by committees of enthusiastic amateurs. Professional Theatre is an industry, and in no other industry does every move have to be discussed by untrained outsiders. At an annual general meeting of a public company, the amateur can have his say and if it is valid, the Managing Director or the entire board may fall. So should it be in theatre. The Director should be unhampered for his term of office but knowing that once having been given a mandate, should he fail, he will fall. The direction of the Royal Shakespeare Company which moves from success to success is in the hands of Peter Brook, Peter Hall and Paul Scofield - three of the most talented and knowledgeable men in theatre. The National Theatre in England is run by Sir Laurence Olivier with Kenneth Tynan as literary advisor. Both these companies are hugely supported by public money, but the direction is unfettered.

Another reason why such a Company should be founded here is that although, once again, the question of T.V. has been pushed into the background, sooner, obviously I should say, later, it will come, and then the commercial managements with the run of the mill commercial plays will be the greatest sufferers, and it will only be something in the vision of great company which has built a tradition of artistic achievement which will survive.

I know you will say that an Opera House and a smaller theatre are planned in the future development of the Civic Centre Complex. You will say that building restrictions have been imposed; that there is a system of priorities; there is a credit squeeze and a determined effort to combat inflationary tendencies. But, and this is the real crunch, if the need is in the hearts of the people, ways can be found to surmount all these difficulties. And what is more, it should not be the sole responsibility of the municipal coffers. Industry should be tapped and made to bleed. I know that in an oblique way industry can plead that it supports the arts with their grants to universities, the purchasing of paintings by leading South

African artists, by the commissioning of sculpture to adorn their office blocks or public places. Suggest a match between top tennis players, football teams or race horses and the sugar industry, the breweries and tobacco manufacturers are falling over themselves to underwrite the event. But the endowment of something with the lasting value of a theatre, well

Mining Houses have recently donated 1 million Rand to heart research, but what is the point of endeavouring to remove the fear of premature death if nothing is done to gladden the heart when alive.

What more is needed? The visitor to Johannesburg from overseas is not particularly interested in seeing a carbon copy of some current West End comedy. Indigenous work is bound to be far more intriguing. For reasons which it would take another full session to explain, the drama output of top-class work is bound to be small for many years to come. But what of the work of the other ethnic groups? Certainly there are the mine dances on Sunday mornings .. but there is a considerable amount of interesting music, dance and dramatic work going on in the townships. The Municipality and the Non-European Affairs Department should help to publicise this and make a point of encouraging certain of these performances for white audiences, either in venues in the city or at special performances in the halls and theatres in the townships. Quite apart from this being very much a part of the life of the city, it could do nothing but good as far as our image goes overseas.

Open Air theatre. Why should Maynardville have the exclusive right to this form of entertainment. Certainly Johannesburg's summer rains make this something of a problem, but nothing like the problem which has to be faced in Regents Park in London, where open air theatre battles on year after year. Two of the most exciting things I have ever been connected with were the special performance by Margot Fontaine at Zoo Lake at the end of the Festival in 1956 where some 6,000 people sat happily soaked to the skin to watch her dance in a fairy-tale setting, and more recently a production I did on the other side of the lake of Treasure Island which played for two weeks to packed and enthusiastic audiences and schoolchildren and adults alike while the good ship Hispaniola actually sailed on the water in front of them.

Certainly all this will cost money. The time may well be close when the City Council will have to consider whether it is justified in providing PACT with such a large grant, and whether it should not be better advised to spend at least some on the money on its own enterprises. There is a good case to be made against the dissipation of effort by the four Performing Arts Councils, with the consequent wastage of money - the two productions last year of Heartbreak House, now a similar situation with The Lion in Winter. And, although you may think this is a personal family axe which I am grinding, the absurdity of a very special cast for The Importance of Being Ernest which will only play Durban and a few Natal towns while the Transvaal is planning an alternative and less popular Oscar Wilde revival later in the year. As long as this policy continues, there is nothing to stop Johannesburg stepping in and establishing the Johannesburg National Theatre Company.

There might have to be a small increase in the rates, but there again, as with other services such as sewage and roads, if

first class facilities are provided the increase can be justified. Further, it might be possible to provide all rate payers with a membership card which entitled them to some concession at all municipally sponsored presentations. This indeed might be a way of encouraging a large new public.

The City Council is forming a committee to enquire into the ways of increasing the gaiety of the City. Let us see that its only recommendations are not for more fairy lights in the parks and a celebratory fire-work display. Live entertainment can make the life of Johannesburg rich, but it requires the heart, the help, the education, the soul and the NEED of the city.

The great American actress, Ethel Barrymore, was known as a tartar in the theatre, and there is a story of a young girl who joined her company when they were rehearsing some play. The girl had heard all about the old lady's reputation and went to the first rehearsal full of fear and trepidation. During one scene, she was required to smoke a cigarette and she enquired in a very small voice whether there might be an ashtray on the mantelpiece in which she could put it out. "Of course", said Miss Barrymore, "Stage Manager, see that an ashtray is added to your property plot". A little later the girl was rehearsing a scene with Miss Barrymore as they sat across a table. Tentatively the girl suggested that if her chair was placed a little further down-stage it would be easier for Miss Barrymore to play the scene. "An excellent suggestion" replied the old lady. During a break in rehearsal the girl was talking to her fellow actors and saying that the reputation was nonsense, she was a sweet old lady and so easy to work with. At the same time, Miss Barrymore was down in the stalls talking to the author who commented that he thought the new girl was very good and very talented. Miss Barrymore looked at him and said "yes, indeed, what a pity she won't be with us after lunch."

Let us see that Entertainment and live theatre especially is still with us after lunch.

BACKGROUND PAPER:

ENTERTAINMENT AND SOCIAL LIFE IN JOHANNESBURG

- by Robert Langford.

What exactly does Johannesburg offer in the fields of Entertainment and Social life, and how does it match up to the opportunities offered in the other fields such as Industry and Finance? Superficially a great deal, and in some sections it is deeper than superficial.

Music is catered for by two independent organisations..Musica Viva and the Johannesburg Musical Society..which present many of the world's greatest soloists and small ensemble. The South African Broadcasting Corporation maintains a symphony orchestra and frequent concerts are also given by the newly formed orchestra of the Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal. On the lighter side there are several clubs and coffee bars where the younger set can enjoy the local "Pop" groups and Folk Singers. Four private managements are responsible for presenting the tops in the world of variety and we have seen or will shortly see such artists as Marlene Deitrich, Max Bygraves, Trini Lopez and Frankie Laine.

Johannesburg supports no Opera or Ballet Company of its own, but the PACT companies and the Cape Town Ballet Company play regular seasons in the city.

The cinema go-er is amply provided for. There are five large central theatres, several smaller "art" or foreign film houses. Two theatres fully equiped for the showing of Cinerama films. The sub-urban areas boast more than a dozen "drive-in" theatres within a small radius from the City Hall.

Some nine or ten professional managements are actively engaged throughout the year presenting theatre and it is not unusual for live entertainment to be being presented at seven or eight venues simultaneously. Quite apart from entire productions such as "Wait a Minim" and "Blood Knot", artists such as Laurence Harvey, Sidney James, Joyce Grant, Janet Suzman, Estelle Kohler and Brian Murray (who was known here as Brian Bell), directors such as Leon Gluckman and Leonard Schach have all made a reputation for themselves overseas having started their careers here in Johannesburg.

Among the clubs in the city, the Rand Club is almost as old as Johannesburg and enjoys a world wide reputation, and of a more social type, The Country Club was founded in 1906 and continues to flourish.

All tastes can be catered for if the need is to eat out from the modest coffee or steak bar to the smart à la carte restaurants. The Diners Club directory lists no less than 84 suggestions in this field.

With all this to offer, what is wrong with the scene? The lack of adequate venues for most of the live entertainments and the lack of "heart" in the citizens. For the future, both these flaws must be remedied by constructive thought and education to bring the "need" and not just the social habits to enjoy what Johannesburg can provide.

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DISCUSSION ON ADDRESS:

SOCIAL LIFE AND ENTERTAINMENT IN JOHANNESBURG

- by Robert Langford

Comment:

I think perhaps we are inclined to miss the point of this symposium and to relate what we have heard and what we will hear, I would like to put a graph on the blackboard depicting Johannesburg's growth rate.

The vertical line represents volume and the horizontal line, time. If we take the growth rate of Johannesburg starting somewhere before 1900 it would represent a steep line to 1968. Mining has contributed to this growth rate, specially at the beginning, and now it is on the decline. This is shown on the graph as the primary section and the secondary field is industry, which contributes and makes up for the decline in the primary section. Then we have the tertiary aspect, which is commerce. What makes up the quaternary field and determines finally the growth rate of Johannesburg is culture - better schools, universities, parks, museums, sports, tourist attractions. In the case of Johannesburg, this fourth aspect has been neglected all these years. Imagine a graph like this for Pretoria, where mining is practically non-existent and the main section would be the quaternary field.

I find myself in this fourth field and classed as the beggars. We have to rely on the people in the first, second and third fields to support us because we are not money-making concerns. We are not asking commerce and mining to help us. We are asking them to invest with us in their own future, because if it were not for what we could achieve in this field, they - industrially and commercially - would be in a city which would decline and they would probably find it more profitable to move elsewhere.

Comment:

I would just like to add to what Mr. Langford and Dr. Brink have said, as also being in the fourth category, we naturally speak the same language. The graph drawn by Dr. Brink supports the ideas held by the Civic Foundation. I can add without any hesitation that since the establishment of the Civic Foundation that we have been aware of the contribution we can make concerning culture toward the future of Johannesburg.

Professor Kleu mentioned yesterday these various facets - mining as the major facet, industry as the second and finance and administration etc. as the third facet. The fourth is culture, but he also mentioned consultation and brain power under the third aspect, but this also comes under the heading of culture. Mining, initially, was the

catalyst for industry as well as the ensuing development of the other aspects. We have a rich heritage derived from gold.

Mr. Langford stressed the 'creating of a need' and I too feel this is very important and the Civic Centre can play its part in this creation. Many of you will recall when the City Council mentioned the building of a Civic Centre that many said it was going to be a white elephant. Today I don't think there is anyone who could imagine Johannesburg without the Civic Theatre - its attendance during the past year has risen to 81%.

America is a country blessed with an exceptionally good revenue system so that wealthy and respected citizens financially contribute to cultural institutions, universities and civic centres. We do not have this situation in South Africa - we become entangled in the local government and secondly in the central government. The central government are, at this stage, not concerned with the erection of civic theatres as such.

The Johannesburg Civic Theatre Society has for some time stressed the need that training facilities be established for the performing arts. The Society submitted a scheme to the City Council for the erection of the Civic Theatre on the northern side as a centre where training would be given to actors, ballet and other dancers, musicians and singers in order that we could service the 364,000 Europeans in the Witwatersrand complex - by means of supplementing the education obtainable in this field from our two universities. The Society also recommended to the City Council that a Concert Hall be built to satisfy the musical need of the city. It depends very much on what the Province as a whole intends doing in the future, but a smaller theatre should also be built in order to make complete the performing arts complex.

In reply to Mr. Langford, as far as the acoustics of the Civic Theatre are concerned, it has been proved by the world's greatest acoustic authorities that we have no acoustic deficiency, but we do sometime have difficulties with performers who do not speak out properly.

Comment:

Mr. Chairman, I get up with a feeling of fear and trepidation because in my capacity as Chairman of the Publicity Association, Chairman of the Management Committee of the Johannesburg City Council, Chairman of the Johannesburg Civic Theatre Association, I have really come under a bit of fire. I take it personally but it does not worry me terribly because I would like to remind Mr. Langford that it took quite a bit of getting the Council to agree to even consider building a theatre. My colleagues will remember that certain emotion had to be brought forward to get them to do such a thing.

I was personally thinking of something in the region of 700 seats. We were told that we should consult the artistic people of Johannesburg as to what was required. Not one of the members of the performing arts was in agreement with the other, not one! Anyway, the Council, influenced by the discussions that took place, decided to have about 1000 seats.

With regard to the acoustics of the Civic Theatre, I must tell Mr. Langford that I have taken a small tape recorder

to every part of the theatre and I have some beautiful recordings. There is nothing wrong with the acoustics.

I would like to ask Mr. Langford if we cannot have some originality in the artists who are brought out here to entertain us. In other words, because Trini Lopez came out and packed the theatre, we must then have Frankie Laine. There is such a similarity. This may be because of the season overseas, I don't know. We get no variety - we get tired of the same thing over and over again. We are sincerely hoping to put on Eureka, which is indigenous and will be tuneful at least. Mr. Langford, can we not have some variety, please?

Mr. Langford:

I am not shooting down the Civic Theatre, I am delighted to have it, but I am thinking of the future. I will go into the acoustic problem with you privately in a long long session.

I couldn't agree more about the similarity of the variety acts that come out here - I just mentioned them in passing in my address as to what we had had. I think that the work of the entrepreneur, being rather rude about it, is frankly 'cashing in'. If someone has a success - let's copy it, let's get what money out of it as quickly as we can. With all due respects to all the people concerned in this form of presentation, I don't think they have one jot of real artistic integrity in their souls.

I am thinking for the future - I am not thinking of bigger and better Frankie Laines - but for something more constructive in the way of culture - real true artistic endeavour. As I say don't let us shoot down what has been done in the past, let us perhaps criticise it and be grateful for it, but let us please at this symposium go away thinking about the future.

Collection Number: A1132

Collection Name: Patrick LEWIS Papers, 1949-1987

PUBLISHER:

Publisher: Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Location: Johannesburg

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