

76 Victoria St.  
Hawera,  
New Zealand.

Mr. Alan Paton,  
South Africa.

Dear Mr. Paton,

Would you grant permission for me to arrange a one-act play from "Cry the Beloved Country"? To-day's news from South Africa, added to the controversy about the N.Z. Rugby team to tour in S.A., prompts me to make a request that will probably seem to you something like impudence on my part. My motive is to use theatre as another means of bringing home to our people a situation in our own country that I know to be morally wrong, because it is condoning segregation.

Five years ago I produced with amateurs for a British Drama League Festival scenes from "Lost in the Stars", having received a grudging two-performance licence for the rights from Chappell's in America. The effect on the audience was the most remarkable I have ever seen in the theatre. People were so moved that there was a gap of a couple of minutes on curtain-fall before the applause started, and then it went on that it would have been music in your ears as it was in the company's and my own.

I used then no singing, but a group of Negroes as a verse-speaking choir for the extracts from the lyrical passages, a treatment that is eminently suitable to your poetic prose. Several scenes were suggested by lighting, in turn, various parts of the stage.

No attempt on my part or by various other New Zealanders has been any use since in getting performing rights from Chappell's, and so I am asking you, should you have the power in your contract with Maxwell Anderson, to allow me to arrange a play of about an hour's duration, for presentation at this season's local B.D.L. Festival. My literary ability you would have to take for granted - I am a working journalist and have worked all my life in the amateur theatre in spare time. The national president of B.D.L. (N.Z.), F.R. Burns, Box 2726, Wellington, N.Z. would be pleased to give information of status.

Should you be free to give your permission, and willing to trust me with this production, I would treat the trust as an opportunity to use all the power I could summon to let the book's message go to the listeners. I am presuming that you know of the Rugby row here - the N.Z. Government's refusal to step in, when the Rugby Union is arranging a representative team excluding Maoris. The "No Maoris - no tour" movement has gathered many thousands of signatures in protest against this acceptance of apartheid, and all eyes are on N.Z.'s lip-service to equality of race, and condonement of this situation. So no time could be more opportune for the presentation of "Cry the Beloved Country" even in the capsule form I have the temerity to suggest.

There should be some mention of recompense should you give permission. The production I hope to give is for a non-profit making group of amateurs, but author's rights are met for every play. My own share would be the joy of being all owed to work on the production.

Yours faithfully,

Nancy E. Russell (Mrs.)

23 Lynton Road,  
KLOOF,  
Natal, South Africa.

16th April, 1960.

Dear Mrs. Russell,

If I understand your letter correctly, you have not been able to get performance rights of LOST IN THE STARS from Chappell, so you are now asking permission to do a dramatisation of your own. Some years ago, Mr. Maxwell Anderson handed back the dramatic rights to me, i.e. the dramatic rights of the book, not of his play LOST IN THE STARS. I then allowed Miss Felicia Komai of London to make a dramatisation. I suggest that you write at once to Messrs. Jonathan Cape, Ltd., 30 Bedford Square, London W.C.1 who are my English publishers, and ask them whether there is anything to prevent you from preparing a one-act play. If they reply that there is nothing to prevent you, then you certainly have my permission.

I am very glad to hear your views about the New Zealand Rugby team. I must say it is a bit sobering to realise how many white people in the world think that race discrimination is merely a kind of party politics. It is quite clear that many of them think this way because they have never been the victims of it.

I hope there is no difficulty in the way of your production.

Yours sincerely,

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