

INTERVIEW WITH PAUL SLABOLEPSZY

Interview with Paul Slab 11am 29th March 2014, in Linden, interviewer Vanessa Cooke, assisted by Carol Preston.

Transcription notes: Paul is indicated as PS and Vanessa is indicated as VC.

VC: How did you become interested in theatre Paul?

PS: Well, theatre as such, I suppose it had to have started when I was like twelve years old and we lived in Messina and I was at Messina Primary school and there was the huge big baobab, and at break I used to stand under the baobab and tell stories..um.. I just, just, used to, used to, just improvise the stories. I'd talk. There was a character called Goras who rode a funny little red bicycle and it was "The Adventures of Goras". And he rides out and things happened and lions came out and then there were one or two kids who used to sit listening and then um... it became quite a regular thing. It wasn't every break but every now and then again someone would go "Goras man. What happened to Goras? Tell us the story." So, so the audiences sometimes got bigger and bigger. Sometimes I had 12 or 18 kids sitting listening. I didn't realize that um... because I wanted to perform obviously and as long as I had an audience to tell stories to and also to act all the stories. So it took me a long time to remember that because, you know, you think ag no not that. And then somebody came up to me and said "Geez I remember the stories under the tree." Is it? And then what, what I remember in Messina is that I used to stand under the tree and tell – and then slowly and then what Goras he used to do this he used to do that. He had to fight these armies and all that, you know. And then I remembered he told me the stories that I had told because I had forgotten.

VC: And you played all the characters?

PS: I played all the characters ja. So it was like a one man show and because I didn't have a cast and also, in fact, I found the photograph now as well the other day of um er ah there was a school play and it was a pirate thing and I was Peter Coffin. That's why I am a Pirate's fan. It was Peter Coffin and a line I had "Peter Coffin it is my name". So that was also twelve, so that was my first experience, of, of kind of acting in a play in theatre you know. My mother made our costumes and stuff. She made costumes for everybody. And, and, and then um... there was the Moth hall and I had a whole thing where you would invite the audiences.

VC: Is this in Cape Town

PS: In Messina... and I, told all the guys what they were gonna do, do this cowboy scene, like oh, and so you know so all the parents had to come in the Moth Hall and – on the stage we'd have ladders, built the set, made the posters and stuck them up in town. And I drew the pictures of a witch's face like stupid witch, the face would look quite like stupid. And I can't remember what it was called, but that was the first production – directing, acting, casting you know.

VC: And where did you get this from? Did you go to theatre?

PS: No!

VC: No?

PS: No theatre.

VC: No.

PS: Nothing, nothing we had no... it was just that urge, ja the urge. I don't even know where the idea came from to perform and, and, and make 'theatre' in inverted commas. Often people had that 'puppet thing' or little like, you'd talk about people who'd be interested in theatre and little puppets and all that. I didn't. I wanted to use the people and the things and we just created our own stories. So I walk in the pub," This town ain't big enough for the both of us (American accent) go for your guns boys "(they laugh). So the parents come and watch the- Oh it was stupid. Anyway, hey. (they laugh)

VC: You were the star of the show

PS: Yes, yes the show the star, the star. But they were all about all of us you know. There were like twelve of us, boys, girls we just all, "who wants to be" Ja and the amazing thing about that, that was, that it didn't come from the teachers. It was like us we decided we wanted to do this.

VS: this was it.

PS Ja. Then that was forgotten the... When I went to high school and then that was one coz I lived in Messina before no ag sorry Modderfontein, then Witbank and then only went to Messina when I was 11 and that was my last year in primary school and then when I went to college and that, all that was forgotten. There was like sport.

VC: ?

PS: Ja, ja, ja – although I still in fact have the little booklets of um... if something like happened, like, um... I've got like Scene – biology class – coz we were talking about brothers, Catholic brothers so I'd put like Scene – Croaky or something, like the name of the Brother. We called him Croaky because he had a croaky voice. Ja, "Who put the chameleon among the reptiles?" Coz he had cages, the little like glass cages for chameleons, snakes, and we used to take the chameleon and put it into the snake thing coz (VC intake of breath) to see what would happen and of course *goeps* (VC intake of breath) dead. So Croaky "Who put the chameleon in among the reptiles" and then Bertolli, one of the guys you know "Oh no it wasn't me" you know. So I used to write the stories in dialogue form. So I didn't write – in the class we sat and all this is what happened.

VC: What happened?

PS: It, was the voices, "Who put the thing" so I put "Angrily" and all that. And so this is somebody who has had no experience of theatre, and no, not even know how to er ah script anything. But it was obvious like "Croaky" then "Bertolli" then "Croaky" and then someone else so I have them and then the dialogue. So...

VC: So it just came naturally to you?

PS: Ja, ja, ja. So that was, and those things I'd forgotten too. Then I was digging through all my stuff coz I kept things and I found these little booklets there again.

VC: Like journals?

PS: ja ja ja. I'd keep - anything that happened I'd write down, but always in dialogue form. It wasn't narration.

VC: So you always saw it?

PS: Yes, saw it and heard it. It was theatre as opposed to novel you know novel kind of writing or short story writing. It had to be dialogue driven, acted.

VC: Characters?

PS: Characters ja. Characters. So that's it, ja. And then that was also put to bed and then ja so coz I was going to be, going to do engineering. And then I got to UCT and, and my Dad thought I was doing engineering. I convinced him I would start with a BA coz I didn't want to do engineering at all. He said "OK do a BA first then you gonna do you know, um...". And I did BA broadcasting coz I was gonna be a sports commentator. That's what I wanted to be coz I ... used to sit at school with a little tape recorder (V laughs) "High and he's got the ball and he passes it to Bartarco. Bartarco passes to Bertolli and Bertolli shoots and it's a goal!" ai, oh or something like that. (VC laughs) so I was going to be a ...

VC: You are always talking.

PS: Yeah, yes I always had to do that. Ja. Ok. Ja so then I would also type out the game so I'd say so and so and so and so scored. I've even got those books. A joke.

VC: Wow.

PS: I've still got the books "Roaring Ricardo scores six" you know then. So I'd write with kokey and then it was all written. No typewriters in those days so it was all...

VC: Ja?

PS: ...all, wrote it out. I said "Today at the college of the Little Flower stadium in front of a huge crowd of 23" so (VC laughs) I always made it bigger than it was. Twenty three people watching.

VC: Ja.

PS: Ja, a huge roaring crowd. No, right so, so I used to write the reports so I would record them and stick them on the laboratory window so people would come and read how they were so Bertaco would come along. Ricardo is from Lourenco Marques thick glasses he pointed and says, "See I was the hero of this game you know" so it was kind of journalism as well.

VC: Ja.

PS: Journalism and sports broadcasting. That was what I wanted, really what I wanted to do. But then of course and stuff...

VC: So they had broadcasting as well?

PS: Yes it was a thing called BA Broadcasting and it was Dewar McCormack.

VC: Wow!

PS: And he used to teach us class and at UCT, Little Theatre UCT we had a little recording studio as part of the department. And it did microphone technique and all of that.

VC: I wonder if it's still there.

PS: Yes, well don't know if they've kept that little studio but it, was upstairs just next to the movement room. We just need to know if it's still there. Jacqui....(Singer)

VC: Ja.

PS: ...would know.

VC: Ja.

PS: And I'd do little bits there and we used to go to SABC now and again and um...

VC: So you didn't do any drama or did that come into it?

PS: Um... well drama was part of it but well a very small part of it because mainly voice, so we only did voice technique, voice classes but then of course I saw Robert Mohr's SEPPUKU. His Kibuki and Peter Kruger was in that, and Pieter Dirk Uys. It was the first time he put on drag coz he played all the women, Japanese are played by men and there was Pieter doing his whole thing and I think that's where he got that ...

VC: Mm.

PS: ...dresses on stage. Ja,ja,ja. Anyway so um er but I didn't know him very well, he just came into drama school then. When I saw that play SEPPUKU that theatricality of the smell of the grease paint and the way they did it so dramatic and intense.

VC: Intense.

PS: And like you know I remember like Peter Krummeck, when he cut his stomach and he had those red ribbons that fell (VC intake of breath) down the stage. And so like a slight ramp and all these red ribbons rolled down to the foot lights sort of stuff, but it was so like dramatic. I think that tapped into stuff I was doing when I was a little kid you know, it was like this is my world. This um... was a huge thing, this is my world. But I couldn't tell my dad that I was going to do this. But anyway because like Sue, Suzie Kiel was there, Jackie Singer and all that.

VC: It was that class.

PS: It was that class ja. And of course three guys, me Chris Prophet and Alex Mavro.

VC: Alex Mavro.

PS: Yeah Alex Mavro was there. Twenty four girls you know. So they always like needed us for drama if they were doing scenes.

VS: So you've got lots of...

PS: Ja parts. So I'm doing this scene from LONG DAY'S JOURNEY (INTO NIGHT) you would you know.

VC: Then you would get to play one of the brothers.

PS: Then Jackie would say "I'm doing this scene, can you come and ..." I'd say "Ja I can I'll do it". So the guys were just being farmed out to do...

VC: ...all the nice parts.

PS: Ja all the nice parts to act opposite for crit class and open class and all of that. And then of course in the plays as well, then you know Mavis Taylor would come up and say "Paul we need you. Paul come on man." God [Afr] you know God [Afri], so I did one play after another.

VC: So you were lucky.

PS: Yes in that sense I really cut my teeth on all of these and then of course some courses suffered. I mean I had to, I plugged some courses, so I stayed like on a year at UCT longer doing BA than I should have. And even then I didn't quite finish as I had to finish later on coz it was that third language thing you know- tried French, tried Italian. (VC laughs) and when that fell away a good many years later I was working at Capab (Cape Performing Arts Board) doing- it was Michael Atkinson I remember. Um...years later I went and just did that one subject – Social Anthropol. And then I got my BA. But I left UCT in those early years to go to the Space without having finished the BA.

VC: When did the Space open, what year?

PS: Ja, so the Space was 1972.

VC: 1972.

PS: Ja and um...

VC: Is that when you met Billy?(Flynn)

PS: No, no, no, no, no. We were in HAMLET in 1969 at UCT.(University of Cape Town)

VC: Was he at UCT?

PS: Ja Billy was one year behind me coz he went to the army. Although we were the same age he went to the army and ... he was, he lived in Cape Town. I lived in Messina. In fact I'm writing the book it's taking me a while. It's called FLYING WITH FLYNN our 40 years together from 1968 to virtually 2008. He died just before then. So it was virtually 40 years. It's actually 39. So it's our, it's like a 40 year history of South African theatre really, coz we were at UCT and then we formed the Space together. Then came up and the Market you know, so it's that whole... and it's interesting that there was 20 years in Apartheid, 20 years...

VC: 20 years out.

PS: Freedom. So it's fascinating that Billy's, that the 40 years covers that...

VC: Whole thing.

PS: Whole thing from before and after you know.

VC: So but...

PS: So...

VC: So but so yes the Space?

PS: UCT- that is where we kind of met and then first of all started with Robert Mohr's HAMLET together for the first time. Very funny thing. "Hey who goes there" He was playing Bernardo and I was Horatio "Friends to this ground" or something. Friends. The first thing we said to each other on stage was "Hey who goes there" "Friends" was the ...

VC: Oh sweet.

PS: Interesting you know, the friendship started there in that production. Oh yeah then the Space was '72 and that was – I mean Brian Astbury had gone with Yvonne (Bryceland) to, to... um... to London and seen Marowitz (Charles) Open Space Tottenham Court Road, and he came back and said, "We are going to open a thing like the Open Space" so he was very hung up on that name, just a space where we were going to perform theatre.

VC: A space.

PS: Ja and funnily enough in that first year that's when I first met Mannie (Manim) and Barney(Simon) because they'd heard in Joburg these guys doing a play doing theatre for a, with mixed casts for mixed audiences and that's what got Barney "How are they achieving this?" but everybody...

VC: Barney.

PS: ...in Cape Town was going, everybody was going they came down to see how Brian was doing it. Remember. (whispers) Barney Simon and Mannie Manim are coming. All we knew was that Mannie was in charge of PACT (Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal) and that Barney was like this cutting edge guy who worked with black okes in Joburg. That's all we knew.

VC: Ja, that's when Barney was still at Dorkay then.

PS: Ja Dorkay House. Ja he was doing you know... and then they came and saw how we had a club. Anyone could join for one cent because it was all one step ahead ...

VC: ...of the government

PS: ...of the government ja. That if you ever – someone said if you have a club then they can't stop you coming to a private club. So it was one cent to enter. So when the audience came up, black, white, coloured whatever, (whispers) "Did you join the club" "er uh no uh" "If you don't join the club you can't see the show". "How much is it?" "One cent". Put the cent down and sign up and in they'd go. So they'd be on the mailing list, out your address. The security police would come there, look and see this happening and then say "Ah man shit that's how you do it". You know. (both laugh).

VC: Cent's not enough (both laugh)

PS: Ja, ja. So that was, that was in a sense our freedom of er... of theatre even in that in those early days. It was quite unique. Though of course we were living in this incredibly, ah you know it was actually an aberration of – it was very strange.

VC: And you didn't work for CAPAB then?

PS: Oh well there'd be the odd – like they were doing ROMEO AND JULIET and they wanted me to play Tybalt and Brian is woe(Afr.) with me, "Don't leave!" but, "Brian I'm just going to I'm just gonna, I'm just I'm- I have to do that." "You're going to work for the bloody government." The whole thing, coz being young actors too you wanted to stretch and all that and um... and then I played that which was ... and then come back to the Space you know. And then Mannie was the one who said, "Come up to Joburg" er... you know and ...

VC: And what year was that?

PS: That was 73 and he said ...

VC: That was when the Company started.

PS: Ja, and and he said, "Listen". He said, "Hey listen." Ja, no he said, "Don't worry. I want you to come and work for PACT to do ARTURO UI with..."

VC: Aletta.(Bezuidenhout)

PS: Two hooks were er... "Marowitz is coming out. Don't you want to work with Marowitz?" "Oh God open space and all that". He says "And also Barney wants to start a thing." So those were the two hooks for me. "He wants to start the same thing as Cape Town." And Brian was incandescent. He was just like "How can you be leaving us?" oh and I remember talking to Barney when he came.

VC: And Billy, was Billy...?

PS: Billy, you see Billy at that...

VC: Did he come up?

PS: ...point no, he was going to become a teacher. And he, he got a huge bursary from people in Cape Town to be a teacher.

VC: Right.

PS: So, so, so um... even though he was at the Space he still kind of, he wasn't sure if he was going to be a teacher still, although it was slowly going out of his mind. Or if he wasn't going to be a teacher he was going have to pay back...

VC: Ah the loan.

PS: ...because it was kind of a bursary thing. So he was really between two stools and he couldn't come up to Joburg.

VC: Ok so he came later.

PS: Ja. Ja, so he said “Uh Uh I have to stay on Cape Town and that.” So of course look on one level it was nice coz he went overseas and did HELLO AND GOODBYE with Yvonne and ...

VC: and Athol.(Fugard)

PS: Athol. Well I was with Athol as well.

VC: Ja

PS: Coz that first year I went – I did uh his part in PEOPLE ARE LIVING THERE. I was Shorty.

VC: Shorty.

PS: And he was going to be Don again. But he didn't want to leave PE (Port Elizabeth). He was moaning coz he suddenly said ?? and then Brian saying “Athol” He said, “ I can't live in Cape Town. I got to live in PE. I can't live in Cape Town.” So he let them down and Yvonne was cross with him but he couldn't live in Cape Town you see. He only realized then. So then he said “So who's gonna do?” so they made me play his part which is dreadful. Don is the kakkest part ever written.

VC: Horrible part.

PS: Ja then we said “Now we need a Shorty.” So I said “Bill, Bill.” And they wanted ... I said “No, no you've got to use Bill.” They wanted to use Patrick Kennedy or whatever his name was – it wasn't Patrick Kennedy it was some guy. Kak, it's kak man. I said “Bill Bill choose Bill”. Anyway Bill came in they finally got Bill and that was...

VC: You're also not a Don.

PS: No,no, no. Anyway I gave Bill my best bloody part. (VC laughs) but anyway I was forced to play Don. I had no choice. But anyway then I came to Joburg coz of Mannie and Brian was woes (Afr.). I said, “Brian listen I'll come back again and be in things but um but er Mannie and Barney.”

VC: You had to be there.

PS: Yes it seemed to be happening and I, and I – you see I didn't connect with anyone at the Market (sic) coz Athol was down in a sense he wasn't with us. He was in PE. So I thought if the guru is going to be sitting in PE I'm not gonna work with him – Ok we're doing our own work and Pieter Dirk Uys was with us and that. But I didn't like to, Pieter wasn't writing parts for Billy and me he was writing like... Billy and I wanted to be doing other stuff. (both laugh) And so I needed to, I needed a – and Donald Howarth was lovely to work with but Donald was also coming and going and coz, so Donald came with us okay and he was very exciting to work with because he did ENEMY / BOTTICELLI which was magnificent – I'm still trying to find it.

VC: I loved Donald. The script?

PS: Ja, he was, I mean that play ENEMY/BOTTICELLI if we could do it today. I've got the poster Jana (Cilliers) gave it to me. '42/'72. It was like the Second World War and Vietnam and he put the two plays together.

VC: Like IBCHEK. He did that with Ibsen.

PS: Yes, yes. The two guys upstairs were sitting in a fox hole in Vietnam and me and Billy were sitting in the desert below and, and at the end the gun falls down this light as I reach for the gun it's fallen from the fox hole, so the Vietnam guy goes for his gun, the American and I go for- and we look at the two wars just touch '72/'42 (touches his fingertips together). The audience just, to just that gasp or war, anti-war. It was such a brilliant... Perhaps the greatest anti-war piece ever seen – only the Space...

VC: And don't you have, you haven't got it?

PS: No I'm trying to find it. I contacted Brian Astbury. No trying to – because PACT of course did it with Richard Haines and Eckard Rabe – what did they do! ENEMY – which...

VC: Oh Ja.

PS:...is this twee thing which Barney- he hated it. Barney hated it.

VC: Hated it.

PS: Twee and sentimental. whereas Donald took this thing and he had excerpts from, in the play, like flashes of like audio stuff of Nixon saying "Oh these bums on the college campuses are (shooting sounds)" – that time they were shooting guys at Kent State University.

VC: Ja.

PS: So he combined all these things you know. It was just brilliant. Brilliant. And only Cape Town saw it for six weeks.

VC: I've never even heard of it.

PS: ENEMY BOTTICELLI '42/'72, that is a play to find. I mean it exists.

VC: Donald. Is he dead? I don't even know.

PS: Donald, in fact it's funny you know you should try and get Brian Astbury to talk to. I email him every now and again. In fact, I should email him actually coz he's got...

VC: ...email ? Ask him what's happened to Donald.

PS: It's a wonderful story he told me last time he was here that um... that er... that Donald went to live in Wales and he's kind of got dementia or something now.

VC: Oh really, coz he went to live with his mother.

PS: That's right.

VC: Who was dying.

PS: Ja, ja, ja. Brian says he's like, he's still kind of around but he doesn't remember what he did and all that sort of stuff and Brian is trying to make a – BBC was interested in making a film of the Space so he wanted to keep all the of the material.

VC: Has he got all the stuff actually.

PS: He's got a lot of the stuff actually. And there's also that book er... the Space book you see. I've got the book here.

VC: Ja, ja, ja.

PS: Ja, um... coz um... also ja with my stories of Billy I'm going through stuff that's not even in that book, of our memories of the Space like – how it worked like this. Mrs A was in charge of the books, Brian's mother. Go and talk to her. "Brian can we have some money?" "Talk to my mother." (VC laughs) God me and Billy that's where our 10% thing came - 10% hey, if ever we got t gig we'd say 10% whoever got the job. It means you give me 10% coz I've scored the gig.

VC: Right.

PS: And we'd stand outside Mrs A's office – "OK 10% if you ask for the money this week, I'll give you 10%." (VC laughs) We used to get R49.00 a week so I got R4.90 if I ...

VC: Less.

PS: Extra and I would get R4.90 less of my money on top of his money if he went in and said "Mrs A can we have the thing?" and then if he was too chicken then I would go in and he would give me R4.90.

VC: (laughs) He didn't want to pay you at all.

PS: Ja, ja, coz she used to, "We haven't done well." "The play sold out." Because ENEMY/BOTTICELLI – we were just - the people were cramming. They were queuing outside. Could have run that. See that was a pity. Because Brian knows that – we didn't know coz we had two going and that it should have just stayed there.

VC: Ja.

PS: And done other stuff in other theatres.

VC: But we also made that mistake at the Market.

PS: Oh and the Market. You know you don't actually realize that when you have something like that, you should really have to let it – you know Billy and I learned that with HEEL AGAINST THE HEAD. Although we were also dof coz we stopped after two and a half years. We were man, coz we should have taken breaks and just go on – we could still be running today coz there's, there's, it's like THE MOUSE TRAP. You see it gets a momentum of its own. Ja it's a momentum and then it if you get very tired of it then re-cast it.

VC: Yeah let someone else play it.

PS: Ja, but if the public want it then give it to them.

VC: I know

PS: Give it to them and, and, um...um...and that's a sadness and that, that's a sadness of ENEMY/BOTTICELLI and I think that's why it never came to a book form, or, or published because it was abandoned before its time. You know if people got to know about it, we could have travelled overseas with it.

VC: Easily.

PS: Absolutely, I mean they would have gone mad if it was at Edinburgh Festival.

VC: Like Donald he was very famous then.

PS: Just written A LILY IN LITTLE INDIA – that piece would have travelled the world and would have been published and everything.

VC: It could still now.

PS: You know a piece of South African theatre created in South Africa that just lived and died in a six week period, you know. It's that also the – it's also why it's good it's a whole archival thing and then people give you the whole...

VC: People also don't understand the whole ... what's going on properly.

PS: Yes we also didn't know what we had.

VC: No we didn't even know.

PS: Ja, ja.

VC: ?

PS: Because you just did the material. You just did it. Like, we, have we got a script of MARICO MOONSHINE?(AND MAMPOER)

VC: I've never seen one

PS: But you see that would...

VS: Maybe Janice has got one.

PS: Now you see that...

VC: I'm going to go and see Janice.

PS: You must because we have to ... I was thinking the other day...

VC: Lovely, I loved that.

PS: Look at all these kak musicals that are on.

VC: Ahh

PS: If we did MARICO MOONSHINE now, well that taste of nostalgia. Those little songs of Colin Shapiro...

VC: Songs

PS: Stories that we did with songs in between and that archetypal – whatever you call it – ah, windmill in the middle of the stage. When he climbed up as the vulture I mean it's beautiful.

VC: Ja.

PS: The stories and the songs.

VC: And we just – oh that's done, finished.

PS: Ja now that should be a piece of South African theatre that just, should last forever you know.

VC: I'm going to write it down for Janice.

PS: Ja, MARICO, MOONSHINE AND MAMPOER. Ja, for Janice. Don't forget to ask her that question. Ja, ja.

VC: OK. Ok so then you came up here.

PS: Came to Joburg. Yes, and then worked you know in all those little things for Barney. But that connection with Barney for me was important because I would never have been a playwright if it hadn't been for Barney.

VC: I doubt it.

PS: Thirty three, thirty three plays later. Thanks to Barney. Oh ja because you know he used to make us write...

VC: Remember when we stayed in his house.

PS: Ja, ja he used to make us write all little monologues, drive us mad, walks in the trees in Zoo Lake, eating an ice cream and telling me to keep his attention while he hid behind the trees you know. "Oh no man Barney man I'm telling you a story" and he'd just hide laughing, chuckling with his ice cream (VC laughs) "Keep my attention". "How can I keep your attention if you are stuck behind the tree" (PS laughs) all that kind of stuff you know.

VC: So he taught you without you realizing it.

PS: Yes.

VC: ??

PS: Yes, yes in that way too. Finding... I wrote, had little pieces. I mean the monologue that kicked off SATURDAY NIGHT AT THE PALACE was a monologue. I was doing it for him about a guy who likes his soccer boots. In fact it's in the play. If you look at it, read the play SATURDAY NIGHT A THE PALACE.

VC: Ja.

PS: He talks about, if you check his boots endorsed by Frans Peckinpah And that came from stuff that I had written for a Barney monologue that actually never ever happened. I said to Barney "Barney ohh ahh now next."

VC: You weren't in PEOPLE?

PS: No, no but I was in a – well we were in SHOW ME YOURS.

VC: Ja.

PS: A series of those things and then I for some reason – but also CINCINATTI – we were doing something else – CINCINATTI, but I was supposed to be in CINCINATTI but something else was happening. So, but it was on the edge.

VC: Ja to do the next one.

PS: In fact I was just writing about ...

VC: So you were always ... to write.

PS: Yes. I was writing...

VC: Me too.

PS: This guy who liked his soccer boots and it was going to be in the next PEOPLE type of thing.

VC: Ja.

PS: And then somehow that never happening but I had this piece, and I read it to Barney and he said “But what about, a bit more about” you know. And he actually made me think more about, about the guy's background, you know, so I...

VC: Coz I remember we were – I used to write a monologue and think – well that is done now.

PS: Ja, ja.

VC: Then Barney would – I liked that one phrase.

PS: Ja tell me more about that.

VC: Or I liked the guy's name.

PS: Yes, yes.

VC: So tell me about the guy. “God I've done it”.

PS: Exactly.

VC: But you hadn't done it.

PS: Oh no, no, no. And he took a thread and followed this little thread, little simple thread. And so, and that was the kind of work. Although I had written something kind of before because I went and spent that year 1979 I think it was a bit later on had gone back to Cape Town and ...

VC: You went back coz there was.. sometimes you weren't, didn't seem to be around.

PS: Ja, ja, ja.

VC: And 1975?

PS: After '75, '76, '75 we did that.

VC: And then 1980 you come back.

PS: Come back, ja that is right. So there was a bit of a gap coz I spent a coupla years in Cape Town.

VC: OK.

PS: And then came back to Joburg for good just before 1980. Um... um...

VC: So OK ja you weren't around. Were you around for the opening of the Market?

PS: Oh yes. No, no, no I was.

VC: Ja.

PS: That's when we knocked the walls down. I mean I, I, ah, I remember I was there when Mannie and Barney went with Maurice Norton tour quickly to this place before they knocked it down and said "This is Maurice Norton, they are going to smash this place down." Coz Maurice, coz we were friends with Maurice Norton and you know, his family. We still know his kids. And um... I remember him saying to Mannie and Barney that they are going to demolish this place.

VC: He was the engineer for the city council.

PS: Yes, yes. He was the state? He was an architect and he was on the board of old buildings and stuff like that you know. They were going to demolish it. Mannie and Barney went and they applied. They said "Chaps, don't knock this down I think we can use it." And then they said "OK" and that saved the Market. So Maurice actually saved the Market.

VC: Coz he said it looked like a Shakespearean theatre.

PS: Ja,ja he came in for this arch and all that. He was, he, Maurice wanted to save it because of the pin arch or ...

VC: Oh that biggest arch what, what.

PS: In the Southern Hemisphere.

VC: Ja.

PS: That's why he wanted to save it.

VC: Ja.

PS: So he thought how can I save the building and he knew Mannie and Barney were looking for a theatre.

VC: He knew they were looking for something.

PS: "Get this damn theatre working, keep the arch" and that is how it was saved. And then we were rehearsing up there then – the abattoir and that is when we saw the ox running down the road and climbing the walls.

VC: Oh.

PS: Ja it was the abattoir next door. But it was also that smell, remember that? Incredible when the wind blew this way.

VC: The trucks on the railway lines.

PS: Sheds where the animals went in and 'goied' on the train.

VC: It was awful.

PS: We saw the ox charging down and the oke with the panga chasing him hack,hack and it was – and the ox was climbing up the wall, climbing about higher than there (indicated height).

VC: To try and get away.

PS: To try and get away. Ja we were looking, we all became vegetarians.

VC: I did definitely.

PS: Ja.

VC: Didn't eat red meat.

PS: Ja because we saw that. We were so horrified, "Stop what you doing man! Let the poor ox alone".

VC: "Let him run away". Where to? It was the middle of town.

PS: Ja it couldn't just run away. Ja ? then Barney gave us these twelve pound hammers, fifteen pound hammers or whatever they were and we had to knock the walls down between – Mannie wanted the – wanted to make the wardrobe and laundry or something upstairs.

VC: Oh yes, yes, yes.

PS: It was upstairs there at the back, "Knock that wall because we going to make it one long room". So we 'kwa' go to prison detail as part of Barney's um... kind of improvising – for FORTUNE (FORTUNE AND MENS EYES.) So that was '75, wasn't even '76 before SEAGULL.

VC: Yes, yes.

PS: So we were still working then – and then because there was a shambles we had to do FORTUNE...

VC: You had to go to the Nunnery.

PS: At the Nunnery, ja, ja.

VC: It was meant to open the Upstairs or something.

PS: Yes, ja, ja it was meant to be before then, but we couldn't so then it became like default – it was – SEAGULL did it, because we were all pissed off because we were gonna open it you know.

VC: It would have been fantastic.

PS: Ja, ja but the Nunnery worked very well for our purposes. Thing is, we turned the whole thing into a prison – when you walked out people had to walk behind the scaffolding.

VC: I remember I had to do the lights one night, somebody didn't turn up, don't remember who it was.

PS: Ja, ja it's funny you know Billy and I – to this day well Billy's not around. I still call him Holyface, called old Nigel Vermaas, "Hey Holy face" everyone looks at us. (VC laughs) "Hey Holy face" Nigel "Ja, ja, ja." Coz he was the prison guard.

VC: Ja.

PS: ?

VC: And Ron Smerczak was Queenie.

PS: Queenie Ja, then, then Holyface – always called him Holyface (PS laughs) Ja.

VC: And then tell me so ja you were mostly performing up till ?

PS: Yes, yes.

VC: SATURDAY NIGHT actually.

PS: Yes, yes when we were still performing COLD STONE JUG, MOONSHINE, ja, ja and then that was after MOONSHINE that is when ...

VC: ...when...

PS: I was working.

VC: When you started writing.

PS: I saw that article on the front page of the Rand Daily Mail "Bizarre attack on road house" and I was – because...

VC: Which road house was it?

PS: Oh it was somewhere on the Southern suburbs or on the way to Krugersdorp but it was a little road house and it said, "Bizarre attack on road house" I've still even got the clipping. Kept that. Coz that, those are, is a part of my archive things. I've got the clipping. It was on the front page. And that was the kick off and I thought here's my play. I was – because I had this guy with his soccer boots. Kind of like kak duck tail drinking mad person and ... and, and I had a story about a black guy, also one of Barney's things about a guy going to KwaZulu Natal, takes his suitcase. What would he have in his suitcase if he goes? He hasn't been home for a long time, what would he take to KwaZulu Natal if he hasn't seen his family for a long time? Um ... I thought, oh shit he'd have little shoes and that was part of – a bit about –

I'd kind of written stuff but it wasn't formed or anything. I just had notes about it you know. So when I saw this thing, "Two youths ride up on a motorbike" that's basically what it said, "Last night at 2am in the morning two youths rode up on a motorbike and beat up the waiter, stole the cash and road off into the night" and that was the story it was like two things, so I thought shit OK I'm going to be this bad bastard and Billy can be the nice guy. And then, and then, and then there is the waiter, and then I suddenly thought the story is like then what if it's his last shift before he goes to see his family. Hasn't seen his family then for two years so that was the kick off point.

VC: So his suitcase is already there.

PS: Ja, packed even packed in the back.

VC: So?

PS: I wrote it in two weeks coz I suddenly thought there is my story.

VC: Had you written a play, an actual play before?

PS: All I'd done before that is um... one year, no two years before that in Cape Town I'd written ?? it's never been done. In fact I put it in my CV, but it's called RENOVATIONS, and it was a , was a play, it was a play. It only went as far as a play reading and I used, in the play reading, I used DI Wilson, Ronald France as the parents – and me the son and a coloured guy, and it was basically a story about a student in Cape Town who is in digs with a coloured. White guy who's got a coloured – stays with a coloured guy together you know in a little house like Mowbray or something, and his parents come on holiday and his father is a complete racist, "What is this? You staying with a kaffir?" and all that sort of shit. Ja so it was a – so I wrote it as a play .um... and it wasn't bad but it was very... God this is you know the first thing you try but I had the parents in a fight with the son. Father says, "You're moving, you're moving, you're getting out immediately." And the mother trying to say "Darling you know it's not that bad." "No man they like children man." And going like ?? sort of. It was so weird saying it obviously angry you know. Like the father was such a racist. And now the son is learning to live with people of other colour you know.

VC: Ja

PS: So.

VC: And the father was just bad.

PS: Ja, ja and you know it's a funny thing. It's something that I learned as a playwright too, also at the time, because I was very friendly with Billy Domingo who was a guy who...

VC: I remember Billy.

PS: Who is Billy Domingo who worked, he worked at the Nico [Malan Theatre] then as it was called. He was a stage manager. Then he went and worked at Sun City for years and years but he was a hell of nice guy. Played soccer in the grounds after work when I was ...

VC: What there, any ?

PS: Long long ago.

VC: Karen Cutts used to know him.

PS: That's right, Billy. So I was friends with Billy then I was, said to Billy, "I'm writing this play, you know RENOVATIONS. So I used to sit with him, taking notes like what's it like being a coloured guy and what are your experiences with white people. So I wrote all the notes and I said, "I'm going to put this in the play. Do you mind and that?" and he said, "No" Anyway and then when I'd written the thing and we had the play reading so it was like a, comma we were in the rehearsal room and there was Ron France and me and the coloured actor, can't remember who it was, but he was a young coloured actor. He was at CAPAB, that sort of thing, and we did the play and Billy was there and that – and then Billy didn't talk to me afterwards. And I said hi to him and he was completely, just – and then I realized, and it's something I've never forgotten since then. And that's why when people, youngsters bring me plays to read and that, I've got to have a policy now because I'm a playwright. I never take them. I'd say, "I'm sorry I'd love to – when it's finished and when you've put it on I'll come and see it", "I know but I want advice" and I think that was such a shock. I was like...

VC: Billy couldn't talk to you about it?

PS: Ja, coz you see, "You're using all my stuff. You're using all my stuff I've told you" But I said "That's why I asked you..."

VC: Asked you if I could -ooh.

PS: Nothing was signed or anything, of course not.

VC: That's horrible.

PS: I want to write a story about – I don't know what it's like to be a coloured person of course you know.

VC: Now you stole all his stuff.

PS: "You stole my..." So it was a ...and then I was going "But you said it was alright" but then I realized then I tried I put myself in his shoes, because he just wouldn't talk to me. He was angry. He was talking to everyone else saying "Paul Slab stole all my "

VC: ?

PS: Then I kind of, I tried to put myself in his shoes and I thought OK what's happened. When you have a story to tell – it's like my kind of thing. You know stories are precious as Barney always said, "You have your stories. OK they are your stories." That's what I tell new writers, "Your story is your story".

VC: Please just write it.

PS: Write your story however hard it is whatever journey you have to travel – travel, ask for little snippets for advice.

VC: Barney also got into trouble with that stuff.

PS: Ja but you see – hey?

VC: He did.

PS: I'm sure he did.

VC: He did get into trouble.

PS: Ja.

VC: Ja even with Nicky Rebelo.

PS: Ja, yes, God Nicky. He never forgave him. Nicky he still talks about OUTERS. Whatever it was and, and but I learned that very early. Such a blow to the friendship. Finished. Anyway, "Ja howzit" I went to Sun City years ago, "Ja howzit Paul" and I said "Hey Billy man how are you?" It never goes away. Coz we were big friends, that connection never came again. "You stole my story" and so I said to him, "Oh Billy would you, would you ever tell the story, would you ever write it down. You wouldn't."

VC: It's not the point.

PS: Ja, ja he said "Who knows one day I'd make the movie or something". It became a ...

VC: Is that why you never ever put it on?

PS: Maybe that stopped it from travelling any further coz I felt so guilty you know, about it and they were his words. OK I paraphrased them.

VC: But...

PS: But eh words the coloured guy spoke were his words – paraphrased . Cos that's what you kind of do. And that taught me then to ...

VC: Don't, don't.

PS: To – ja, it's sad. Because a lot of young writers say, "So you not going to help me." And so, so that's the difference between me and say a Barney who would. Barney would sit and maybe ...

VC: Get into trouble.

PS: Transform it into a play or it was them who turned it into a play, or ja, you get into trouble maybe.

VC: Ja.

PS: And, and, and so even reading things. I like ideas – oh it's a wonderful idea maybe you could use this.

VC: Ja well maybe.

PS: No do it.

VC: No I don't want to use it.

PS: I don't want to use it.

VC: Ja.

PS: Because then you'll get someone coming after the event and saying, "Oh ja you stole my idea didn't you?" "I didn't do a play." And I think it was such a big blow that, that I kind of – I thought okay, from now on I will do my own things. And then so that also made me not show people material like PALACE. That was my first play.

VC: Did you show to Barney?

PS: No. now okay what happened with PALACE. I wrote it in two weeks after I had these ideas from Barney and all that, I wrote it in two weeks and I still had work to do. It just coincided with the Amstel Playwright of the Year awards.

VC: Oh ja.

PS: So I sent it and of course it was, I won. Zakes Mda was second (laughs) and I still remember ...

VC: Wow.

PS: Ja Zakes was second I don't remember what he wrote. I was first. He was second. He'd won the year before so there was a bit of ??, anyway and um... but it was still kind of unfinished. And I know that it still had work to go, a way to go and I remember taking it to Mannie. I said, "Listen me and Billy are going to do it and we are going to do it with Timmy Kwebulana.

VC: Oh yes.

PS: Yes he was going to be Fats's part. (Dibeco)

VC: BORN IN THE RSA. Ja.

PS: Ja ja ja and um "Bobby Heaney's going to direct coz Bobby had just done LONE STAR AND PRIVATE WARS in the Laager." And I wanted, I said Bobby was right, perfect.

VC: Ja.

PS: Timmy didn't manage ?? Mannie.

VC: You didn't know Bobby that well then.

PS: No we'd been at UCT and I'd seen that stuff that I liked specifically. Now, thing is, I gave it I was, I before you – what happened was I gave it to Barney to read coz I was very nervous. And it was before OUTERS, Nicky's thing, but I knew the way that Barney worked and Barney would take something and you know go in his own direction. And I was also scared, I was actually, I thought ...

VC: Coz you wanted to.

PS: I knew I wanted, I knew what I wanted to do and I, coz Barney already said, "OK, now throw the script away and take risks" (they laugh). That is what he said – as much as I enjoy taking risks with Barney as an actor now I was a writer.

VC: No.

PS: It's not that I – I learned later on to kill my darlings but even if you, even without the play I killed my darlings. That's the thing with Fats coz that happened in rehearsal, but I, I knew what I sort of wanted to do. Me and Billy. And I thought if Barney was going to be with us it was going to be something else.

VC: It would've been.

PS: It would have been which maybe wouldn't have been a bad thing. Maybe it would have got to New York who knows.

VC: ?? you know.

PS: Anyway so I said to Mannie, "Bobby's going to direct it" and all that. Coz even when Barney saw it he said, "Ja you guys you don't take risks". Really it was too conventional for him. And then Timmy Kwebulana fell out. He got some TV movie. "What are we going to do?" and then Fats was there. Billy saw Fats in the pub.

VC: Doing his crossword?

PS: Ja, Fats. Ja, "So Fats, so you wanna do this?" "Ja." And then, and so that in the writing of it, in the rehearsing of it I remember...

VC: Did you improvise at all in rehearsal?

PS: Well what happened was – we started rehearsal – and I'd had the first comedy going into the tragedy thing and er ... Fats' character had a lot more lines and I think it was a mixture of Fats not wanting to talk too much – it was one thing – slightly later on ?? No, no and he said, "I would never say that", and then I was able then at that time, and I think maybe it was my experience with the Cape Town thing it was – I thought well okay.

VC: If you don't want to say it, don't.

PS: Don't say it. So I just cut alright, don't say that, don't say that. I would just ...

VC: Fats was tricky.

PS: Ja, very tricky to work with, but in a funny way, he was the perfect first person because he had a lot more dialogue in the play.

VC: And he didn't need it?

PS: He didn't need it, he didn't want it. So then I had to work then, as a writer and that, to get the slumbering volcano to explode. And of course that added to the tension in the play.

VC: Ja.

PS: So, so, so, so, so. Sixty or seventy percent of it was written, eighty percent of it was written but that twenty percent that dealt with Fats' character came from Fats – just said, "I would not respond to this. I would not respond to this".

VC: Wouldn't do that.

PS: Ja, ja and his silence made, gave the play the power um... of course that was ...

VC: Do you need a break?

PS: Ja, ja, can we have a break.

VC: I see you're getting tired. (Paul sighs).

PS: Do you want some tea or coffee.

VC: Ja I'll have some coffee.

PS: Yes, coffee yes.

(Tape left on during tea by mistake – unrelated conversation)

VC: According to this (looking at the play list) KAROO GRAND was your next play at the Market.

PS: Yes, yes at the Market. Now it's funny how things are. It's like almost like every play – when I read about all playwrights they seem to have a thing that once, because I would see PALACE as my first play even though RENOVATIONS was written before it, never saw the light of day, was very much an experimental piece. So KAROO GRAND was actually my second play and there's always that thing where you try and over reach yourself. It's almost like – this has got to be better than the one you did before and it's go to travel the same distance.

VC: I was the ASM [assistant stage manager].

PS: God!

VC: Remember.

PS: Ja. And there was Patrick [Mynhardt] and Bobby also ? of making the mistake casting. I mean Patrick in a sense was the wrong person. He was particularly wooden in those days.

VC: Also he wasn't used to new work.

PS: No, no.

VC: Which is a difficult thing.

PS: Patrick never had a connection with the play. He never bought into this guy who listens to old music. And in fact it was based on the uncle who just drank all the time, that was a very sharp edged character. Not a sort of, sort of ? he wasn't in it- I'm not blaming Patrick.

VC: No that was ...

PS: That was – you need a kind of like connection with the part like Danny's [Keogh] connection with Kyle in PALE NATIVES is the perfect marriage. Here's a thing, written, tailor made. I knew this person and it comes out you know. Jus, you must see Lionel in PALE NATIVES he jussus, he gives it his slant. He is like so different to Danny. He's like when, anyway that was lovely when an actor takes on something and really ...

VC: Makes it.

PS: Makes it and based on ??? is a drunk bitter ? Anyway for many reasons it didn't work because I was trying to think what would be effective as opposed to the story.

VC: To your love of it.

PS: So even though it was a story of a hotel, has a bypass going past, or people don't come to the town anymore so it's dying, that was the story but it didn't, it's one of those things where all of the components don't come together and it just, okay well you know.

VC: Done.

PS: It's the kind of play you need ...

VC: To get to the next one.

PS: It either kills you and stops you writing or it makes you say, "OK come on, let's do this again. Let's..."

VC: I'm going to do another.

PS: Let's tell another story. Ja, and let's take the lessons we've learnt."

VC: So you did learn a lot?

PS: I did, but also in terms of, not only writing, coz you know. I've got that, I've got all the notes from KAROO GRAND. I've got all the long hand stuff. Not only that um... but also, from then on when I did a new play I kind of wrote it with people in mind, and then, and then travelled. I'd make sure that it kind of, pieces fitted before I went on. And I thought let me ...

VC: Think about who could play it as well.

PS: And have particular people in mind. That's why with UNDER THE OAKS and OVER THE HILL – you got that.

VC: Ja.

PS: That was also at the Market, ja.

VC: That's the next one.

PS: Of having, of having, what's her name? I knew Kate Edwards so well, worked together so much you know, wrote it for Kate.

VC: Ja, so there was none of that

PS: Yes, yes.

VC: I don't understand.

PS: A response, straight and also the questions she'd ask me would be you know, "I don't feel right about this". You know Patrick never ever did that, he mumbled.

VC: He never said anything.

PS: Never said anything ja. And you need that as a writer. Like even ...

VC: It's good to be questioned.

PS: Like even you know what's happened in our play, a perfect example in PALE NATIVES now as we are doing it now when Anthony [Coleman] came and said, "You know there's a thing just before Kyle comes on" and I wanted light before Kyle comes on you know, so I wanted a scene that was, you know and jovial and fun. I think about, about rude about capturing the chickens, in the old days, you had to get a chicken, you had to go with an axe and chop the head off yourself.

VC: Ja.

PS: So his Dad made him go, aged nine and a half to Mrs Prentice to buy the chicken and chop its head off. And so he goes, but in the end she chops it off because he can't do it. Casing the chickens with his beady eyes pwaak, puk, puk, puk, puk, puk and because it was me and I'd written the part I went straight into it and that, and Anthony's, "Did you know I'm in a bit of a bad mood here, I don't see how I ...the transitions not right." So I looked at it again and also now because I was in the play, rehearsing writing.

VC: You know exactly...

PS: With Bobby – so we were rushed. So now I took it way now and I spent like seven hours and I made Eddie, Billy's character "So now remember man, remember man" and then he walked outside and his old man, "He was chicken hey, he didn't want to go in" so Eddie pulls the story. So he starts telling a few wrong facts. And then Randy "No it wasn't like that man, it wasn't like that."

VC: So it wasn't a bad mood?

PS: "I've knocked on the bloody door and then she said ... and then I knocked on the door and she came out." In other words the transition is much better now so it's taken twenty years to make the transition. So a play's never you know, so that's also a lovely thing about revisiting it. And, and, and I know that in a sense things could have happened in KAROO GRAND – the actor says, "Listen I don't – you know."

VC: But...

PS: No but since then I've worked with people who challenge me as a writer. Who'd say ag you know it's just ...

VC: Pauly come on.

PS: I don't want – I always laughed at Billy you know. First day of rehearsal, "I'm not saying this. I'm not saying this" (VC laughs). And all the others and Bobby would just keep a straight face but then but as we went along the lines were back.

VC: Came back.

PS: Because there's a reason they were there because I'd spent months and months building to that point.

VC: ?

PS: "Don't need to say this, don't need to say this" to actually Bobby and then (VC laughs) that's what happens with you know (VC laughs).

VC: Ja Paul ja, so, so KAROO GRAND was a bit of a ... and you've never ever done it again.

PS: No I have had an inclination to revisit the story but I don't know if I would or if it's that important to me.

VC: Okay.

PS: You know.

VC: Now UNDER THE OAKS and OVER THE HILL was next.

PS: Yes, now okay. It's a lovely story. Okay now that bit also funny that it was spring somewhere? At that time PACT [Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal] had a little festival called the Pot Pourri Festival.

VC: I remember that. Oh I remember that. Some of it was in the Laundromat.

PS: The Laundro.

VC: At the Alex [Alexander Theatre].

PS: They called it Laundro at the Alex. And I still remember Frantz Dubrowski came to me and said, "Listen I..."

VC: He was still with PACT then.

PS: "This Pot Pourri Festival, and I've got to have something because I've got to direct." Ken [Leach] or someone told him. "I've got to direct these guys; I've got to do something so – I've got to use Jimmy Borthwick." So gonna write, so then I thought UNDER THE OAKS, thinking, watching the cricket at Newlands. A guy like Jimmy sitting with us talking kak. And then his wife has to bring the beers and she doesn't arrive. That was the thing. And then I thought I'd have a guy from Natal, "Hello and haha" you know talking shit. "How are you?" "Bloody banana boy, hey." Anyway so I wrote a little; I thought no perfect and because I'd been there and knew Newlands and this poephol from – it was Neil McCarthy, Neil was the first one. It was with Jonathan [Rands]. Shit I haven't remembered who was it, was it Neil McCarthy? I think it was Neil. Anyway it doesn't matter – could have been Neil McCarthy – he was the first Richard and Jimmy. So I wrote that, it was about forty minutes. PACT and we did it in that thing. And they went through the roof, the guys just went mad.

VC: ?

PS: People loved it. And then so I worked on it a bit more and then it stayed like that. And then, oh it was also for the PACT experimental company or something. Peter Terry was in charge, or something.

VC: Oh my.

PS: I can't remember but they wanted like an evening, and I thought well okay, UNDER THE OAKS and OVER THE HILL. I thought I'd – how can I use the same actors.

VC: Two different ...

PS: Two different ...

VC: Stories.

PS: Stories and, and, and Kate had always played Beatrice, the wife Beatrice. She could be the beauty queen, sort of story you know. From Nelspruit or whatever. It's funny and I called her Lynette, which is just like – Barney "Why did you call her Lynette?" (VC laughs) Lynette is still like – although she was different to your character.

VC: The beauty queen. All beauty queens are called Lynette anyway.

PS: Ja, ja Lynette, ja (both laugh) I don't know why she was called Lynette anyway it was ...

VC: Lynette.

PS: Lynette, she didn't have to be Lynette. It must have been a tribute to Barney. I said "Barney it must be because the play's so deep".

VC: For so many years.

PS: But she was a different person.

VC: Ja.

PS: Your character was like paranoid whereas she was just hey yay. Anyway and so Kate could play Beatrice, this older woman, and the thing you know, fading thing. So it worked nicely that I could, you know and then I needed some guy who could do rugby and that was when Jonathan came in, Jonathan Rands. He could play Richard with his cravat.

VC: Yes.

PS: Then he could also be a rigger bugger you know.

VC: Now this was going to be the production for the Market or no?

PS: No you know how – now I know what it was, it was for the Grahamstown Festival.

VC: OK.

PS: It was on the main, that's where it had its kick off and I think it wasn't even PACT because I thought – someone says, "Come on, come to the Grahamstown Festival" so I'd – I wonder if it was tied in, was it not the young artists awards?

VC: It was.

PS: I think it was tied in. I needed, I needed a play because I'd won the young artist award.

VC: It probably was.

PS: And that was it, ja.

VC: So they produced it in other words.

PS: Ja, and, and, and we took it to Grahamstown, that's right. Anyway I can't remember something like that. But anyway that's where it had its birth and having the two casts it worked like a bomb – but we made a balls up. You know it's funny how you do things. I'd say now they need to laugh so I made UNDER THE OAKS no OVER THE HILL and then UNDER THE OAKS.

VC: Not the other way around?

PS: Ja, and of course when I ran it properly in the theatre, I swapped it around.

VC: Ja.

PS: Because the second play is a better play, and the first one's frivolous. So when people saw it at Grahamstown the reviews weren't great.

VC: ??

PS: They said? it must be played UNDER THE OAKS and OVER THE HILL, it has to be played like that. You see those are the things you discover.

VC: Ja.

PS: With audiences coz then they come out. It was ag, OVER THE HILL was quite – it's a good play, was a good play. Short but it was a good play.

VC: Not good for it to be on first.

PS: No it was about a guy, big mistake, big mistake and I realized as soon as we did it for audiences I thought this is wrong. Anyway and then God is that yours (indicates coffee; VC laughs) Sorry coz I've got a bit of sugar in mine.

VC: Oh I see.

PS: Yuk. Anyway so um... um... ja, so that was down in Grahamstown and then it sort of travelled and we also took it to the Market because um... I think there was – I've never forgotten there was a Standard Bank – it was a huge big corporate thing and we did it in the Main Theatre in the Market.

VC: Oh for – for an event.

PS: For... it was one of the previews. I think it was for Mandie, Mandie van der Spuy. There was a huge, gala evening and all the sports people came and we had a good run there in the Main Theatre.

VC: I remember it well.

PS: Did good.

VC: Did very well.

PS: Did very well. Ja then we went to the Baxter Concert Hall. That's when I jumped on a woman, in the days when people like had their cell phones and I screamed at her coz she was on her cell phone in the show.

VC: Were there cell phones around then?

PS: Ja.

VC: During the show? Oh so did you ...

PS: She was in the back row. I was standing in the back watching right in the back row, "Don't ????" it was early days of cell phones. She was like trying to phone someone – coz you didn't have sms's and things.

VC: No just, ja.

PS: Ja, so...

VC: Now then. MAKING LIKE AMERICA, the one that you haven't got at all.

PS: Oh ja, ja. Well there again it was Bobby.

VC: That was in um ...

PS: That was Upstairs, Barney Simon Theatre when we played in the same configuration we played PALACE, against the back wall there. There's something side wall with audiences on three sides. That's ja, and you know I wanted to work with Marius [Weyers], and I said, "Shit Marius I've got a play for us. I've got a play for you and me as brothers". And um... it was nice and then I wanted Billy to play Nicky's part, I can't remember he was doing something else and then Nicky (Rebelo) came in and Lida Meiring was our mother.

VC: Okay.

PS: Lida was – and that was lovely. We took it to Cape Town as well. We also went to the Baxter with that. And that was very successful.

VC: The Baxter hasn't got a copy?

PS: No you see because what happened was, the stage manager I think it was, we did the play and then – I'm just talking about the text. I mean I've got notes, I've got – but you see even the first 80% or 75% of the play that I've got, it's stuff that we worked, we still worked upon that later on.

VC: Ja.

PS: So in other words it's an early rehearsal version without the end and um... and, and what I've done subsequently to plays is – I mean OVER THE HILL, I mean UNDER THE OAKS I find different versions. Jimmy came with the script. "Here man but Winston Churchill, Winston Churchill we put those lines in in rehearsal and it's not in the Wits University Press."

VC: Published version.

PS: Published version. This shit hasn't got the Winston Churchill section coz...

VC: Ja BORN IN THE RSA was also a mess.

PS: And that was er... Jimmy that had had the notes. So now I've got a version in my computer. When anyone else – would like – Judy Broderick's son now wants to do UNDER THE OAKS – or whoever would want to do it, I've given them the version that I updated from Jimmy's notes.

VC: All your stuff.

PS: So I say don't use the Wits University Press one which was published, because that hasn't got these things in and that's only now when I'm finished rehearsal when I come home, I go back and I put all the changes in.

VC: Ja, straight away.

PS: Straight away.

VC: It's easier now with the computer.

PS: Much easier, ja. I mean they made cuts now, changes it was called VICTORIA ALMOST FALLS – MY LOW FAT ALMOST ITALIAN WEDDING, and I changed it, it's more catchy, sounds like the Greek thing.

VC: Are you going to do it up here?

PS: Ja, we're going to try. I want James [Ngcobo] to, to – coz Graham [Hopkins] wants to do it again. Graham was wonderful. How he gets from here to there I don't know. I thought he wouldn't crack it but it's lovely. And there's a lovely black actor from the Eastern Cape who plays the waiter whose name is Qobo. He's wonderful. Ja we must do it here coz the audiences respond. We were chocabloc – it played the last week of last December and the first week of January except for the first few days.

VC: Full, full.

PS: Full, full, full. People don't go to theatre coz it's New Year, it's Christmas – full – because why? Seven characters in an Italian restaurant, and a wedding that goes wrong. That's what people are hungry for – arguments, stories, operas – singing it's like...

VC: Ja.

PS: Real theatre you know. And, and the, what's her name Anthea Thompson.

VC: Oh she's fabulous.

PS: I couldn't believe as I watched I thought ...

VC: How are you doing ...

PS: Where does this person come from, where. I kept think she'd come from the street, she's Mavis, she's Mavis. She's Mavis. She was ...

VC: Just walked into your rehearsal.

PS: She's Mavis. She sits there going ??

VC: She's so funny.

PS: She is beyond belief. If – if she – no, who won't take notice of – she should win the best actress. She was just, just unbelievable. Anyway, but people were responding you know. And that's what so lekker is but anyway...

VC: Let's go back to MAKING LIKE AMERICA

PS: Ja, MAKING LIKE AMERICA - I thought it would be great for Marius and that, and then we did it – ja – hugely successful Upstairs and we took it to Cape Town but that was it.

VC: Didn't take it overseas.

PS: Lost the script. No, no, no lost the script afterwards. That's one play that lived for its time and died.

VC: That was that.

PS: That was that, but those things happen.

VC: Ja and SMALLHOLDING.

PS: Later in the year you still get people coming along saying ?? Ja SMALLHOLDING – there again, and it's funny you know, because old Sello [Maake Ka Ngube] – God I got cross, coz he put in interviews, and I got so angry.

VC:Sello?

PS: Sello Maake Ka Ngube.

VC: ??

PS: He played, he played.

VC: Yes he was in it, hey.

PS: The guy whose dog – whose throat had been ripped out by the dog – huge scar. Couldn't speak. He was mute um... and I wrote the play and it was a response. I started writing it – it's about this boer who's got a small holding, he's got a black oke who works with him but he's put fences all around. It was 1989 and we had that elections in '89 and the official opposition, it used to be the Nats.

VC: That, the referendum.

PS: No, no.

VC: That was..

PS: No it was an election before.

VC: It was the Coloured...

PS: Ja, the Tripartite all if that this was the election before the shit hit the fan. But, but the Nats were in power and the PFP was the official opposition – with Colin Eglin, I think, and those guys. So it was the only, people have forgotten, what happened in that election was the Conservative Party became...

VC: That's right.

PS: The official opposition. So we had the Nats in charge.

VC: That's right.

PS: And Andries Treurnicht and them.

VC: The opposition.

PS: The opposition and I remember thinking fuck, this country is now finished. And that was my spark for SMALLHOLDING. I thought fuck it I'm writing a parable about ...

VC: Coz we're all gonna die.

PS: This is it. And that's why I had Pa?? God what's that line? I must look at it in the play (laughs) "What's the point of having a kaffir!!!" Ah yes. He's got the black guy who is supposed to look after the property, steals.

VC: How dare he?

PS: "When your kaffir who looks after your property steals and he's supposed to be looking after you." So it was nihilistic, the play was...

VC:??

PS: Heavy shit with the guy in the ground with a thing. And the black guy wouldn't speak. And his daughter, Afrikaner's daughter, goes out with the black guy and Kate Edwards there again. She and the black guy had a thing.

VC: I don't remember Sello you know, particularly...

PS: Ja, well he was quiet – coz Sello did it and Louis Seboko, Louis.

VC: Maybe I saw Louis.

PS: In those days we blacks, we weren't given words in a Paul Slab play where – we didn't have words. And what I said to him "The reason you didn't have words Sello was because..."

VC: Black people couldn't speak.

PS: He stands there going Nahhh – in the play what he does is – the guy's watching TV and he falls asleep. Pa, with his flag going "Uit die blou van onse hemel" you know in those days, on the TV at the end of the day they always had Die Stem and the flag fluttering. So he falls asleep with his little portable, with that anthem going. And the guy comes behind me and puts a rope around my neck and tried to kill him and was his – that was the play. And the reason the black guys didn't have a voice was because I was trying to say – they can't speak and it's got worse now.

VC: ??

PS: So the play was like a this is the world coz he was making a ??? this is going to make us rich – with the little fairy lights, little fairy lights around the top.

VC: And the caravan.

PS: And the sun?

VC: It was in Durban. You told me Carol...

Carol: The cleaners came and cleaned all the rubbish off the stage.

PS: You leave the rubbish, ja. But, but that was the country. Ah fuck! And it was going nowhere. So that, that was kind of a parable, that was my parable. And you know a lot of people responded, you know I ? people coming and saying – that that? Think and Grahamstown, unfortunately Grahamstown commissioned that, it was a Grahamstown thing and er... then it came to the Market and it went to Durban and it went to Cape Town.

VC: It was nice up on the Market stage.

PS: Ja and the pillar went through the caravan.

VC: That's right.

PS: Ja, ja and I still remember going to Grahamstown, where we brought this caravan, Bobby pulled it on the back of his car and I was going behind it in the Karoo blowing wind and the caravan went like this (indicates) went like that and I thought it would have gone one more out would have just gone prrr like, like...

VC: Zabriskie Point.

PS: Like, like little bits pieces of paper coz that's how they disintegrate. Prrr that's what I thought was going to happen. Anyway, fortunately it didn't and we had a caravan for Grahamstown. But that, that was a we even had a track ?? on the organ which ran through the play and that. Um...

VC: That was the one that had "Destiny Came Crawling".

PS: No, no that was FORDSBURG (FORDBURG'S FINEST) "Destiny Came Crawling". Know what we might be doing...

VC: That was my favourite.

PS: You know what we might be doing it now that Nondumiso (Tembe). She was in RACE.

VC: Oh.

PS: The Playhouse might be doing it with her playing the American coz I saw it and I offered her. I said "Listen" I saw her in RACE and she's like completely American. The part could have been written for her. So they might be doing it "Our Destiny Comes Crawling."

VC: (laughs)

PS: I was thinking of taking that character out, but ...

VC: I loved him.

PS: Ja because he's just a piece of riff raff, but that's FORDSBURG, that's FORDSBURG.

VC: That's FORDSBURG ja, that's after '95.

PS: Have you got FORDSBURG?

VC: Ah hah.

PS: 1997 can't believe that...

VC: It only goes up to '95 you see.

PS: Oh, oh is it only up to '95. Oh sorry I didn't know. Why only up to '95?

VC: I'm doing the Apartheid years.

PS: Oh ok.

VC: I'm sure somebody else will do the rest or maybe we will.

PS: Ja, so that's '97. I thought you were doing all my Market plays.

VC: Yes but up to '95. ELVIS.(DU PISANIE) Was ELVIS a Market play?

PS: It went to the Market.

VC: It didn't start...

PS: It didn't start at the Market. No it started in Grahamstown Festival again and then it had a life and it just went on and on and I just kept doing it every gap that I could take. Rosebank.

VC: You did it for a long time hey.

PS: God it was two years. I even did it in Washington, you know, only one performance but ja. It just travelled and travelled. And that was working with Lara. And that was a journey. Lara was just playing ??

VC: That was the first time you worked with her.

PS: Ja, ja we worked together in a little house. Oh it was a flat before Kensington. I was anyway.

VC: Yeoville when she stayed with Lionel.

PS: Ja.

VC: Was it Bellevue?

PS: Ja Bellevue. That was when we first started working. Ja. So ELVIS had its journey and stuff. And I'm so glad Lionel's doing it now.

VC: Was that based on...

PS: That was very autobiographical in the sense that the journey through childhood are the places, Witbank okay I don't go beyond Witbank. I don't go to Messina but Modderfontein, so when I describe the little corrugated iron houses and the white picket fences, that's all from my childhood and we're

back in the coal mines and the er... thing but – the legend of ELVIS being, I wanted to do a play about Elvis being like a god to some people, like Elvis being – so like Elvis saving his life on the night that his very war damaged father, like my father was also war damaged. Ja but I made him an Afrikaner, not my mother was English, my father was Polish but I made this Afrikaans father du Pisanie. He was fucking war damaged. The night that the father kills the brother, the sister and then his wife, and then himself – when he was down at the Station Hotel trying to find Elvis, coz he'd heard that Elvis would be coming. Man on the lamppost you know is he loved this whole life since his father killed the whole family and he's never spoken it so tonight's the night he speaks it and so, so...

VC: I remember it was fantastic.

PS: Ja, ja, and so the journey, the little, this cyclical thing of like, like Elvis can save a life you know, it was intriguing it was so lovely working , coz I had the story in my head but working with Lara for six weeks...

VC: You were able to...

PS: Charted a path through it, you know and I was able to...

VC: So you hadn't written is all before? Oh you started ...

PS: A lot of it was written. I knew where I wanted to go. But things developed within it as well. And she also worked, having worked with Barney so much, and being do inspired by Barney – that was so nice working with Lara too because okay, thinking of her doing worked a lot with Barney – it would have gone to another direction, whereas Lara kept me on my story told.

VC: Your journey.

PS: Ja, so it didn't go – so it still remains my story till the very end, um, um... but it was also a Barney journey, if I may say.

VC: She learnt from Barney.

PS: She learnt from Barney.

VC: Doing that ja.

PS: There was only one terrifying moment, I'll never forget, when she – she said "Who are you telling this to?" You know she kind of freaked out. I think she was also nervous. She just said "I can't do this play." I said "What are you talking about?" "Can't, can't do it man; who are you telling the story to?" And I could "Well I'm..."

VC: Everybody.

PS: Ja, everybody ja, but...

VC: What did she mean – you were in front of a panel of psychologists or?

PS: Ja who are you telling it to?

VC: Oh sweet.

PS: Oh you see, no well it's a story - I think it was a little wobble.

VC: Ja.

PS: And then she kind of said "Okay".

VC: Okay.

PS: But when she saw the response too, because we didn't know how it was going to go.

VC: We did loads of things like that.

PS: Ja, you never knew how they were going to do, so doing it at Grahamstown, it exploded. People were weeping and you know...

VC: They never expected...

PS: Never expected – now, watching Lionel do it now; it's completely different, like Lionel plays him bad ?? Whereas I played him as a business man who'd lost his job, Lionel plays him as a, as almost... not a drop out but as kind of an angry person. I wasn't that angry. I was hurt more.

VC: Right.

PS: He plays him very. Very angry.

VC: Which I think Lionel is a bit.

PS: Ja, and when, and in the end, when he cries. I mean I was just devastated. He was, I told him he's got to, he's gonna do it.

VC: ??

PS: Ja he's going to do it.

VC: ??

PS: Ja but he's going to do it in a, I mean Lionel - I got in a few standing ovations but Lionel. I mean he did is a few weeks ago. And people just "Aaah".

VC: Aha.

PS: But I'm cutting stuff out for him because he ran at more than 100 minutes. I used to run at 85 minutes.

VC: 100 minutes. God.

PS: He's running it 20 minutes, 15-20 minutes longer than me. Audience can't sit through that in a play.

VC: Especially if it's intense.

PS: Ja, so I'm taking a big chunk out when he does the cowboy Dick Cheney does, coz he tells lots of stories so there's this one big story he doesn't need.

VC: Does he agree to it?

PS: Ja, ja he knows coz also he's nearly killed himself.

VC: Ja.

PS: He doesn't realize I said; I said to him when he started rehearsals. I said this is exhausting.

VC: Watch out.

PS: First of all any management you work for – you never do two [shows], not even one in the afternoon and one in the night.

VC: Mm.

PS: Sorry you can only ever do one a day. And even when you do one a day you have to rest because...

VC: Can't be doing other stuff because he's rehearsing as well.

PS: Ja cos it's a mammoth and he says "No I'm alright, I'm fit." Well he (we) did it up here for six weeks and he'll see what it was like.

VC: I saw him the next day in Cape Town. (PS whistles).

PS: Oh yes of course you were...

VC: Fleur de Caps. My goodness.

PS: Finished.

VC: Finished.

PS: Finished, finished. But that, you know ...

VC: Now tell me about MOOI STREET MOVES.

PS: Ja, no, MOOI STREET MOVES, also festival started and then in fact that was, also started with Elvis. I was doing Elvis but I. Sepulta (Sebogodi) there again – said "Come on man, write me something. Seputla always wanted to do - and that was, came from Seputla.

VC: I loved that play.

PS: Ja, and, and, and um... and – so I thought okay this guy coming and looking for his brother in Hillbrow and, and you know, shot to ribbons and fucked up and that. It will make a great movie, we want to make a movie one day.

VC: Did you see that version with Mncedisi (Shabangu) and Anthony (Coleman).

PS: Yes, yes. Did he direct it? And then after that Hannes Brummer who was lovely, did it with Rantoberg(sp.), or Moira Blumenthal directed - kak but anyway.

VC: God.

PS: Ja ou Moira. They did it at Pieter Toerien's Upstairs thing. Not then – played it was very nice. And him and little Hannes who is Afrikaans you see. ?? Afrikaans. He played it in this little Afrikaans, he was very sweet. And Rantoberg is a body builder. Just a completely different dynamic.

VC: Dynamic ja.

PS: Ja um ah James [Ngcobo] was going to do that now and then I said to James, when we spoke last year for the Market now. I said James, done MOOI STREET a lot man. So it was either BRAAIT LAAITIES to do again of I said "Can't you do PALE NATIVES?" he said "What would you like to do?" I said "I want to do PALE NATIVES – exactly 20 years after our democracy. Do PALE NATIVES you know.

VC: BRAAIT LAAITIES I don't remember at all.

PS: Ja well BRAAIT LAAITIES I'm reworking it now I'm ready, coz it was quite short, it was only like 60 minutes. So I'm kind of extending it just but it's beautiful, it's a picture, it's Verwoerd's face, that iconic picture from...

VC: Oh I know.

PS: Where he's like this. He's got that Mona Lisa smile.

VC: Mmm.

PS: Black and white.

VC: But it used to be in the post offices and everything.

PS: Yes that's right. And the set is - it's the Hendrik Verwoerd Hall in Springs. And the set is, it's a blank wall in the middle, there's the portrait of Verwoerd and he's like looking so when Aubrey comes to to...

VC: I think he thought he was a philosopher.

PS: He walks, and wherever he walks ??? and she comes in – come walk man.

VC: (laughs)

PS: Wherever you walk the eyes follow you. They follow you.

VC: So it was Aubrey Sekhabi?

PS: Aubrey Sekhabi and Megan (Willson) and the whole play happens under the gaze of Verwoerd. And it was like 1991 – '92 so the Afrikaans girl...

VC: 1993.

PS: And the black man and Verwoerd is watching them, and also like this whole thing like reconciliation and finding each other. It's – and Apartheid is gone you know and that's why I really want to do it again because, also he makes candles and there's a point where they light the candles.

VC: Is he like a Rasta guy?

PS: No, no, no, no he's a guy who's worked for Joshua Doore and that sort of thing and the story is that he's been scammed by these chaps who want to work - he's joined this agency - then we'll get you onto TV.

VC: Okay.

PS: So he spends all his R120 out of his...

VC: To go get a photo.

PS: ... and then he comes for lessons to act for the TV. And of course he goes there to the Verwoerd Hall and they've stolen their money.

VC: Ah.

PS: Stolen everyone's money so it's a bullshit story. But he's sure they're going to come back - "They'll come back". And she says "Voetsak man I've booked this hall and they're not gonna come." And anyway they start talking and that's how they kind of find each other in this little evening, you know. It's a lovely play, I mean, Adrienne [Sichel] loved it, she's like "Jussus why have you never done it?" So I thought well now's the time, like...

VC: So it's like your retrospective almost hey.

PS: Ja, ja.

VC: I just want to ask you a big question.

PS: Yes, yes.

VC: If I need to come back I will.

PS: Just ask me for - whatever.

VC: The Market what did the Market provide you with? Why do you think, you know, when we say The Market?

PS: Yes the Market was always my base and my home and when I say now this thing about running around the Market with James, I was like a little kid in a toy shop. Sweets. It's because, because, um um... for me the Space is where it all started. But you see the Space had its time and it died. When Brian and Yvonne left ...

VC: ...it was over.

PS: The 'gees' went. What's happened at the Market is interesting now - joking about it because I haven't talked about ?? But the Market not only - it wasn't only the building. It was Barney and Mannie and that company and the people who we were working with, that gave it, so it was a combination - Barney, Mannie and that space, that area in which we worked and it had a kind of um... It was a home, mother was at home in a sense, mother was at home in that space. Ja, ja, ja and then in a sense - and it's not that you ever lose it, it's always home, but then it becomes a memory. When Barney's influence and Mannie but the combination of Barney - that energy that it had - when they kind of went. Barney

dies and Mannie left – it fell into a kind of trough and I was – it was there – but the Market remained and now in a sense that is happening – it's almost like a rebirth for one – James has got that same energy that Barney had – wants to tell stories, wanting to get writers, actors.

VC: New people.

PS: New people.

VC: Old people.

PS: Old people, ja. The best part about it is the old people because I'm an old person now.

VC: Me too.

PS: And in a sense I felt, I felt rejected by Malcolm Purkey in a sense of like "Oh fuck off man, we're not doing ???" The thing was...

VC: He's the same age as us. I don't know what...

PS: Stupid. "We don't do reruns."

VC: "We don't do one person shows." That was when I went "What are you talking about?"

PS: We do everything.

VC: What do you mean?

PS: We do everything.

VC: We don't do a play with one person or two people.

PS: ...or two people. A play is a play is a play.

VC: What?

PS: ? It doesn't matter.

VC: And a one person play, he told me is not a play.

PS: Bullshit. Complete nonsense. Now I come I see the energy James has – it's become a place now again. Well he also sees the value of, of like a mentorship, a mentoring as well because I I don't enjoy teaching, my worst thing on earth, I can't.

VC: Also I can't do it.

PS: But what I do enjoy doing is working with new casts, something like that and then exploring a line then you know I'd, we do a short one on my favourite things is to sit there in the edge of the stage "Any questions?" and that and have then dissect –

VC: What, what.

PS: What happened there, why was that there? Who? Why? What? How did you get there then then you're kind of...

VC: Ja.

PS: ...dealing with something tangible. You know and, and I think that new energy is coming.

VC: It's back.

PS: It's back. So...

VC: Different but back.

PS: Yes different, yes fine.

VC: Got to be different.

PS: Got to be different. And the venue is gonna ?? but, but. A theatre house, a house has to be a place of of, of new things – projections of exploring of trying but also reflection, what went past, what...

VC: What was Barney's failure as well, I mean you can fail. If it happens that way.

PS: Ja, ja.

VC: Gotta try and put on a play – if it doesn't work well..

PS: And I suppose that's the difference for me between a place like the Market and the State Theatre- oh I don't know.

VC: Pieter...

PS: The Market does still feel like a home still. You walk into that venue, you walk into that little area, and you for okay theatre is created here, theatre lives. People talk, people rehearse, people think – it's kind of you can – it's almost like ghosts of Barney, I feel like when I was there last, walking there – Billy is there, Billy is there, I can feel it. There's absolutely no question. And I've got a smile on my face when I went there. A little tingle and it's, it's... you can feel it.

VC: Ja.

PS: The place still breathes that. And you get that okay, that legacy is there and that's going to go on. And that's that.

VC: You can still be part of it.

PS: You need, you need the spirit – and James has got that spirit. James has got that spirit. So you always need a kind of a person who has that capacity to feed, nurture other people, and to excite them you know. That's, that's very important. That's like okay, Brian wasn't so much of a guru, so much a ??? now, and also Yvonne - but the combination of them.

VC: Ja.

PS: When they were at the Space, you had that feeling of...

VC: Come.

PS: There was a flame, ja. Ja come. Come. And then when some other guy takes over and he's there, worry about the box office, why are you here? Is it because of the work?

VC: Or are you trying to make money?

PS: Or ja, you know. So that's why theatre for me is a combination of things – it's not only the space in which you work, it's the, it's the people who are there, company and also the person who's kind of at the helm there, you know, and I hope that James is able to get, to draw a couple of people who will also be in the same spirit because I think he can't carry this thing all on his own shoulders.

VC: No, no and he shouldn't because..

PS: No he shouldn't. coz he'll burn himself out. Ja.

VC: Like Barney always wanted to resign. "I'm gonna resign." ?? Used to fight, "You can't do that, What do you think you're doing?" No no.

PS: Ja ja.

VC: No no.

PS: You see that's like comes from being squeezed dry.

VC: He was tired.

PS: Ja ja Billy was also tired.

VC: Ja.

PS: Ja, ja, ja. And it's almost like, you see, it's sad because in a sense, if Barney could have just rested for a little while, it could have been ?? there...

VC: Ja but he couldn't.

PS: Ja he was too exhausted already it was kind of but then okay maybe. I suppose you wish and you hope for that, you could rest – and then come back gently and try again ?? It's funny seeing Morris Podbury again. Morris is in his 80s or something.

VC:??

PS: But there's a little flame that still burns – you his...

VC: He's still touring. ? How old to still do that. Sweet.

PS: So there's still that little thing that 'gees'.

VC: I think Barney wouldn't have been okay to be old.

PS: Ja.

VC: His heart?

PS: He'd given it his all.

VC: Not being 80 or something.

PS: Ja, ja.

VC: Wouldn't be able to.

PS: Billy certainly didn't want to do that.

VC: Didn't want to be old.

PS: No, no, no.

VC: And Billy went to sleep.

PS: Ja.

VC: Lucky ,hey.

PS: Oh ja but it's funny when you look at it like that coz it was 1995 when Barney died. Okay. So...

VC: It was the day before we got the cheque from the government.

PS: Really.

VC: Yes, he died and we had to go to this cocktail party.

PS: That's Barney. You see now. You know what?

VC: You see, he never had the money.

PS: I'm telling you, I'm telling you now that's something. It's like these things happen, Barney goes up and knocks on the door.

VC: I want money.

PS: Says –okay I'm here. Knock knock.

VC: And he left us with money. For the first time.

PS: Ja.

VC: Didn't have it at all.

PS: But that's what I'm saying.

VC: We had to all smile and get the cheque from...

PS: Shame ja but you know that's what I mean about the spirit of a place you know and in fact these kind of led – these things don't go. You when I worked at the Old Vic in London. As well, I had the same thing too. You get that - you know after the show and you go out on the stage. I mean I used to, I'd go out after there's no one inside the theatre I'm on the stage, and just like...

VC: Whew.

PS: Oh ja – you’re there in a sense and all of the actors going right back to the 17th century However long this building has been there, the performance of the actors, the whole engine that is that space. It’s kind of like...

VC: ??? it’s not just a room.

PS: No there’s a kind of a, so keep it going, keep it going. And that thing was supposed to die. They were going to knock down the bloody Old Vic.

VC:??

PS: That guy saved it. What his name? It’s funny it was a stupid name from Toronto – “Honest Ed” who ran this company. He ran a shop, big shop in Toronto – multi millionaire.

VC: And he just saved.

PS: He bought it for his wife. His wife said “I want to fix up the Old Vic,” Okay how many hundred million, 70 million pounds.

VC: Is that enough dear?

PS: She came back to London and they sorted out the Old Vic and it lived you know. And it’s almost like the spirits of the Old Vic – they were saying, come on, and that’s why this money that the Market got now ? it can – so it’s a space.

VC: Some people make the mistake of thinking that it’s theirs.

PS: Ja.

VC: If you know what I mean.

PS: Yes,yes well this is the way we are going to go.

VC: Ja.

PS: You see, it’s also like forgetting the past too I suppose one shouldn’t be upset about it but I walked into the foyer and I don’t know who refurbished it with the photographs and I said to Billy – in fact Billy was still alive and I said to Billy, I said “Billy you know there’s not one thing here.” And you know it was me, having done so many plays. I’ve had more world premieres at the Market than anyone else. Not one picture of me or Billy.

VC: Nothing.

PS: Nothing! And the only picture of PALACE is Fats on his own.

VC: (laughs)

PS: There’s PALACE but it’s just Fats – it was me and Billy in it as well.

VC: Was that John (Kani)?

PS: I think it was John. There’s not one and I said “Billy, we’re not here.”

VC: (laughs)

PS: And you ??

VC: You were...

PS: You know.

VC: And you are.

PS: Ja I know that's why it's nice to be back there again – I'll bring my own picture from home.

VC: Ja.

PS: Me and Billy will put - you know what I wanted to have in the foyer. I wanted to have a little glass case – that funny little blue helmet that Billy wore – all chipped – from, from PALACE.

VC: Oh yes, yes.

PS: I want to put that helmet and call it the "Vossie Comedy Award". So it's a little helmet.

VC: Oh sweet.

PS: In a little glass case and have a little plaque there.

VC: Get a little...

PS: And then every year, whoever at the Market, you think the funniest, the award we enjoyed the most to laugh at ??

VC: But you know Paul you should do that.

PS:?

VC: You know why because this year Dawn (Lindberg) decided there are no comedy awards.

PS: Ag no man.

VC: At the Naledi's.

PS: No that's just ridiculous?? so woman or man – it doesn't matter. What we think is the nicest comedy award at the Market Little Plaque, but also you have a photo – so what happens is – people come along, take the helmet out of the little glass case, whoever it is, puts the helmet on (VC laughs) and stands there for a photo. It's the Vossie Comedy Awards.

VC: Aw do it man.

PS: For the year ??

VC: Don't you think you should do that?

PS: In a little glass case for Billy.

VC: He'd laugh (she laughs) James Borthwick trying to put the helmet on.

PS: Well if you don't fit you hold it.

VC: (laughs)

PS: You either hold it, or you put it on your head.

VC: I think you should do it. What does that mean that the Naledi – that comedy isn't serious enough so to speak?

PS: And Dawn's gump was "Drama's much harder to do than comedy" bullshit. That's exactly why. Drama you can be ...

VC: Oh all the effort.

PS: Comedy – timing. Getting the laughs, much harder. No in fact I haven't spoken to her about that I'm – when I next see her I'm going to say "Listen, you go and change that right away."

VC: Otherwise we're doing something else ?? Oh that would be such fun.

PS: Ja, I mean you see little things like that and you it gives those touches because – I was talking to James about it, saying "That's what I noticed about working in England when we were at the Old Vic and all these people came to talk to us, John Gielgud came, ad he was so – and they had a - it was a sort of a Saturday morning, come along to the Old Vic and John Gielgud was going to talk about – some things and then people came there and they listen to this old 'toppie'.

VC: Ja.

PS: So there's like a legacy – out to, oh fuck, out to pasture, finished now. Coz there's stuff to offer you know still.

VC: Is Dawn going to define what is a comedy? At this stage I mean. Is PALE NATIVES a comedy, or a drama? Or a wow – that's, that's really shocking.

PS: Ja.

VC: Paulie. I think we've done enough for today.

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