

INTERVIEW WITH MANNIE MANIM PART 3

22ND November 2014 AT 2PM

Interviewer Vanessa Cooke

VC: Okay, Mannie, now.

VC: So we suffered a lot with things being banned. They never tried to close the Market as such.

MM: Yes but what it seemed to be was that they were running interference. They were finding ways to trip us up. And what was a lot, none of our political plays. It still stays weird that SIZWE BANZI, the ISLAND, you name it, any of, any of Barney's – BORN IN THE RSA, BLACK DOG INJEMNYAMA were never touched by the censors. It was, it was, the first one was COMEDIANS which is a play about the nature of comedy, and we thought we were being very clever because we always found it very hard to find a Christmas production in those days coz to find something that was just fluff and happy, up, in those times was crazy. You could never find the right mix. So we thought COMEDIANS, Trevor Griffiths, serious writer, serious play, blah, blah, blah. We had a good cast and we played it sort of for the Christmas season. But we hadn't run for ten days when we got the letter, or the telegram from Pretoria saying Banned, and then we started to...

VC: What was the reason- obscenity?

MM: Obscenity. They don't give you a reason in the telegram. When you phone then they tell you what it is, and then they allow you to appeal. So we started learning. We didn't know anything about any of this. I was just completely befuddled and Leonard Schach was still here. Everyone was up in arms and we then decided that we had to go and we had a hearing in Pretoria with the Appeal Board, and the chairman of the Appeal Board then was a judge, I think, and there were like, I don't know how many people – seven, eight, nine people on the Board. And we had a very good lawyer. I remember his shirt sleeves were never tied and he used to, we actually joked about it.

VC: Not Ernie?

MM: Ernie?

VC: Wentzel.

MM: It could have been. I should remember these things.

VC: Ernie was very untidy I remember.

MM: Okay.

VC: Maybe it was him. I can't remember either.

(Coffee is brought)

MM: Thank you very much. This is our first time we're doing this. We're in Pretoria, far away from everybody, but what we were sussing as we were sitting there was it was actually a publicly open hearing. Other people...

VC: We didn't go.

MM: No nobody went. We were just like, you know, Pavlovian hounds. We rushed over to Pretoria and told our case and that, in the end we won the not banning thing but we had to compromise. There was the whole thing about the – Robert Kirby made a wonderful sketch, which he performed for years afterwards about you take away the “prick” on page ten. We’ll give you the “fuck” on page five. You can’t have all three “fucks” on one page.

(He laughs)

VC: So they didn't perform COMEDIANS for the censors.

MM: No they didn't. But we learnt...

VC: After that we did, hey.

MM: Ja, we learnt all these things about the public hearing that was open to everybody. We learnt about the fact that in your appeal case you could ask for ...um... one more performance which you do. Your legal argument is, that because the play on the stage is different to the play on the page, coz that's what we were trying to say to these people who are sitting in a dry room in Pretoria, with these very solemn people behind a long desk, and you're trying to argue about something that is very funny and lots of people... that's why it was in the play.

VC: That's why the actors have to do it for you.

MM: And the actors should be there. So you've got a lawyer saying the words and you've got the prosecutor. You've got your defense and their prosecutor saying these words – reading the script and saying it and it just sounded terrible. I agree it sounded terrible, and in the courtroom it sounded worse. It sounded terrible.

VC: Sounded obscene.

MM: Totally obscene. So then we were called into this back room and we argued about the page on the stage and all that. But by then it was too late coz we'd already, I think we'd had two days with no performances. We were trying to get the show back on so we won the case but we had to do this compromise. So we won on condition we did that. So then I had to phone Trevor Griffiths who was on holiday in Greece, I remember, and say, “Now...”

VC: He must have had a fit.

MM: Well I did a long explanation about South Africa and everything. And you know it was quite a thing that we got to do the play anyway.

VC: Mm.

MM: Thank heavens, with my long explanation, and pleading that if we closed it would be a financial fiasco – the, he agreed. So then I had the job to go to the actors, coz then you can imagine, you know.

VC: I'm gonna say this whether they like it or not.

MM: Danny Keogh, “What are you saying? What are you saying?”

VC: “Allowing yourself to be censored Mannie.”

MM: Yes, yes (He laughs) “So I have to go on stage now. I have to (Laughs) make sense of this.” Oh God. And his limerick was the one, like the main thing. Totally...

VC: Stupid one.

MM: Stupid limerick. It was completely messed up by them and we couldn't find another. I think somewhere, after a while, we worked out a better one, or as good a one. Hey, but thank heavens Trevor Griffiths agreed. So this was the first one. I can't remember what the second one was, but it could have been something as simple as HOLY MOSES AND ALL THAT JAZZ or it could have been...

VC: Ja HOLY MOSES caused quite a lot of trouble.

MM: Yes, coz again HOLY MOSES AND ALL THAT JAZZ was a children's musical and they banned it because jazz was denigratory of Holy Moses.

VC: But Moses is not God.

MM: Exactly, so that is when we then said, “ We understand about the play on the stage, so we want to have an appeal performance. Can we have one?” And we had to organize very quickly coz we wanted the show to get on again. So that started a series of these performances where we were allowed an audience. We didn't sell tickets. It was an invited audience who'd come coz they were they were there for the court case – where the play...

VC: And to laugh at the play.

MM: Yes.

(They laugh)

MM: So all our friends would come and we used to get good houses.

VC: On a Sunday, or something wasn't it.

MM: I can't remember when it was, but it was at a time that we could have the Appeal Board there, and we gave them the best seats in the house. After the show, no, before the show we told everybody, you know, they're welcome to stay afterwards. Go out and have a cup of coffee and then we'd have the hearing and for HOLY MOSES AND ALL THAT JAZZ we got ourselves...now come on you know him, you know.

VC: Not Raymond (Tucker).

MM: No, he was a jazz musician in his own right. He played a mean bass guitar. Oh what was his...oh his son also played jazz. His son was around the theatre a lot. You know him man. You know him.

VC: I'm sure I do.

MM: Don't put this on the tape. It's, it's who is – oh they're big friends with Lara (Foot) now and run the Barney Simon Trust.

VC: Hillary (Hamburger)

MM: Hillary and...

VC: Tony.

MM: First husband.

VC: Dennis Kuny.

MM: Dennis Kuny.

VC: And Steve Kuny plays.

MM: And Steve Kuny plays. And Dennis plays. And I remember the last thing – so I remember we were starting to cast the defense lawyers. We had to get people who were sussed in the area.

VC: Ja.

MM: Ja and the judge played right into our hands because in the end he said, “ No, well looks like you’ve done enough to – but can’t you change the title man. Change the title.”

VC: How can you change the title.

MM: Your worship or whatever. We said, “What’s wrong with the title?” and he said, “ What is this jazz, jazz. It’s denigratory of...”

VC: It’s music.

MM: Ja and then he did...

VC: Dennis.

MM: Dennis did this wonderful thing, he did the history of jazz. He did a performance. (Laughs)

VC: For the judge.

MM: Yes, where it started, what jazz is all about and how jazz has told the story of the people over the years. And when he finished there was a massive round of applause from the audience and the judge...

VC: Good show, yes.

MM: And the judge said, “ Okay, you know, we rest. You can do it like it is.”

VC: Now Pieter was banned quite a lot, though.

MM: Pieter’s first thing in the Laager.

VC: VAN AARDES banned.

MM: VAN AARDES VAN GROOTOOR was banned.

VC: Yes.

MM: And then we got an Afrikaans lawyer who was a young firebrand.

VC: Hectic.

MM: Hectic, praat die taal perfek – because they brought all their heavies of the Afrikaans people and again we had another performance, in the Laager. I don’t know if it was the second or third week of the run and of course again the case was here. There wasn’t enough space on that small stage to put them all on, but again this Afrikaans guy won it. He just beat them down. Every point that they, they couldn’t really...there was nothing to object to, it’s a...

VC: Satire.

MM: Fun, fun story.

VC: Ja.

MM: And he could tell it to them in their own language so again he won and of course it had a run for nine months you know, after this court case. The other ones that were banned were the Spike Milligan.

VC: Yes.

MM: And...

VC: CINCINATTI was censored as well. Wasn't banned.

MM: Was censored. There was...

VC: We had to cut.

MM: It became a different technique. Certain words.

VC: Then we forgot to cut them!

MM: Ooh boy, Peter Piccolo, bless his soul, gave me a hard time with that one. " So what do you say Mannie" (Laughs)

VC: " Have we got to do this, really."

MM: Ooh it was very hard. It was harder to convince the actors than anything else.

VC: But Maishe (Maponya) I remember Maishe did, and I might be confused – he did HUNGY EARTH right, in the Laager.

MM: Yes.

VC: And they didn't ban it. They said something like it could only be done for an audience of less than sixty. So you could run it for like thirty years and everybody would have seen it.

MM: Mm.

VC: That was a new thing they came up with, that if it was in a small venue – coz I think they were worried because Maishe was like hectically activist.

MM: Mm.

VC: So they didn't ban his show.

MM: They kept trying to find ways to...

VC: Stop us.

MM: Put us out to dry and kind of trip us up.

VC: And why do you think they didn't try and like close the theatre?

MM: Well then what happened was THE ME NOBODY KNOWS.

VC: That was early on.

MM: I saw Benjy (Francis) a couple of days ago.

VC: Where's he?

MM: He's on an exciting project.

VC: I want to interview him.

MM: You must.

VC: No I want to because I want to hear his side of the story.

MM: I'll give you his number.

VC: Thank you. Everybody's been saying – oh I don't know.

MM: No, no he's very busy. I don't know if I must say anything – coz it's a new baby and I saw it on Friday and it's impressive.

VC: Really, that's brilliant.

MM: In potential. He's got a mountain to climb still but he's saying they've given him their support and...

VC: Is he in Joburg?

MM: In Johannesburg. He's just down the road, that way.

VC: He's never moved away.

MM: No.

VC: Really.

MM: No he's kept working and he's getting a little team together.

VC: Please give me his number.

MM: Of course. He's asked me to get involved in the lighting side as a consultant or whatever.

VC: I'm pleased actually.

MM: You'll get his number, and he's the same Benji, as excited as ever. It was raining on Friday afternoon, not as bad as this (indicating rain noise) but we had to walk all over and, very sweet quantity surveyor person was with us – Collette somebody and...

VC: Wow, Okay.

MM: He just said – can't we go and see – and I could see she was (laughs)

VC: In the rain.

MM: " And I just want Mannie to see...." Anyway he was being very sweet. So he's around and active and he's trying to cook up...you know the Potato Sheds were like a dream of his and it's a great sorrow with him, and this is his chance to do another one but better.

VC: Okay.

MM: Maybe less able to be...

VC: Kicked out...

MM: Thrown away, ja. So okay Benji does THE ME NOBODY KNOWS.

VC: ja, that was quite early on though.

MM: It was the second year.

VC: Ja.

MM: Ja '77 and...

VC: Nomsa (Nene) and Lesley (Mongezi) and those people.

MM: Correct, correct and wonderful cast, Barrie, Barrie Shah.

VC: I was looking at the photos the other day.

MM: So we had a photograph of the cast which we thought was also wonderful, so we made it the poster of the play.

VC: It was all scaffolding, the stage.

MM: That's where we came adrift.

VC: What, multiracial cast on the poster?

MM: Ja on the poster.

VC: Ag, no man.

MM: And they said – so on a day they came to the theatre and they walked into the door unannounced, a good cop and a bad cop. And walked into my office and plonked themselves in the chairs and then said – pulled out the poster – “ We see that you're doing this production.” “Yeah” And they said, “ But there's black and white people on the stage.” “ Yeah, yeah.”

VC: And in the audience.

(They laugh)

MM: The bad cop was very heavy, very sort of...

VC: Close it down now.

MM: “ What do you think you're doing? Where do you think you are? How can you think you can do this? “ Those kind of questions. “ So why are you doing this? “

VC: “ What's wrong with you? “

MM: Aah and the good cop was just, he just was being very gentle, much more sweet than the other guy and just – “ Oh no, just explain to us what your purpose is.”

VC: Shame.

MM: And then they ended up opening a lot of my, those filing cabinets standing in the office, opened those drawers and they took lots of the folders.

VC: Folders of shows.

MM: Folders of shows, and they said, “ We're taking this away, and we'll be in touch.”

VC: Did they bring them back?

MM: I don't think I ever got them back. But, the point of the story is that about ten days later – now we haven't heard from them. Ten days after they walked in...

VC: Nothing.

MM: They were there from something like ten in the morning until four/five in the afternoon and they were just going, and everybody was just huddled in the office next door there, all the Callies and the Lorraines and the Jasmines and (Coughs)ten days later the good cop phones me. This famous phone call, and of course I should remember his name, and it should be recorded in history, but I can't remember his name,“ Mr. Manim , this is lieutenant so and so, whatever, and I'm just phoning to let you know that we are not going to proceed.” So I said, “What do you mean?”

VC: What were they going to do.

MM: They were going to...

VC: Close it down?

MM: They were going to do everything they could. They could close the Market. They would, I would be arrested, I don't know – all the things they could do, but they were not going to prosecute, they were not going to – Oh – “ Well the fact of the matter is that we found a law under which you are legal, what you're doing is legal.” So I said, “Well that's very interesting. Please will you tell me that law.” And then they told me the law and it was under the Group Areas Act and it had to do with the fact that if a building is not changed externally it can continue to be used after this date in the same way Group Area wise. It was a Fruit Market and a Vegetable Market that was open to everybody. They could trade, they could buy, they could sell and buy. So they occupied the old market. They occupied the new market at Kazerne. So it was zoned. It was a place for everybody.

VC: We didn't know that before.

MM: We didn't know that. We didn't know nothing.

VC: We thought we were being really kind of...

MM: Yes.

VC: We're not asking for a permit.

MM: Yes! But actually by, somehow by luck, by choice, by getting into that place,that had this common usage...

VC: Which they couldn't change actually.

MM: No they can't, coz then you'd have to change the whole Group Areas Act, mess up all the other people who were correctly continuing to trade or whatever. So I then asked him for the number and the thing of the law. When I put the phone down I phoned Raymond and I said, “The guy's just phoned me and this is the...” “Okay I'll look it up, I'll look it up.” And then, I don't know what we were communicating with – faxes in those days. He sent me a fax of the law and the law said that, that a place is open to all people, this date. This place is allowed to be open to all people as long as it's not externally changed and we then, I remember holding it up and giving it to Alan (Joseph) saying, “ Put it in the safe and anybody comes you just pull out this piece of paper.” And then the story goes on that several weeks

later, three or four weeks later the good cop phoned me again. I thought Aw, Aw. I remember my heart sinking and he said, “ Er...er...Mr. Manim I’m phoning you again. I just want to let you know that we actually, we found another law that you also – it’s not actually a law, it’s an ordinance, it’s whatever municipality has.”

VC: So he was helping you.

MM: I told this story to some Swedish people once I remember. I think the people who we eventually go involved with SIDA(Swedish International Development Agency) with and they said, “That’s the play. You know you’ve got to find that man.” And there’s – this is – Barney was there. “ Barney you’ve got to write this play about this guy.” But he then phoned back and said, “ There’s the Municipal Ordinance which says that places that are zoned industrial are open to all races. It’s to do with the black labour force.”

VC: The workers.

MM: The workers. So the Market Precinct was open to all races.

VC: Even though it wasn’t a Market anymore.

MM: It was zoned light industrial and nobody changed the zoning.

VC: Ah right.

MM: Didn’t change the zoning, and the Group Areas was cool.

VC: And nobody bothered to even think about it.

MM: No, and then this guy looking through all these Acts.

VC: My God.

MM: And then he found this one. “ I must phone Mr. Manim. “ and I said, “ Please can you get me the name and number and all that.” And I phoned Raymond and Raymond sent me a note. So we had two pieces of paper.

VC: That’s all we needed.

MM: And we put it in the safe and anybody came – we used to say from Pretoria. We always thought they were the TP cars in those days. That if anybody challenged us and thank heavens nobody actually did but so there were various moments, you know. I mean the Censor Board thing. It was Cobus van Rooyen, that was the Chairman of the, of the Appeal Board in those days, and we got to know each other, coz I would phone him and say...

VC: “ Come on now.”

MM: “ Hello Mannie.”

VC: “ There’s another telegram. What’s going on? “

MM: Yes, “ What, when do you want to do the performance?” “ Now.” “ What night? I’ll have to phone all the Board members and see if they can come.” A bit like an opening, see if everybody can come and then the, I mean, what I’m trying to think about is the other ways they tried to hamstring us, you know, but there were...

VC: Well they did arrest a lot of people outside the theatre.

MM: Yes They did. They kept...

VC: For pass...

MM: Pass things, because they were coming at night.

VC: We were always doing things in the morning to sort it out.

MM: Haai,yaai, yaai. But there were these other, you know, all the passports for the people who had to go...

VC: Overseas.

MM: Overseas with shows, thanks very often to Mandie's(van der Spuy) help. There was an " open sesame" somewhere. There were very often also on the day before the departure, on the morning of the departure, phone calls to various people we were also talking to.

VC: Charles...

MM: Charles Nupen. Barney had spoken to him, and so on. Barney was the godfather to one of the children and I say, "Charles now er... Mbongeni's come to see me. He's had a phone call."

VC: No passport?

MM: No he's got his passport. He's going, but the bloke said – and Charles would say, " I want to know exactly what he said. Mannie what did he say?"

(Vanessa laughs)

MM: " Mbongeni what did he say?" And then we'd say, "He said please come down to the station now. We want to see you this morning. No problem. Just before you go. " And then Charles would say...

VC: Don't go.

MM: "No you don't have to go. They didn't, there words that they used when you have to go. That's not the words."

VC: Just intimidating you.

MM: Yes. So that if you went there they would have just kept them there.

VC: Arrested them.

MM: For days and days, and they missed the plane and then it's a mess. So he just said, " Don't go."

VC: And they never phoned again.

MM: And they never phoned again. And then we would go through the airport always very worried, you know. Mbongeni and Percy go first. Barney and me wait to see if they got through and we go – oh they're through you can go.

VC: Are they really through, are they.

MM: Yes, yes all this. But we would be allowed all these things so there was some funny double thing going on because we had passports to travel, and we did these shows that were obviously...

VC: John Kani and them had problems with their passports.

MM: Yes, and again Mandie...

VC: Well her Dad was quite important I guess.

MM: He was the Minister of Education. He was a Minister of the Cabinet, so he was what is now called the NEC.

VC: Yes.

MM: I don't know what they called it then.

VC: So he had some influence on...

MM: He must have had. And sometimes...

VC: Tell me, Fats, Fats Dike – which I didn't remember at all.

MM: Mm.

VC: They came to rehearse KRELI and we were finishing rehearsals of MARAT/SADE and opening...

MM: Yes.

VC: And they came from Cape Town.

MM: Yes.

VC: And they stayed in the Holiday Inn. How was that possible?

MM: Don't remember the Holiday Inn.

VC: They did.

MM: I don't remember the Holiday Inn. I remember I had to make a decision. I had to choose between SACRIFICE OF KRELI and Robert Mohr's KINKEL INNIE KABEL.

VC: Oh Janice?

MM: Was it Janice. I don't think it was Janice. There was a new production.

VC: Oh a new production.

MM: Ja and it was a mixed cast, being a student production, but it was like fun. It was also nearly Christmas time. It was part of the Christmas season, and I'd seen SACRIFICE OF KRELI in the Space and said, "You know you guys must come." And we just decided that they would come.

VC: But they stayed in a hotel in town.

MM: Maybe Rob Amato had something to do with that. I'm just trying to think on my feet.

VC: But how could they stay in a white hotel?

MM: But hotels were called "International". Hotels had international...

VC: Must have been, ja.

MM: And Rob Amato's the only one who would have had the money.

VC: To do that.

MM: I mean one of my favourite memories of that show was after they finished. They did ten days or whatever the season was in big theatre, and they were leaving, and their combi's outside and we heard them singing and they came singing into the Market, and everybody in the office said, "What's going on?" And they came singing into the office, and into my office and, you know, they were hugging and singing and, I mean, they were saying goodbye and decided to give us a blessing, if you like.

V C: Fats said they could not believe...

MM: Yes.

VC: They were in the Market.

MM: Yes it was wonderful.

VC:Ja.

MM: Still lovely that Fats is in Cape Town, active, and I see her quite often now. We have lovely times. We meet in the street very often and start shouting at each other. It's just, she's just such a live wire, and she's so different now, hey. Now, now it's meditating on the hill in India.

VC: Mm.

MM: It's a whole other Fats to the Fats of those days.

VC: Yes. She did even say she was very naughty.

(They laugh)

MM: Very naughty. But she, I mean, it's part of- it was us trying to find our way and raise the flag. We also had, in fact we had a play by Maishe on the Main Stage as well during that crazy time.

VC: PEACE AND FORGIVE.

MM: PEACE AND FORGIVE on the Main Stage for a week.

VC: Ja. He spoke about that when I talked to him.

MM: Did he.

VC: Ja.

(They laugh)

VC: Well he was also like – wow you know. He didn't...

MM: It was important for us to let everybody know that we were open.

VC: Ja.

MM: And if we'd chosen the simple route and had the University of Cape Town and Robert Mohr then it wouldn't have sent out any message. It would have just been – oh it's another theatre. It's like the Alexander or whatever and they're doing – so we had to kind of make these choices you know. Benji's opening season in the Upstairs BLOOD KNOT and the WAITING FOR GODOT, the black WAITING FOR

GODOT. What kind of just again, you know, raising the flag and saying this is – we going to do it this way now.

VC: Ja if we feel like doing...

MM: Yes.

VC: WAITING FOR GODOT like this.

MM: (laughs) Yes so that over the years, I mean, you know we also got the counter argument with people saying, “ Do I have to be black to work in the Market.” And I always used to say, “ No you just have to have talent.”

(They laugh)

VC: Very popular thing to say.

MM: Yes but what a stupid thing to say. It was only people who didn't have talent who always said that, you know.

VC: Yes.

MM: Coz the others were working there. We were all people working there – there weren't only – there were three theatres and they were going all the time. And there were different plays and things didn't run long enough and other things went on tour, so it's all part of, kind of trying to build the thing. Slemon (John Slemon) became a good friend of ours. I mean we were very sad to lose the Space, coz it was like a ...

VC: Ja that was sad.

MM; Like a sister theatre, you know. WOZA ALBERT played there. That was probably the last of our plays to play there.

VC: But Slemon was a good fellow.

MM: He was.

VC: I think.

MM: He was and I've always – there's one memory that I really love about John which was – we were going to do FOR COLORED GIRLS WHO CONSIDERED SUICIDE (WHEN THE RAINBOW IS NOT ENOUGH).

VC: Oh yes.

MM: Barney and I had...

VC: Shange took away her rights.

MM: We met Ntozake Shange in LA. We had special introductions coz we were there with WOZA ALBERT at the time. She came to see that. Percy and Mbongeni were both shopping coz they were both trying to...

VC: Ah.

MM: To get close to her and we er... we had to sort of stage manage that. But I know that I ended up in her kitchen in New York – great buddies.

VC: But why did she take them away?

MM: So then we started rehearsal.

VC: Yes I remember that.

MM: And at the same time she went to England. She hadn't been to England before, and in England the Anti Apartheid lobby, compared to LA or even New York, wasn't as stringent so in New York some anti Apartheid lobbyist must have got to her. And they twisted her reasoning. Coz she understood now that she'd met these mad people and she understood all the things that we were doing and she understood all the people...

VC: Women's stuff.

MM: Who were involved with us and who were on our side and you know she was like a real friend, and then whew it was like a hundred and eighty degrees. And when we said now we want to do COLORED GIRLS she said of course, of course. By Barney, she'd met Barney and yes, great. So we got the telegram in the second week of rehearsal or something and we were doing it with the Baxter. John Slemon was...

VC: Oh, it was with John.

MM: A co-partner and it was half half. And then – now what are we going to do. Barney's in my office again and then, you know, that wonderful, that positive side. How we got together for the first time. Barney said, "I'll do a play."

VC: "Okay, we'll just have to do another play."

MM: Right, so, and he sat there and said...

VC: About women, hey.

MM: "Ja we'll do something else. We'll use this cast. "And he just thought it up, there and then, you know. And then I said, " But you know we in this with John Slemon." " If he doesn't want to come we'll do it ourselves and that'll be that."

VC: So the theatre isn't dark.

MM: Ja. "We'll do it here and we won't go to the Baxter. But we're kind of breaking our word with John but it's beyond our control." So I phoned John Slemon. Said " John um...I have very sad news. Very sorry. Ntozake Shange, I just got this telegram." And I read him the telegram. " And so Barney has decided he is going to make his own play. We haven't got the title yet, but he's going to use the women. And it's going to be South African women talking about their things. "And there wasn't a second's silence when John said, " Oh I like that very much. That's good. "And I said, "So if you want to withdraw..." He said, " No, no, no, no."

VC: No.

MM: “ I’m in. I’m fine.” So we never had another – he just went with it, you know, from a Broadway hit to a new Barney Simon play.

VC: Entirely different.

MM: Women he’d probably never heard of and all that. Boom ! And we did and then we went to Lesotho somehow on the way down.

VC: To Lesotho?

MM: Ja, Swaziland was our first international thing.

VC: Yes.

MM: ???

VC: Lesotho?

MM: Lesotho was our second international venture, and we played in that theatre where GODSPELL opened in...

VC: Oh the Casino.

MM: In the Casino, and to this day, again you see it’s impossible, unless someone has all those files and letters. I don’t know how we ended up in Lesotho, but we did.

VC: And we just did.

MM: We did. We played there for a week and it went quite well. Went very nicely in Lesotho, totally different to anything they’d ever seen there. No but Barney had some music in it as you know. And maybe they’d also booked, maybe they also booked for COLORED GIRLS and ended up with this CALL ME WOMAN.

VC: Maybe they did.

MM: Which is something completely different. And then we went to the Baxter and of course it was strong, did very well.

VC: There’s no full script of it hey.

MM: Isn’t there?

VC: Not that one can find at the moment.

MM: Coz that’s another thing that should be done.

VC: Maishe phoned me the other day and he...

MM: Really.

VC: And he said somebody’s asked him for the script of it and I said well we did look.

MM: Six or seven good women and you’re away.

VC: Somebody must have it. Maybe it wasn’t typed out you know.

MM: There was a Stage Manager's script, you know. Who was the Stage Manager. What would she have done with it.

VC: Elaine? (Bourne)

MM: No, no, Indian.

VC: Saira Essa?

MM: No.

VC: Oh I know who you mean.

MM: Lovely and really I had such a nice time working with her, and I remember in Lesotho, somehow we were together coz Barney was working with the girls, and it was her and me and we just, we did it, you know. We did our work, and we made the show look as good as possible.

VC: What was her name?

MM: What was her name?

VC: I'll look in the book.

MM: She went working. I was in touch with her once after the Market and she was in a different field.

VC: I know exactly what she looks like.

MM: She was in some sort of community field or something.

VC: Mm.

MM: Developmental thing. I can see her too. I can see her.

VC: Yes.

(He laughs)

MM: Anyway.

VC: Nice.MM: No she was nice. She was good. And she was the Stage Manager of CALL ME WOMAN and I'm sure there was a script. That was the thing that we worked with was definitely the script so there's got to be a script.

VC: Ja, well.

MM: So what have you got. Have you got pieces of it. Have you got like monologues and stuff.

VC: No there's some stuff at NELM but it's not the whole thing. So I don't know where some of these stage manager's scripts were, thrown away or...

MM: Haai.

VC: I don't know.

MM: Yo.

VC: I mean they were precious.

MM: Yeah, ja now it would be great for people to be able to do, you know. That was a Barney Workshop Production.

VC: Ja.

MM: And all...

VC: They're doing CINCINATTI next year.

MM: Oh good. Who's doing CINCINATTI?

VC: The Market.

MM: For the opening of the Laager?

VC: I don't think so. For Barney's...

MM: Barney's?

VC: Twenty years.

MM: Okay.

VC: Ja.

MM: Okay.

VC: They're doing that and I'm going to help them and stuff.

MM: Oh well that's nice. That started in the Upstairs.

VC: No, it should be in the Upstairs.

MM: Ja, yes. But it was used sideways. People are liking the end stage now.

VC: There was no set for ages. Do you remember the drama. He was going to have three stages.

MM: Oh (Laughs) Yes. We had to go down and try and you guys had to act on the railway line.

VC: And nothing worked. Yes.

MM: And you couldn't hear.

VC: No it was terrible.

MM: So we took all the seats out.

VC: Ja.

MM: But then he came in. Then it was so echoey. Quite an interesting experiment because, I remember...

VC: We didn't know where we'd be performing.

MM: There was the old restaurant, where the restaurant...

VC: Then down, then on the railway line...

MM: And then up.

VC: Up.(Laughs) That didn't work, no.

MM: Barney had that mad idea and then I mean again, it was a great success. Ran for a year. (Laughs) ended up in the Brooke Theatre.

VC: Yes.

MM: The commercial run. Aai, yaai, yaai.

VC: So tell me if you would think of your particular highlights of things.

MM: My God.

VC: For whatever reason.

MM: It's impossible. (Laughs) That's impossible. That's impossible.

VC: That's impossible.

MM: I mean there were highlights with different people. There were highlights.

VC: That's fair enough.

MM: There were highlights with Barney. There were highlights like choosing MARAT/SADE you know. I don't know where that came from. It came from somewhere brilliant and genius and it was totally crazy and that's why it was so wonderful to do it. And it was totally the right play, you know. When I hear – We want the Revolution Now – Then I know that that...

VC: Was right.

MM: Couldn't have been better.

VC: Ja.

MM: Couldn't have been better and the whole...

VC: And it had thirty-five people in it...

MM: ja, the whole process of creating...

VC: Another problem though yes...

MM: The play and having those musicians in, was very close to all the work that we'd done in a way. And using the whole theatre and getting Steve Collins to design the first production there, because he wanted the structural thing that Steve could bring to it, which he did beautifully. So it was all that and I mean, often Barney would do those things where we would do something and we would make a little bit of money and then...

VC: Spend it.

MM: Ja, but that was part of the deal. We'd say Okay and that's how MOTHER COURAGE happened, which was also a highlight for me. Ah, I think it'd how the DYBBUK happened. Now, which was also a highlight for me. It was a wonderful thing to do. Patrick (Curtis) and I and that circle Patrick invented, which we used again in the TEMPEST. You never saw our production of the TEMPEST.

VC: No.

MM: I never used it for all those years and then in the TEMPEST they've got the magic circle.

VC: And you used it.

MM: And Patrick was in the production meeting and I said, “Janice, do you think we have something in the ground?” And Patrick said, “No Janice I will give you one.” Coz Patrick and I had spoken about it lots after that. I always said he should, you know, everybody these days – Declan Randall now has colours named after him. Get Declan Randall’s little range of Lee colours, five or six colours that he invented. I said, “Patrick you can, that can be your circle, coz nobody can make a bloody circle coz it’ll fall out.” And he did that. There’s a side story. But we took the TEMPEST to England, to Stratford and the guy said, “This is fantastic. Who made this?” And I said, “Patrick, Patrick.” He was there. I said we should call it...And they went off and machine made...

VC: Ah.

MM: The same thing. So now it’s going to become...

VC: It’s all over.

MM: Now everyone’s going to have access to this bladdy circle now. It’s not the same thing. But DYBBUK was a big highlight for me, a play that went back to my time with Leonard Schach when we did THE TENTH MAN which was the modern adaptation by Chayefsky (sp) of the DYBBUK. But Barney doing the original with Joe Stewardson.

VC: Amazing.

MM: Barney and Joe and Dawid Minnaar and Megan – which one – Kruskal.

VC: Kruskal.

MM: Kruskal, you know. That was when...

VC: Ja it was beautiful.

MM: When Barney was, kind of, was into things, you know, the choice of the SEAGULL to open the theatre...

VC: I never understood that.

(Mannie laughs)

VC: Honestly.

MM: Well it was like... I know, I don’t think I had that much influence on him at all. But my feeling was, if we were going to do a classic, that’s the time to do it, coz he wanted to do some classics. Didn’t like to do Shakespeare, but he wanted to do – he had these Chekhov’s, very much wanted to do Chekhov’s and that was the moment, because people will come to see the theatre, “What’s this bladdy Market Theatre that everybody is talking about.”

VC: They’d come to see the theatre.

MM: So you’d have an audience. But we had to do this big cast play.

(They laugh)

MM: You know with the small theatre and I still, I mean I'll never forget Fiona Fraser coming into my office and saying, "Mannie, how dare you employ my husband, Bill Brewer, for Forty Rand a week."

(They laugh)

MM: She was a full time PACT actress. So I said, "But Fiona he agreed to do it. I asked him if he would like to."

VC: He didn't have to do it.

MM: He didn't have to do it. He just, he wanted to do it. She said, "Yes, but you're just taking advantage of him."

(Mannie laughs)

MM: I mean Bill was also in COMEDIANS. I think I paid him Sixty Rands a week, coz it was the big theatre.

(They laugh)

VC: But he had another job as a journalist.

MM: Yes he was a journalist.. You know, he was many things. He was President of the Players Club and all that stuff. We used to meet at the Chelsea Night Club. So I mean, those Barney... you see there's strings of them. I'm probably leaving out half of them as well. But there's also the other thing whereby Barney said, "Okay let's do something commercial. I want to do..." Brian Astbury had just done whatever he did of Woody Allen and Barney said...

VC: DON'T DRINK THE WATER and the other one. There were two.

MM: Yes so Barney did PLAY IT AGAIN SAM.

VC: Yes.

MM: And Brian did DON'T DRINK THE WATER.

VC: Ja.

MM: And when we were doing DON'T DRINK Barney said, "I got one. I want to do one. I'll show you. It'll make money."

(Mannie laughs)

MM: And we did. It was a great success. It was lovely when Barney was, when, and Barney when he was being humorous. It was one of the things that made WOZA ALBERT such a success was that – I mean there's a highlight. I mean talk about highlights.

VC: My goodness.

MM: I'm leaving out WOZA ALBERT.

VC: That changed a lot of things.

MM: Yes absolutely. And the way, the way it happened, that Percy and Mbongeni, in what was to become the Restaurant, on bales of straw, came with their play and for some reason Siphos Sepamla was with me that afternoon. It was a Saturday afternoon.

VC: You may have been doing something at FUBA (Federated Union of Black Artists).

MM: Maybe. Yes, yes I was on the sort of, whatever we called ourselves, the Board or something and I don't know why, but I think I said, " This is maybe something you might like. Come and have a look. Percy and Mbongeni."

VC: Barney wasn't there.

MM: No he wasn't there. No. See it goes back a little further. I used to have these Friday afternoon clearing things – general auditions. Anybody can come, not more than ten minutes. Not more than three extracts, not more than three minutes blah, blah, blah. Show your versatility. Percy and Mbongeni auditioned in the old Lager, the small one.

VC: That's where it opened in fact.

MM: Correct.

VC: I remember it.

MM: But they were terrible. They were terrible. They were awful. They were doing you know, big eyes.

VC: Hey man, Gibson (Kente).

MM: ja and they did three extracts, and each did their thing.

VC: From WOZA ALBERT, from...

MM: No, no, no, now just...

VC: Acting?

MM; No, they were doing, I don't know, maybe Shakespeare or something. They were acting acting. And they really weren't good. And then, they kind of had a determination in those days too. So they waited until the end of the audition. I came out and they said, " No we want to talk to you. What was wrong, what was wrong. We could see you weren't happy. " Coz I said, " Well I haven't said anything. I've told everybody, you know, don't phone us we'll phone you." " No, no, no, no but we've got another idea, got another, we want to, we've got a play we want you to see." So that's when we made a date and...

VC: There they came.

MM: There they came. It was a Saturday afternoon and they said, "Oh what we've got is the first act. We'll show you the first act of WOZA ALBERT."

VC: Wasn't it on a train or something.

MM: Yes that was the one thing that Barney kept. (They make train noises) You know and the sticking their heads out of the window, and the cold.

VC: But I think the whole thing was...

MM: So two hours later we'd seen Act 1.

VC: Oh,oh.

MM: And there's no doubt it was very, very promising, you know. It had all sorts of good things in it.

VC: Sipho was excited and stuff.

MM: Yes he was excited. We were all excited and I said – well you know we had one of my famous talks. I said, "Now you've got a, what you've got here is a nice piece of glass. (Laughs) But now you need a cutter."

VC: Beveller.

MM: "Diamond cutter that turns that thing into something that's worth a million dollars. So I want you guys to go away and think who you want to direct it." They said, "Okay." And we made a date to meet them, in my office the following week or something. And Mbongeni still remembers that meeting. One of the things he always says is, "Do you know what made me first ah... start to like you." I said, "No I don't know, what did I do?" And he said, "You offered me tea when I came to see you in the office. You said do you want some tea. And I had a cup of tea in your office. "And I said," Okay well we offer everybody a cup of tea."

VC: ???

MM: "Come on. If you having a meeting you offer- especially if I'm having tea."

VC: You sit and drink tea.

MM: 'No white man has ever offered me tea. "All that stuff. "So then who have you decided?" "Barney Simon." So I laughed. I can remember I went Waa Ha.

VC: Barney.

MM: Ja, so I said, "You've just asked for the top guy that we've got. I expected you to come here with somebody that maybe I haven't heard of, that you think is good, whatever..."

VC: Gibson, or whoever...

MM: Ja start with something. "No, no we want Barney Simon. "That was there decision. So I said, "Look. "

VC: Had they been to see things at the Market.

MM: Who knows, I don't know.

VC: I don't think they had.

MM: I don't know what it was. I said, "You've asked for the Artistic Director." They said, "We want Barney Simon." Both of them. That's all they could say.

VC: Barney.

MM: Ja. So I said, "Okay I know he's in his house now. I can phone him and I'll hold the phone. You can hear what he says." They said, "No phone him, phone him." I phoned Barney. I said, "There's two guys here. They did the audition for us a week ago and Sipho and I thought it was good. It definitely needs cutting, it needs working on." And I asked him, I told him the whole story, "And they want you to direct

it.” And then I had to hold the phone here (He indicates) coz he said, “ But Mannie you know that I’m about to start directing this, and I’m doing that. What are you trying to do now, what!”

VC: Moan, moan, moan, moan.

(They laugh)

MM: And I was holding the phone here.

VC: You see.

MM: And I got on the phone and I said, “And they also heard everything you said. “ “What!”

(They laugh)

MM: “So what would you say.” He said, “They must come back in...” I don’t know how long, it was long, like two months, coz you know Barney.

VC: He had to go to America always ja.

MM: Always yes, he was going to rehearse for a long time, and whatever he was doing, and then, after the two months or whatever it was. It was two or three months...

VC: They came back.

MM: They came back on the day. And again they sat in my office. And again I picked up the phone.

VC: They were waiting for him.

MM: And again Barney went off. He said, Warra, you know where I’ve been, I can’t, I haven’t got any time, warra warra.” And I said, Okay Barney, what do you want me to say to them?” And he said, “ Well.” Then it became shorter, like three weeks or something. “They must come back in three weeks. I’ll see them in three weeks.”

VC: I’m sure they were getting cross by then.

MM: They came back, and again, I know it happened three times. And again Banrey said, “ No I can’t see them this week, Mannie you know I can’t see them.”

VC: “ I told you.”

MM: “ Coz I didn’t have it in my diary that these people come back.” And then, then they met and Sipho gave, I explained to Sipho what they were on about. We didn’t have room at the Market. So they went to one of the rooms in FUBA.

VC: Oh yes.

MM: Barney went there on an afternoon. He went in, two half past two, and I remember I waited for him afterwards. When he came out he was all smiles, and he said, “ ja.” He said, “There’s something, there’s something.” He said, “And there’s that one guy. The big black one.”

(He laughs)

VC: The skinny black one.

(They laugh)

MM: Haai, yaai, yaai. Something exciting so...

VC: That was it.

MM: That was it.

MM: The start of it. Then within a week or two, they were starting to rehearse. Then we were starting to plan and it went on in the ...

VC: How long did they tour?

MM; Well it had a crazy, wonderful, you know, I suppose that's why I always think, things had got to be on, things have got to be alive, for people to see them. That's the thing about the theatre. It only lives in the mind of those who are seeing it and people have to go. If you say, " I saw a wonderful show last night." And I say, " Well,can I see it tonight, or tomorrow night." It's got to be on. So two things happened almost simultaneously. One is we ran our season in the Laager and in the middle of our season in the Laager, and we're now somewhere like '82,'83 or something, a visiting team from Newsnight in England, BBC news team was out here filming the riots in the townships.

VC: Ja.

MM: The townships were burning. But they got the night off and they said, " Let's go and catch a piece of theatre." And they came to the Laager. And they phoned me the next morning saying – we want to film extracts from that play.

VC: Wow.

MM: And they put it on Newsnight. I think it's called Newnight. Anyway they came within days. Barney was there fussing. " Are you sure they chose the right extracts. " and everything and then they broadcast it.

VC: And it went crazy.

MM: I think as part of their nightly thing on what's going on in South Africa. They said, "Usually we're showing you these scenes of burning townships. Tonight we're going to show you something completely different. We're showing you what's going on in the theatre." And they showed extracts intercut with interviews with Percy, Barney and Mbongeni of WOZA ALBERT. The next morning my phone rang and it was David Thompson, who was a big hotshot at BBC, saying – we would like to produce the full play.

VC: For television.

MM: For television. That was something.

VC: It hadn't even shown on the stage in England.

MM: No, no they were – we want to do it. We want to do the whole thing. And I said, "That sounds very interesting blah, blah, blah."

VC: A whole other contract.

MM: And I had to go back to Barney and the boys and they were getting excited and at more or less the same time we moved to Cape Town, to the Space. And again one morning my phone rang. American accent, Ken Bricker, from the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles, “ Now Mannie I saw the WOZA ALBERT last night at the Space and I’m just phoning you to tell you that you’re coming to America. We’re going to bring you to Los Angeles. We’ve got a Festival there and its whenever it is.”

VC: Not, would you like to come.

MM: No, no. He said – he was very, very positive. He was an anthropologist. He was a funny guy. He was a Deputy Artistic Director. Artistic Director was, guy who was one of our patrons, and this was his sort of ??? and he said, “ I’m telling you, I’m taking this back to Gordon Davidson. Taking it back to Gordon and I’m gonna tell him what I saw. I’ve got the programme and anything else you can send me in the meantime. And I’m telling you, you’re going to come. So you must start to talk to the guys.” And so within like ten days we had an invite to...

VC: It was a whole different thing.

MM: You know, Los Angeles with the... it was a festival which took place in a five hundred seater theatre. They converted a massive cinema in Los Angeles. And we were actually on the stage of the cinema but it was five hundred seats on the stage, and a stage. And there were lots of other plays there too. And it was called the New Theatre for Now Festival. And in the meantime we went to England and recorded...

VC: Filmed.

MM: WOZA ALBERT for the BBC.

VC: Have you got a copy of that?

MM: Must be somewhere, must be. BBC will definitely have it. I don’t have a copy of it.

VC: Maybe NELM’s got it.

MM: I wonder if I’ve got a copy, I wonder if I’ve got a copy.

VC: Just would be very interesting to see it.

MM: I’ll look. I’ll go through all my old, what do you call it, VHSs.

VC: Ja.

MM: Coz in those days that’s what it was.

VC: Mm.

MM: You know, but again there’s a reason to do this. One should do it. I’ve now got ASINAMALI. That was Ross.

VC: Devenish.

MM: Yes. He filmed ASINAMALI somewhere in Joburg. But there is a film of that. And that was opening in the UK.

VC: All sorts of things.

MM: You see, what was I doing there. I wasn't actually doing much. I actually don't even know why I went. But now, the history.

VC: Were you not doing the lighting.

MM: No.

VC: No.

MM: Because it was television lighting.

VC: Oh right, of course.

MM: So they had their people. I was there like the manager. Just to see that everything was in place. Dixon (Maleele) was the Stage Manager. (He laughs) and Percy, Mbongeni and Barney. And we stayed, I remember, in a lovely hotel that overlooked Lords Cricket Ground. Just down the road from Mary, Mary Benson. Barney used to say, "I've got to have supper with Mary." (He laughs) Every now and then we got...

VC: Mbongeni's eyes must have been even bigger.

MM: Yes, every now and then we'd get invited and it was, you know, hard work. We had to, you had to be in the studio at like eight o'clock. So we were up at six.

VC: Even earlier.

MM: Ja, even, ja, cross town, wherever their studios were. And they gave me an office. They gave me, they said, " Mannie, this is your office here. " So then again we used to huddle together quite a lot and...

VC: Sit in your office.

(They laugh)

MM: Sit in my office. And we were at the hotel in the evenings, and then we decided that we must try and find a theatre and do a show. We must do...

VC: Just one.

MM: We must do a showcase and er... Mandie was in England then somehow. I remember she came to that showcase.

VC: Ja she did talk about that.

MM: And my job was to find a theatre and then find an audience. And then I tried all different theatres and um... somebody got me in touch with the Riverside Studios and David Gotthard.. So he's the only one who said yes. All the others, I said Saturday morning...

VC: No you can't...

MM: Coz we were leaving on Sunday and they... No, no we can't. Stage is precious and there other shows playing there.

VC: Overtime for the technicians.

MM: No we don't...we won't move anything.

VC: Don't need lights even.

MM: Two tea boxes and we'll bring them with us. And so it ended up in the Riverside Studios, David Gotthard.

VC: And you had to organize the audience as well.

MM: David Gotthard said yes but I wasn't allowed to touch the lights. And in fact we weren't even allowed to use the lighting board. We did it in working lights which led to another whole discussion with the boys and Barney and me, of, because it was a fantastic performance in the end. To get there I invited everybody who ran a theatre in London, that I could find. Anybody. I didn't know half of them. I just said, " This is what's happening."

VC: If you're interested.

MM: Sure, ja. And um... people from the National, people from the Royal Shakespeare Company, people from Edinburgh.

VC: Royal Court.

MM: Traverse, the Royal Court, all over and um... it was pretty full. It was pretty full, and it was early in the morning. I still remember it was misty as we went. When we got there it was very misty. Even when the audience came at 10 o' clock, I think the show was...

VC: Darkish.

MM: Yes it was dark, was winter and I think that was part of the magic of it on that morning because they were used to being super hot by 10 o' clock in the morning. They were in the middle of the second take already. They were, you know, flying and the energy was up and they'd been in that sleep cycle.

VC: They were full of that energy.

MM: Ha, and no lighting changes, just full lights.

VC: And they went.

MM: I don't even know if I said anything. I just, we banged out the house lights and leapt on stage and in they came. You know, did that opening sequence with the trumpet and stuff and it was fantastic. It was standing...

VC: They went mad.

MM: They went mad, and afterwards, and I don't have it, I don't keep these things. And I remember sitting with my diary, and David said, " We'll set you up at a table." And the Riverside's got a lovely feeling in the foyer and David made it even more lovely.

VC: He liked the show as well.

MM: Oh he loved the show. Somehow that was his thing in life was finding, you know, little unnoticed jewels. And he was running a very successful Riverside Studios at the time, doing maverick, crazy, different...

VC: New stuff.

MM: New stuff and so he started this thing and he said, "Okay, form a queue here." And I said, "What are you doing?" and he said, "No, all these people want you." and there was a queue.

(V laughs)

MM: Going round the foyer.

VC: But he had first choice surely.

MM: Well he didn't say anything.

VC: No.

MM: And then Barney and Mbongeni and Percy sat at a table over there and I kept shouting across to them, "Do you guys want to go to Birmingham." You know.

(They laugh)

MM: Then somebody else would come and sit.

VC: Wow Mannie.

MM: No it was... and I wrote all these names and numbers. And then somebody from the Edinburgh Festival, from the main festival, sat down and said, "I am here representing the Main Festival and we want you to come." Coz that was one of jokes on the phone, "Edinburgh, we want to go to Edinburgh festival. We going to be the stars." And I shouted across to them, "Hey we going to Edinburgh." And thank heavens I did that coz it's all like, when these things replay themselves – Gotthard heard that and five minutes later he came and took me to the side. He said, "Excuse me."

VC: ???

MM; He pulled me into his office and said, "Just answer this person on the phone, and whatever he says you say yes."

(V laughs)

MM: "Just do me a favour." And his name was Lichtenvelts, Peter Lichtenvelts. He was the Artistic Director of the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh.

VC: Oh, that's right.

MM: And he said, "I'm Peter Lichtenvelts. David's just told me I've got to book the show, so I want you to come." So I said...

VC: But that's other than the festival.

MM: That's the Fringe Festival in Edinburgh.

VC: Yes, not the Main.

MM: And it's not the Main, and in those days particularly, before all the other Assemblies and things had joined, the Traverse was like the...

VC: Ja, I know.

MM: King of the Fringe.

VC: We went with BOPHA.

MM: Ja there you go , exactly.

VC: We were all in the theatre.

MM: That's right and the Traverse became our home, Ja in Edinburgh.

VC: So you snubbed the Main.

MM: So I said, " Yes Peter because David's telling me to say yes. But now I've still got to go and face these people who are sitting at my table.

(V laughs)

VC: David must have phoned him – book him!

MM: Yes, yes that's what he did. And then I went back to them and said, " Can we have a meeting." And we discussed it with the guys, I can't remember now, blah, blah, blah and then I mean...

VC: Wow.

MM: The Royal Court was there as well, so what came out of that were two major meetings. The Edinburgh Festival, who I don't think have forgiven me to this day...

VC: Probably not.

MM: There was a, it was a terrible meeting. I said, " I'm terribly sorry."

VC: But we're going to the Traverse.

MM: "We've decided we're going to the Traverse. " (He laughs) He said, "Do you know what you're doing." You know...

VC: "And who do you think you are!"

MM: Yes it was all that. It was implied if not said. "You're making a big mistake here, Mannie."

VC: And they could be very snotty.

MM: Ja but the point is they were like these three days. You know you got one week.

VC: Fringe was like the whole, ja.

MM: Fringe was like four weeks.

VC: Ja.

MM: And that already smelled nice to me and it was the best theatre on the Fringe, in those days anyway.

VC: That was a lovely place.

MM: It was lovely. It's changed now.

VC: I know.

MM: A bit more smart.

VC: It's pretty but not the same.

MM: Not the same and Peter was just a great friend and him and Barney got on. It was all...

VC: And what about David, did you perform at Riverside.

MM: Then, the next meeting is in the Royal Court, with, what's his name – Max, what's his name, Max, great director, American, who ran the Royal Court for a long time.

VC: Yes.

MM: Did a whole lot of, what's the woman writer.

VC: Carol Churchill.

MM: Carol Churchill. He's like famous for being her director. Anyway we go and see him. He's love and sugar and spice. Just, "You,ve got to come to the Royal Court."

VC: Mm.

MM: That's where this stuff started, Athol started here. We want you to be here. So again somehow we eased ourselves out of there, and we went, I remember, there was a pub across the road. We went to the pub and Percy and Mbongeni drank milk.

(V Laughs)

MM: Ja I had, I don't know what Barney had. I had a drink and we sat down and said, "Well there's David who obviously wants to have the show, and then this is the Royal Court, you know. There's the Riverside Studio, which is a grobbie little theatre in..."

VC: But they were the only ones who wanted you.

MM: Ja ??? There were regional theatres who were wanting us but we, we realized we had to solve London first.

VC: Quickly, ja.

MM: Ha, so we all looked at each other you know, and all agreed, you know. We said, " Now David gave us the chance and we want, we're going to give it to David. " So again I had to go back to Max Stafford Clarke...

VC: Oh, that's right yes.

MM: I had to go back to Max Stafford Clarke. (He laughs) Who to give him his due, didn't give me a hard time. He just said – No I can understand. I explained – look we asked all of you to give us that tryout.

VC: And they said no.

MM: And none of us could. Well why couldn't we? He also had shows, but somehow he did it. Somehow it was written in the stars. He did it, so we are going to him.

VC: And he helped you to get to the Traverse.

MM: And he helped us get to the Traverse and, you know, he became a friend for life. In fact he's still a

friend. You know whenever I'm around and he appears, which he does, sort of unexpectedly. You know he's got this long, lank hair.

VC: I don't know if I've ever met him.

MM: You've never met him. His hair wasn't that long and that lank in those days. He's now like the Artistic Advisor to the Gate, the Dublin Gate.

VC: Ah.

MM: And er... got a lovely new Artistic Director, so he's quite a mover in his world. He came out and did a production. Did it get to Grahamstown? He was trying to get a show to Grahamstown. Some sort of Shakespeare link.

VC: Wow.

MM: Anyway that was David. That was as close as he got to... I think he came to Grahamstown twice. So I mean it's a whole episode is WOZA ALBERT.

VC: I know.

MM: One of the Barney highlights, you know.

VC: One has to talk about it.

MM: It's absolutely massive. Their success in LA, we were introduced to Columbia by the Mark Taper Forum. They looked after us, and they did a National Tour which ended in New York. And we were downtown. We were in Lucille Otel Theatre. HA, ha, Lucille Otel came to the dress rehearsal and the next day both the boys got a gift from Lucille for the opening night- and what was it, it was towels.

VC: Towels.

MM: Because they perspire.

VC: She couldn't bear it, ooh.

MM: Very much sweating. So (He laughs) they all laughed and loved it. And I mean it was crazy being in Christopher Street with that play as well. All just part of the madness.

VC: Ja.

MM: And I think it might have been during that visit that Barney found his apartment in New York, I think that one of the nephew's has now.

VC: Ja.

MM: And I mean it was a very, very successful time. We then, I mean, how these things all fit, time wise. I don't know coz we also ended up in London, playing in the West End, playing on Piccadilly Circus, what's that theatre called, the Criterion. Alan went over to look after them then.

VC: Alan was with them for like two years.

MM: Yes coz he was part of the Traverse time, so he was in the UK.

VC: And they didn't really talk to each other apparently.

MM: Percy and Mbongeni, no. They, we had then started to get into the difficult area of... I mean on stage it was fine but – Percy got married then, and I think there was a, the power structure was disturbed.

VC: Ja.

MM: She was on tour with them an, and...

VC: The wife, oh.

MM: Often then she's not as invested in the work as Percy has to be. So she's got more time to think about how can... I don't know what the reason was.

VC: But ja, gosh.

MM: So that became an unhappy situation and eventually, after, I think it altogether it was four years.

VC: Ja it must have been, altogether...

MM: By which time, who was it, Louis (Seboko) and Sello (Maake)...

VC: Oh, they were doing another production of it.

MM: Did a new production, with their blessing.

VC: Yes.

MM: And Percy and Mbongeni started their next works which were ASINAMALI and BOPHA.

VC: BOPHA ja.

MM: And BOPHA did very well. ASINAMALI did very well.

VC: But BOPHA didn't go on in New York after...

MM: It didn't go on in New York...

VC: After the Woza Afrika Festival because one of the critics didn't like it.

MM: Okay.

VC: They liked BORN IN THE RSA.

MM: Ah.

VC: And then the next one was BOPHA and then there was ASINAMALI and BOPHA he didn't like.

MM: BOPHA.

VC: New York Times I think it was. So BOPHA had been booked for a run.

MM: Ah.

VC: And it was cancelled.

MM: Ah.

VC: And ASINAMALI went on.

MM: Oh I thought that BOPHA...

VC: I liked BOPHA.

MM: ASINAMALI was more formulaic for me. You know the end at the beginning whereas BOPHA...

VC: BOPHA was great.

MM: BOPHA was a nice story. It was a well written story.

VC: But I remember that was a terrible thing that happened to Percy. We were all in New York and BOPHA was cancelled.

MM: Was that before or after the National Theatre run of BOPHA, coz there Nicholas...

VC: I don't know.

MM: ...Wright.

VC: Because we went – all I know is we were all at the Woza Afrika Festival.

MM: Right, which I missed, for some reason I wasn't there.

VC: You weren't there.

MM: No I wasn't there.

VC: No um... I don't know whether BOPHA had been... because we also travelled to Edinburgh with BOPHA. I think they went on to the National maybe.

MM: From Edinburgh ja. Nicholas Wright phoned me. He said, " I think BOPHA is a very good play. And I want to do it in the Cottesloe, blah, blah, blah. And he was like advisor to the king, was then, I don't know, Richard Eyre's time I think.

VC: I don't know because we went from Edinburgh. We were at the Tricycle and then we went to America.

MM: So I don't know what order, you know.

VC: I can't remember.

MM: This is very hard, to remember all these things in their order. And then of course BOPHA was filmed, for a film film.

VC: Yes.

MM: Filmed in Zimbabwe, I think.

VC: That's right. I saw it quite recently on the TV.

MM: I've never seen it. I don't think I've seen it.

VC: It was, what's his name?

MM: I had to deal with the contract for that one.

VC: Not Morgan Freeman, the other...

MM: I was involved with the contract which wasn't a good thing to be involved in, coz Percy didn't trust anybody by that time.

VC: No he was paranoid a bit then.

MM: And he would blame me for everything. But I thought it was a very good contract, at the time. I, I was trying to be protective of him. I mean nobody else got anything out of it. Percy got...

VC: The most.

MM: All the royalties. I don't know what actors were involved but, the, you know, any, any other entity, including the Market got zilch out of it. It was all just...

VC: For them.

MM: For them, for Percy mainly. But he was, he always felt like, you know...

VC: Hard done by.

MM: If he got X, he wanted X plus.

VC: Ja why is it only X.

MM: Ja and he was going into a very strange phase. That's the last...

VC: Ja he's never really recovered.

MM: And where is he now, and what's he doing now. I mean he's held various positions.

VC: I don't know. I don't know where he is.

MM: I don't know. It's very sad about that. And you know Mbongeni is still going his wild and wonderful way down in Durban with Anant (Singh).

VC: But now there's problems with SARAFINA and...

MM: Is there, is that...

VC: With what's her name. She says it was her idea.

MM: Oh yes, yes, yes. But I thought, Tu Nokwe, but I thought that's been dealt with.

VC: I don't know, because it's not on this Christmas. It was meant to be on at the Playhouse.

MM: Yes but it wasn't that that stopped it. Coz I was at a production meeting, coz they were trying to bring Sarah (Roberts) and me.

VC: It's not on because...

MM: No, no way after that meeting, before this came out, this sort of scandalous story.

VC: Mm.

MM: We met at the Playhouse and I think Mbongeni had wanted, you know Mbongeni puts deals together like we have breakfast.

VC: Ja.

MM: So he had some deal going where he was going to get some funding. Playhouse were going to give some funding and it was going to come together. And I don't think his funding came through. And also he takes a lot on, you know, he was doing, he was doing the ZULU, which was a massive thing to undertake. It was all on him. It was a one man show. He was the producer, and all of those things, and

the leading actor, and the writer. Ha. I only saw it in the rehearsal room in Cape Town and I, I thought it was very good. I don't know.

VC: The ZULU, I didn't see it.

MM: You didn't see it here, okay.

VC: I haven't seen it here.

MM: I didn't see it. It also had a showing in Durban and it went to Edinburgh.

VC: Ah ha.

MM: It went for like a week, late or something. It was one of those funny things where...

VC: Oh God.

MM: They were supposed to be there for week 0, and they got there for week 1.

VC: He liked being late. (Laughs)

MM: Yes, yes. No I'll go that week.

VC: So, Mannie we can't talk for much longer.

MM: Yes.

VC: But okay so now we talked about a whole lot of people.

MM: Yes, but okay ja.

VC: What, what, what was it – was it the coming together of all those people.

MM: people I haven't mentioned who are very important.

VC: No we must...ja.

MM: Is Lucille Gillwald...

VC: Ah.

MM: Is- Janice was there from the beginning. Benjy we mentioned. Um... Hilary Blecher and her Sam Shepard phase, you know. Then there were just so many of these – Matsamela Manaka, who never worked with us but who worked in the theatre and who, I always loved having him there coz he was totally independent and valued his independence. So it was like- it was so nice for me, coz he said, "You know I don't want anything from you."

VC: Don't, ja.

MM: Ja. I used to say, "Do you want to split this in any way?"

VC: "No."

MM: "No. What is the rent. Okay if the rent's a percentage deal, that's fine. But that's what I want." And the poster would say whatever his company's name was – at the Market. That's what it is. And he did all his own, which I thought were very important in the structure of the whole thing.

VC: Very.

MM: Very important.

VC: Very.

MM: To have his voice. Same with Maishe. So just as independent. Maishe said, "I don't want any help from nobody. I'm doing, I'm doing my thing in this theatre, you know."

VC: Now somebody like Andrew Buckland also...

MM: Yes.

VC: When he talked to me...

MM: Ah ha.

VC: You would give him a fifty/fifty and he would try and get it together.

(Mannie laughs)

VC: And he did get it together.

MM : Yes.

VC: He said he would never have got that style going, without that...

MM: Well you know.

VC: ...opportunity...

MM: Fifty/fifty was born with Malcolm.

VC: Purkey – he calls it a Purkey.

MM: The Purkey deal. It was Junction Avenue and there was this company. How the hell do we pay for a company? And there's Malcolm- if we split it. You pay for all the actors and stuff, and we supply the theatre and we do the advertising and...

VC: It worked quite well though, didn't it.

MM: I think we gave the Stage Manager, I can't remember. So that was our side of the line, and their side of the line. And they seemed to be happy. There was no, the thing was split down the middle.

VC: Andrew was blissfully happy.

MM: Ja, everybody knew the takings, everybody knew. No it was a very above board story, all this and whew, how did – you know we've spoken on one of the other tapes. But Murray Mclean, who was the most extraordinary thing to happen to all of us, that just came and did this. Gary Zulberg and um and, what was his name, our architect.

VC: Rodney.

MM: Rodney Grosskopff.

VC: Ja.

MM: Who became the first two chairpersons of the Fundraising Committee.

(Mannie laughs)

MM: They had to raise their own fees.

(Vanessa laughs)

MM: But also just because they...

VC: ...were interested.

MM: Bitten by the bug, you know. Scilla Mclean who, who – board meeting.

VC: We talked about that.

MM: Did we talk about that board meeting before the opening.

VC: Yes.

MM: When she said, “ Hey, hey just remember why we’re doing all this.” Ja, and it needed somebody outside us to make us understand, certainly for those Board members who were getting a bit worried.

VC: Edgy.

MM: Yes, including poor old Murray himself. But, oh, and then eventually the whole reason why the Kippies and the road closing and the Precinct was Menell, Clive Menell.

VC: Clive and Irene, ja.

MM: Him coming with, you know, major bucks, coz I remember meeting him at Murray Mclean, where I was the guest of honour and sat down on the bladdy verandah, with those weak cups of tea that Scilla ...

VC: Ja, cold, it was always cold on that verandah.

MM: He listened to me and then said, “ Ja it’s very interesting Mannie. I wish you well but I don’t want anything to do with it.”

VC: And Barney and him didn’t get on.

MM: Maybe, is that where it came from. I don’t know. But then there was this Kippies idea and that.

VC: The Anglovaal Mall.

MM: Yes that’s what got him. It was the jazz venue.

VC: He loved that.

MM: Built out of, out of the design of that Victorian Toilet and I mean, again what started happening, and David Goldblatt, you know, is another one of the people. And who was the first, the first Photo Gallery – you know these people that used to come and sit outside my office.

VC: Oh gosh.

MM: She’s very, very important. She, like Wolf, one day I walked into the Market Theatre, and there was Wolf Weinek, sitting on the stairs, saying, “ I want to talk with you.”

VC: Yes, yes, yes, I’ve got that,ja.

MM: And then there was this woman.

VC: What was her name?

MM: Who just sat there and said, “ I think I’d like to be involved in making a Photo Gallery. We can use the space up here, Circle Foyer. And then that became so successful. Then we had that experimental wall and I remember having meetings with David, and David saying, “ Now Mannie, who’s going to decide when an exhibition is for the Art Gallery or the Photo Gallery?” (he laughs)” Even when it’s a Photographic Exhibition.”

VC: They want it in the Art Gallery. (laughs) What then?

MM: That’s the thing, who’s the decision...I had to jump around them, hey. I don’t know what I said, because I don’t know who decides those things. They happen like – because Michael (Goldberg) and Wolf and Paul (Stopforth) would like somebody, or because she, also, she became part of the bigger committee as well, our loosely structured thing called the Art Gallery Committee.

VC: I must try and look it up somehow. But I must interview David anyway.

MM: Ja. Good, good.

VC: Coz,ja.

MM: Ja coz now the Photographic Workshop is part of the whole structure of the Market.

VC: Ja,ja.

MM: And then obviously John Kani and the beginning of the Lab.

VC: Ja.

MM: Where, I still believe, is where the heart of the Market beats strongest, is in that Lab. Even today, when I don’t really know, when I see some Lab students.

VC: It’s still going strong.

MM: That gets me going. Do they still use them as ushers and so on.

VC: Yes, there was a phase, kind of tried to stop them.

MM: There was a show in the Main on Thursday night and the ushers were fantastic.

VC: Ja I think most of them are them.

MM: I don’t know why, I get shy but I wanted to say where are you, you know...

VC: Ja.

MM: They were really sweet. I didn’t want to sit in my seat in the middle of the house. I wanted to wait and sit at the back.

VC: Back.

MM: Ja and they were so sweet with me.

VC: Helped.

MM: Looked after me.

VC: ???

MM: So they were absolutely..., they were lovely, and I thought, this is because they understand what they're doing and what this is part of.

VC: Ja there was a phase where they said it wasn't fair that it's only Lab students. I don't know why it wasn't fair. It's the Market Theatre and that was a bit of a...

MM: But it's where they can learn about what they're doing.

VC: Exactly, and it was important and... I think it's back to normal now.

MM: I hope so. I mean one of the...

VC: There was a phase where they only wanted to employ ushers who had their own cars. Now there's no such thing.

MM: Oh, they were trying to avoid transport home.

VC: But you can't avoid the transport home.

MM: Mm,mm.

VC: You cannot avoid that.

MM: No, it's a given, it's been a given from day one. From the time they built the townships.

VC: There's no point in getting upset about it.

MM: No, from the time they built these townships you have to have that.

VC: Ja especially at night.

MM: So there was this wonderful woman who, who did that in the, in the (cell phone rings) in the Photo Gallery, and I mean Wolf's bookshop, as much as they...

VC: I'm so sad it's not there.

MM: Yes.

VC: It's all closed up there. They made a little building there now, a temporary box office. But now it's dark. I don't under..., I don't know.

MM: I don't know quite what's going on, you know, the restructuring of the Main House. The architecture of that, and the things that have happened that are just beyond understanding. They got – I shouldn't be talking like this. Okay. Ah so...

VC: So the Market Theatre.

MM: The Market Theatre, so the Market, I mean.

VC: Ha.

MM: My best friends, when I first told everybody that, what I was going to do. I got a phone call, I remember, in my flat in Pretoria and they used to say, "Are you mad. Do you know what you are doing."

VC: "Are you mad."

MM: "You're going to go, in Newtown, nobody's ever going to Newtown. You're going to put an old building there." Ja, so er all the people, that, once I'd started, from that moment there was just support.

And it's from, my favourite memories are, are, remember we used to have the different phases of the fundraising and we...

VC: Ja.

MM: We used to say a Rand for a brick, whatever it was. Twenty Rand for something else, and a hundred Rand for a seat and a thousand Rand for a light, that sort of thing. And my best things were the scratchy letters and the crumpled – it was ten shillings in those days, crumpled ten shilling note from a pensioner saying...

VC: "I love this theatre."

MM: Ja, "I think this is very good what you're doing." Those are, those were for me, you know, the, such incredible support. I mean Vanessa, if you can find them somewhere. Melanie Dobbs might know where she put them. I don't know who else knows now. There were two photographs. They were sent to me by a lady in Nelspruit. They were pictures of her father who was the original engineer and they're pictures – the first one is the putting in of the pin. The first one is the two arches coming towards each other and you see a man sitting on one of the beams, the thing...

VC: I remember that.

MM: And then the other picture is the coming together.

VC: But where...

MM: And then down in the right hand corner is this lovely big man. A bit like the shape my Dad used to look, big, big tummy, big chest. Tall man, obviously the engineer in charge and that was her Dad, and they were buildings, building the Market.

VC: Did you frame those pictures and put them up somewhere?

MM: No they were framed and they were put up and now they're gone. They were framed. One of them was in my office. I don't know where the other one was. I also used to explain...

VC: I know there's still that picture of the, there is one old, old picture but it's not that.

MM: And that's a picture of? The Market in the old days.

VC: Ja, won't you ask Grace.

MM: Grace.

VC: Grace ferrets things away.

MM: Okay.

VC: Like old posters, things that...

MM: Ja.

VC: And she doesn't throw them away.

MM: That's good.

VC: There might be something there. Ask her.

MM: I haven't actually...I haven't seen Grace this time. Just seen Thuli (Mbuli) and who is the other guy. The front of house guys at night, and Gabs (Gabriel Royeppen) is always there.

VC: You're there more at night.

MM: Yes,yes and in the daytime. You think she's the daytime manager.

VC: She's the daytime manager.

MM: I must look her up. I'll just put my head in the office. They keep that door slightly...

VC: Just ask her if she remembers that.

MM: Yeah well I've only been here one day now, which was Thursday. Friday I was there early in the morning and then I left for other things...um...So what made the Market. I think the time was right. Something had to be done and I think in many ways we were in the fortunate position of being the people who did it. You know as much as it was a battle, it every day that I remember of it, I know one remembers with rosy coloured spectacles, and lends enchantment to the view and all that.

(VC laughs)

MM: But it was a wonderful adventurous time. It was a time of working together. What I always said I like about lighting shows is, I don't like to be the producer that comes into the room and everybody says, " Oh God, the producer and he might not give us a part in the next play." And so on. And I love coming into the room as a lighting designer, where they say, " Now you know where I switch on the light, and I'm part of what they are trying to make." Um... and with the Market...

VC: We were part of what was being made weren't we.

MM: At the Market we were all, you know, from those lovely pictures in the Market book, in that Best of Company of Minky (Schlesinger). I saw Minky recently somewhere.

VC: Really.

MM: I don't know where, but it was lovely to see her.

VC: She's around, ja.

MM: Was it in Cape Town? I went to see something and there she was with her husband and we had good hugs and it was just so nice to see her. Was it in the Fugard Theatre?

VC: But it's true, we all did, there was never...

MM: Peter Piccolo passed you (know). We became quite friendly.

VC: I saw photos of him the other day, oh my goodness.

MM: Ja and him and Ping (Piccolo).

VC: Pic and Ping, ja.

MM: Ping and Lesley have become friendly.

VC: Oh, okay, okay.

MM: Exchange things on Facebook and stuff. Coz he was totally special you know. I saw, I met, two weeks ago, I met John Nankin's first wife. Sue Clarke is her name. And...er...

VC: John's in Cape Town .

MM: John is in Cape Town. He's married, long time now, with the artist, what's her name – the one that does the bulls and the...

VC: Oh gosh, yes.

MM: The animal people and things. She's fantastic um... but we were at, at Ross Devenish 75th birthday party which was in his new home on the Marina in Muizenburg.

VC: Ooh excuse me!

MM: Very nice, a well appointed double storey house.

VC: Very nice.

MM: And...er...every leftie in Cape Town was there. (Laughs)

VC: Sweet.

MM: And there was this woman, introduced herself and she said, "Well John was supposed to be coming tonight, but he won't come, hey. He won't come." And I said, " I don't know if John will come. He's not really a party type." But...um... he's been making the odd piece of theatre in Cape Town causing...

VC: He was around a lot.MM: Yes, and you remember, I mean why I'm thinking about him, is him and Pic and Danny sort of painting and nailing and screwing, doing whatever, and then John running up Bree Street saying, " No I can't do this anymore. I can't do this again, I can't do this ever again."

(They laugh)

VC: Then he would work with Marcel and they'd put something in the Rehearsal Room.

MM: He did all that, but all this nailing and screwing and painting...

VC: "I can't."

(Vanessa laughs)

MM: All for no money, just with hope. You know those Saturday mornings when those people used to come. Do you remember those school teachers. I remember people bringing their whole class.

VC: Yes.

MM: And saying, " Okay what do you want us to do." " Okay sweep this, and scrape that."

VC: Yes, but we were very accepting of everything I think. Weren't we. I mean, there was no question of saying, " No, no, we don't need you, or..."

MM: Yes, yes, no we liked to welcome people...um... because we needed all the help we could get.

VC: Ja.

MM: It was sometimes worrying because one would hear, hey watch out for that one because...

VC: Yes.

MM: Maybe coz one was always nervous that there were – you had to be careful what you said in front of people. I suppose there was just a sense of that. I had one moment with the police myself. I don't know if you had any when – it was during Sandra Prinsloo and John Kani's MISS JULIE.

VC: Oh, MISS JULIE.

MM: When we had that bomb threat and everything.

VC: Oh yes.

MM: And the kiss and then we had to have a dog clearing the theatre.

VC: That's right.

MM: From, the police sent this, because Sandy was an icon.

VC: Ja.

MM: And they asked me to come to a meeting in John Vorster Square during sort of, they said it was to set up this arrangement with the dog. And you know, the time, the schedule and everything. But when I was there, they did that, and then they said, "Now Mr. Mannie, we want to talk to you, you know."

VC: Ooh.

MM: "Listen you know you in a very good position to...um, to help us you know." And I immediately... something had told me, and Callie (Cutts) had taken me there.

VC: Ah ha.

MM: Coz I could walk there but Callie, and I said," Callie just wait here."

VC: "Wait for me."

MM: "Just wait." So that you know of something goes wrong...And I just switched it off as quickly, I said, "No, no, listen, thank you for all your help, but I can't get involved with anything like that." I got down in that lift, I jumped into her car and I said, "Just go, go, let's go fast. Get away." Coz you just don't know what the other, coz it could all turn so, so nasty so quickly.

VC: That could be the very day that you had no money.

MM: Yes, yes.

VC: And you think – oh maybe.

MM: But we had a lot.

VC: Johan Engels was also asked when he was at Tukkies.

MM: Whew.

VC: Him and another guy, and the other guy did it.

MM: Whew.

VC: And Johan just said, “ I don’t know what you’re talking about.

MM: “ Ah, I can’t do that.”

VC: And they said, “ But your fees will be paid and...”

MM: Mm mm.

VC: Terrible hey.

MM: Well it was several times, I think three, might have been more, that we had people from the government come to see me at the Market. They’d come in and they’d sit down and they’d say, “ We like very much what you’re doing, and we’d like to help you.” And they would get in, for different reasons I didn’t totally understand.

VC: ??

MM: Yes and you know, discussing whatever developments were, and I’d say, “ Who are you here from?” “ Department of Culture.”

VC: There was no department of culture.

MM: I would open my door and say, “ This meeting’s finished. “ No I got cross, and all the people used to know when my door opened like that. (He laughs)

VC: Callie knew.

(They laugh)

MM: I used to say no. Where’s Baskind (Geoff) fit into all this history?

VC: Geoff, we haven’t even talked about him really.

MM: I mean again in – he’s one of the dark phases and he is also a phase that set us on the right road.

VC: I think so.

MM: It was eighteen months into the thing and then suddenly...

VC: We never could have imagined such a thing.

MM: Ja there’s this call from the bank saying, “ Mr. Manim you’re a hundred and eighty, what ever it was, in the red and...”

VC: “ None of your accounts have been paid.”

MM: “No, no, it can’t be. I’ve got my bank statement here. Our last Board Meeting financial statements.” And he said, “ Well you better come to me straight away”, Barclays Bank or whatever. And I get in, Callie took me in. I went in and he said, “ “ Here’s your statement. “

VC: Here’s your real statement.

MM: And I said,” Well here’s the one that was shown to our Board.” Coz Ian Haggie, he’s not a small name.

VC: No.

MM: In Joburg, and he said, “ Well I’m sorry that statement is not true. This is true. “And then of course, Board Meetings and all the chaos.

VC: Do you remember we had to go through all those files and me and Beverley (Melnick) and Danny...

MM: Mm mm.

VC: Oh...

MM: Ja.

VC: He did it so simply. That’s why we never knew. He used to come in first, open the post, used to leave last. And such a dear guy.

MM: Sweet.

VC: Sweet, sweet.

MM: In fact, you know, that a couple of weeks before this moment, all the girls in the office asked for a meeting with me. Do you know this.

VC: No, why.

MM: And they said...

VC: “Why were you being nasty to him.”

MM: “ Mannie you’re being too nasty to Geoff.”

(Vanessa laughs)

MM: “ He helps us a lot and he’s getting very nervous.”

VC: We’d all been to his son’s barmitzvah.

MM: Yes, and they said, “ We can see, when you come into the room, he gets very nervous and himse’s not himself.”

VC: He was nervous, understandably.

MM: “ Ja, and you’re, you’re...”

VC: “ Driving him mad.”

MM: “ You must stop being so nasty.” And of course I was always guilty, being nasty.

VC: But he was hiding things from you and somewhere he must have been...

MM: Well I don’t know. I was obviously...

VC: Getting at him...

MM: From a long way round. I could never have imagined that.

VC: No.

MM: So when that happened...

VC: And you know, somebody was saying, was it Mandie, that Cyril Fisher never got over that, because he brought him there.

MM: Yes, shame he was, it wasn't Cyril's fault.

VC: But you can believe it though.

MM: It's like something that you never can...

VC: In a theatre...

MM: The accountant, that's such a thing. Cyril was so supportive of all of us, and helpful.

VC: Ja.

MM: Ai, yaai, yaai – and then you know, the chaos that happens. Scilla's wonderful visit. The moment with the bank. You know all those stories where she...

VC: It's closed and we're not going to open.

MM: She stood outside the bank manager's office and she said, " I'm going to see him today." And the secretary said, " No you can't see him. He's in a meeting." And she said, " I'll stay here. He's got to come out that door. I'm going to stay here till he comes."

VC: Barney did that with the City Council, remember.

MM: Yes.

VC: Sat in the office.

MM: Yes, so and then she got that – she came back with the bank statement with the zero balance. They wiped out the whole thing and then we used all that.

VC: Started again.

MM: Went to all the creditors, the poor buggers and she, whatever happened, there was a fraction that was made.

VC: ??

MM: And they all had to accept a fraction of what they were owed and that cleared the bottom line and then...

VC: Slowly, slowly...

MM: We had that party in the Laager, with champagne when it was all finally done, and Ian Haggie...

VC: Coz the day before somebody, who? Janice said- we'd all been called in and told that the Market is closing tomorrow – no it was Grace (Mokoena) and then she said we all crept in. (She laughs) And then you called everyone into the Laager. Oh gosh.

MM: Hey, Ian made one of his most tearful speeches.

VC: Aah.

MM: You know, coz he believed in it and was hoping it would come through, but now it's come through its all fine.

VC: Thank you, thank you.

MM: But in a way, that kind of...

VC: I think it taught us a lot.

MM: Then boy did we check and double check.

VC: Nobody got away with anything, ever. (She laughs)

MM: Ai, yaai, yaai.

VC: But you don't in a theatre...I've never had a situation in a theatre, where that had happened.

MM: Well I wish I could say that these days. But now you hear of such terrible things.

VC: Oh you hear awful things.

MM: You hear of such terrible things. I was driven by a guy called John Ratshilamela (sp.)who's from Windybrow , who's now seconded to the Market, one of these people and he drove me from the airport to town and he told me his story and I said, " So what's happened." He said, " No well there's apparently over sixty million Rands..."

VC: Missing?

MM: Sixty million, sixty-five million.

VC: How, how can nobody see.

MM: Well they give it to a particular creditor. It was a developer, somebody that was...

VC: How do you give somebody that amount of money, at once.

MM: Give it over time. You see that's how he got a hundred and eighty. We would have spotted a hundred and eighty.

VC: True.

MM: But we didn't spot ten Rand when we took a hundred. We didn't spot a thousand Rand when we took ten thousand, when John and Winston – when we were taking money.

VC: Oh.

MM: He was taking more and, you know.

VC: But sixty million?

MM: Sixty million.

VC: I don't even know what it means, what it looks like.

MM: That's massive and of course, the terrible story.

VC: ??

MM: That was Windybrow, rebuilding the building.

VC: Refurbishing.

MM: Of Windybrow, and that's like part of it. So these guys were given it, and they decide the best way

to do it was to close it. So now what happens to these people, which, it feels a bit overblown. You've got a whole lot of staff at the Market that we didn't necessarily need.

VC: No.

MM: And the Market could do with a more, a larger permanent lighting team.

VC: Exactly.

MM: You know, there's some very good guys. So are they permanent now?

VC: Too many admin people, again.

MM: Yes coz they've all been added. They've been added.

VC: Yes.

MM: Coz now we're looking after Windybrow now.

VC: ??

MM: It's been decided that this is a way to solve it. Give them a job at the Market.

VC: It's not going to solve it. What are they doing at the Market?

MM: But we need, we need those grass roots, the workers. We need workers. And less up there.

VC: Yes.

MM: Less in the...

VC: It's always been a problem.

MM: Haai, yaai.

VC: Mannie we must stop.

MM: Ja.

VC: If I need something else I'm going to come back to you.

MM: Yes. What are you doing. Are you doing – is this now being transcribed.

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