

INTERVIEW WITH FATIMA DIKE

MARKET THEATRE

2nd OCTOBER 2014 at 3pm

Interviewer Vanessa Cooke

VC: Fats, where were you born, and what year? Or are you too old to tell me?

FD: No (laughs) I am too old. (laughs). I was born in Cape Town, er, I was born at the, the Peninsula Maternity Hospital in District Six in 1948.

VC: We the same age.

FD: Yes and then I, I grew up in Langa. I went to school I, in you know, to the local schools. But at that time, there was a school that taught Sesotho and Afrikaans, and yes, my dad took me to that school. And I learned Sesotho, Southern Sesotho and then what I finished Primary School, they had to look for a Sotho school, High School...

VC: in Cape Town.

FD: Ja, around the Cape area.

VC: Ja.

FD: and couldn't find any schools at that time. Then one of er there was family of Sothos, Pedis, that lived in Langa and their daughter went to a Catholic boarding school in Rustenburg.

VC: God.

FD: And that's how I ended up at St Anne's.

VC: In Rustenburg.

FD: Yes. And the school went up to JC, Junior Certificate in those days. It was From 3, standard 9, I think now it's grade 10. Something like that.

VC: Ja.

FD: And then, I, I used to read a lot as a child.

VC: And of course you also spoke Xhosa.

FD: Well Xhosa was my home language ja.

VC: Ja.

FD: So Sesotho became a second language but when I got to Rustenburg they taught Setswana, so I had to change from Sesotho to Setswana.

VC: God.

FD: Ja, and then, but I never forgot Xhosa because, you know, I was born into that language. But I read. I used to love reading. I think, because of the boarding school, because the boarding school was run by Catholic nuns from Ireland.

VC: I also went to a convent.

FD: But - who had their headquarters in Birmingham, England. (alarm) Isn't that confusing?

VC: That's amazing.

FD: And in every class there was a bookshelf. And for me, you know, coming from township, I mean – books...

VC: Wow. This was heaven.

FD: Absolutely. Every day I would read a book, every evening I would steal a book from the shelf and read it under my blanket with a torch, after lights out. so relatively what came with the nuns - were English classics that would have been read by children in England, you know, Charles er, Nicholas Nickleby, you know, those old...

VC: Jane Eyre.

FD: Exactly those classics. So, so by the end of each year, I would have read something like forty English books. So reading, you know...

VC: Was the...

FD: I had an appetite ja.

VC: And what about plays?

FD: Plays came later. In the late sixties there was a group that was founded in Langa called the Black Mambas and wrote poems er, but they also did like, work in the community. Ja they saw that someone, someone's garden was full of weeds, they would go, but my passion was with the poetry. And I met my friend Sue Clarke at that time, and Sue was a poet and she belonged to a group of poets. So she would take me to the Summer School readings at UCT [University of Cape Town] where I first saw James Matthews reading poetry at UCT with a glass of wine in his hands. I thought "Hey that's a cheeky coloured man, jussus. This is the white man's domain and he's drinking wine – no, ja".

VC: And laughing.

FD: Ja, you know James – but very impressed. But you know what really turned me on, into liking poetry, was that Sue then introduced me to the black poets. And the first black poet was Oswald Mtshali – OK – SONGS OF A COWHIDE DRUM.

VC: Ja.

FD: Ja and, and I was like "Yo, wow how did he manage to publish this poems" [sic] because it's all about black life, you know. And then of course The Boss, Wally Serote.

VC: Ja.

FD: Huh he was dynamite.

VC: I met him when I was at University.

FD: Whew, and so I really got into poetry. And then when I joined the Black Mambas I was already writing my own poems at that time. But then Sue Clarke introduced me to the Space Theatre in

1972, where they were still renovating the warehouse into a theatre, and we had a big fight because she wanted us to go there and volunteer to make tea for the people who were renovating the theatre and of course the black and white thing came...

VC: Yes.

FD: Ja you white people you like to volunteer because you've got money. No I want to be paid for the work I do. "Come Dikkles I'm not taking any of your nonsense".

VC: Not doing it.

FD: Ja she wanted to ?? she just did not take my nonsense. She just took me by the hand and threw me into the warehouse and we started doing odd jobs, you know, helping them. Then the, the project ran out of money and then Moira Fine, who is Raymond Ackerman's sister, she's late...

VC: Ja.

FD: ...was the fundraiser for the project. She decided to do a fundraising at, at the Barn Theatre in Constantia and that was the first time I set eyes on Barney Simon.

VC: He was there, for the fundraiser.

VC: Yes and Athol Fugard came to read NAT NAKASA.

VC: He's back now.

FD: Yes, and it was like Yo! You know.

VC: What's this now?

FD: And Barney made me read a, a poem that was written by a lady called Joyce Sikhakana.

VC: Mm I know Joyce.

FD: I think she was in exile at that time.

VC: Ja.

FD: But it's the second poem that had an impact on me. it was a song from a production called PHIRI that Barney had done with...

VC: In 1971.

FD: Yes, yes with the likes of Sophie Mcina, you know.

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

FD: Wow ja you see!

VC: Ja.

FD: And one of the songs in the play was called Madam Please which Sophie sang amazingly. And I didn't know then. So it was a French play that was translated into township setting, and, and I think they wrote the music, the township musicians yes. Barney.

VC: Mackay Davashe and all of them.

FD: And Barney, I think, did the lyrics or something like that.

VC: Barney, um Barney wrote it with Wally.

FD: OK.

VC: And I think Oswald was a bit involved as well and they used to fight, I remember that.

FD: I read this poem and it spoke to me, you know. Because my mother was a maid, and I related to it and I learned the lines in one night. The following morning I was at the warehouse which was going to be The Space Theatre and I couldn't wait to do the poem for Barney. And so, there was no place you know because people were painting, people - like now we couldn't a place.

VC: ?

FD: We found a staircase and we went down the staircase. And we sat at the bottom of the staircase.

VC: You and Barney.

FD: Ja, and I did the poem as a protest poem and Barney, at the end on the poem, I was so expecting I was waiting for him to clap. Tell me it's fabulous. You know. He just sat there scratching he dandruff, picking it off. You know how he used to do that. And I kept on saying "come on tell me what you think." Barney turned around and said to me - "if I were the madam and you spoke to me like that I would tell you to fuck off."

VC: (laughs).

FD: At that, exactly, at that point... (laughs)... an almighty racial torrent...

VC: I can imagine.

FD: ...came out of my mouth about...

VC: Whoa.

FD: ...this white man.

VC: He set you off. As he would.

FD: And this was the first lesson I learnt from Barney. And then Barney just kept quiet. I finished ja.

VC: Just looking at you.

FD: Scratching his dandruff. Dusting it off his shoulders and everything and he said "Fats, look, this woman has power over you." I did not like that. I did not like that. But also I remembered I was not an actress.

VC: No.

FD: You see. I did not take it as a role.

VC: You didn't know that you were playing a part.

FD: Exactly that. I learned that later. Much later.

VC: You were a...

FD: I was the...

VC: ...dare you...

FD: I was, what do you call it?

VC: You were leading.

FD: Ja, the Black Power. I was a protestor, an activist.

VC: Ja.

FD: Let me put it like that. And so, um, Barney said to me "Don't talk down to her. Talk to her."

VC: Straight.

FD: And it was difficult for me as a black woman to talk to that white woman like this. Because of the anger. And then I said "No, I'm not going to do it coz now you're making me into a subservient black."

VC: I can just imagine.

FD: I refused.

VC: (laughs) He must have loved that, hey, actually.

FD: Then I think...

VC: You were a nice challenge for Barney.

FD : (laughs) We always fought.

VC: I know.

FD: So anyway I think the news got to Brian Astbury that I wasn't going to do it.

VC: The fundraiser.

FD: Ja and they didn't have another black person to read the black poems.

VC: Ah yes. Thoko [Ntshinga] wasn't around.

FD: No not then. And then Barney, I mean Brian Astbury met me in the corridors and "Hi Fats" "Hi hi Brian". "How are you?" "I'm good, I'm good." "Actually Fats I must tell you, I'm very sad that I'm not going to hear you doing the black poems. I understand. I understand." And he walked off. And I loved Brian; Brian was a teddy bear ? and I ran after him and I said "Brian I'll do it."

VC: I'll do it.

FD: And I would do it for him.

VC: Not for that other one.

FD: No, oh no. I put my tail between my legs. I went back to Barney and I said "I'll do it, but not for you, for Brian."

VC: Okay.

FD: And so I had to adopt the tone that Barney, that he felt was meant to the poem. We went to the Barn Theatre in Constantia to perform and Athol Fugard broke down when he was reading Nat Nakasa's writings. They had to take him off stage.

VC: Yes.

FD: Yes he just couldn't, he broke down. And then it was my turn. I did the Joyce Sikhana poem.

VC: Mm.

FD: And then I did Madam Please in that, that Barney wanted.

VC: You actually did it like he wanted you to.

FD: Exactly – I spoke to her.

VC: Like she was understanding.

FD: Understanding where I was coming from. And as I said the last line – “Ask now what we want, ask now how we live. Ask now if we breathe. Ask now do we dream, Madam please.” There was silence and then all hell broke loose. People were whistling. I mean this was Constantia with these white women in the front row...

VC: ?

FD: ...with their diamonds, with their diamonds and their little foxes around their necks. The entire theatre was up. They were stamping their feet – I'd never seen anything like that. I got so scared. I ran off stage actually.

VC: You hadn't been on stage before.

FD: Yes. Not in that way.

VC: Not in that way.

FD: And I ran offstage and I went to the toilet and I felt I'd sold out. Why they, why were the white people so happy.

VC: Why were they cheering?

FD: They were supposed to be quiet and thinking.

VC: They were hysterical.

FD: And this thing sat with me for two years that I, having done it Barney's way I sold out. Why did they clap? It was a standing ovation. (VC laughs). But you must remember that I came from the townships.

VC: Of course.

FD: I didn't know anything and I carried this burden.

VC: This man just made you do that.

FD: Ah and I'm telling you.

VC: Ah.

FD: And I'm carrying this burden around and then suddenly the Space opened. We did the SACRIFICE OF KRELI and then there were those rules upstairs.

VC: Who made the whole thing? You?

FD: Yes so we were sitting upstairs in the rooms with Jacqui Singer.

VC: Dressing rooms.

FD: No there were rooms upstairs.

VC: Ja.

FD: It was the old YMCA we were at the Space, ja. One day, years after, we moved from the Old Space to the New Space and we started talking about that night. And Jacqui Singer said "We were the people who were carrying on; whistling and everything because we were the students from the University of Cape Town."

VC: Not the madams.

FD: No, we were serving, we had come there to serve. The servers. We had come there to serve. God. Seven fucking years later. The burden rose off my shoulders.

VC: And in between you'd seen Barney.

FD: Of course, of course we worked together. 1976.

VC: But you always had that...

FD: Sacrifice of Kreli started.

VC: It was the second production here, ne?

FD: Exactly.

VC: Ja.

FD: So we did SACRIFICE OF KRELI in Cape Town.

VC: But you did it there first at the Space.

FD: In Cape Town. It premiered on the 16th July 1976. I remember Barney trying to catch hold of me because he wanted to tell me things about the play and I know I was, I wasn't strong enough. I know he can tell you hurtful things. I ran away from him.

VC: Barney. He didn't mince words.

FD: No, no he didn't.

VC: He pretended it was all like cool.

FD: But eventually when he had caught up with me, I already had a couple of beers so I was a bit drunk. He could see that he couldn't discuss anything with me. so he said "Fats tomorrow morning we meet."

VC: Oooh.

FD: At the roti place, there was a place that sold rotis in Loop Street just behind the...

VC: ...the...

FD: then he told me that the good news about how much he liked the play.

VC: And he wanted it here.

FD: Yes and then couldn't believe it. Rob Amato, who was the person who actually initiated and...

VC: Ja.

FD: ...the play because he did the research on the King.

VC: On the ja.

FD: He did the whole research on the King, but couldn't write the story.

VC: Ja.

FD: Then he came to me and said "I've been trying to write the story for so long I've realised that actually a Xhosa person needs to write it. Here, take all my research and I want you to resign from the Space. I'm gonna employ you for three months and if you..."

VC:... found you.

FD: Yes and if you don't give me a play in three months you're fired.

VC: (laughs)

FD: Thank you. so went back to my struggle boss Brian, and I told him this new deal now. he of course, he laughed and said "Of course I'll take you back if he fires you." (They laugh).

VC: So you'd come back.

FD: So of course I never went back again as a stage hand.

VC: No, no.

FD: Doing odd jobs. I went back as a playwright. So we met Barney in East London.

VC: East London.

FD: Yes, because we, we went from Cape Town to East London and East London was our base and then we took the play to different venues in the Eastern Cape.

VC: You were trying it out in the community.

FD: In the Xhosa communities.

VC: To see whether they liked it or...

FD: And there's one performance I'll never forget. It was in the pre natal ward of the St. Matthews Hospital in the Eastern Cape and we were sitting in a space I think this big (indicates small size) and we had to put horse blankets, you know, on the doors...

VC: Ja.

FD: For exits and entrances.

VC: So at least they had some idea of what you...

FD: Yes.

VC: ...were doing.

FD: And then the village was sitting on the floor. I was sitting on...

VC: ?

FD: ...and the children, generations, the father you know...

VC: ...everyone came.

FD: ...exactly.

VC:.. to the hospital.

FD: Right ? and I was sitting with the portable lighting board on my lap doing the lights. But every time, when the praise singer came out and sang the praises of the King Kreli, you would see the grandfather leaning towards the six year old, telling him...

VC: Ah.

FD: when the cow was going to be slaughtered as an offering to the ancestors, before they went up the mountain to seek advice from the ancestors, as to whether to leave the ? of now. You could see everybody in that community telling the kids. Now...

VC: Look what's going to happen.

FD: Ja, he's not going to stab the, the bull he's gonna just brush the neck of the bull with the spear. This is the ritual. And they would explain...

VC: Oh.

FD:... that ? and I still cry.

VC: Mm.

FD: Whew. I still cry. That was one of the most beautiful performances of that play. It was as it, it was in its natural space, you know.

VC: Ja. The people were totally involved.

FD: Exactly. Exactly.

VC: Understanding everything.

FD: Exactly and the older ones who knew the rituals would sit there waiting. Now.

VC: It's coming.

FD: Now, they're blessing the cow. Now, he's gonna stab it and then oof you know. It was just, Vanessa, I could never forget that moment, ever. I cry everyday when I think about it. It was so special, that performance. Anyway we met Barney at the Guild Theatre.

VC: Oh yes.

FD: In East London.

VC: Gosh ja.

FD: And we started talking, preparing for the rehearsals here.

VC: He'd come to watch down there to...

FD: He came to Cape Town, saw the production in Cape Town, met us in East London towards the end of the Eastern Cape tour, before we came to Jo'burg.

VC: Just, I mean, your actors coming to Jo'burg in the middle of everything.

FD: Ja.

VC: It must have been freaky, weird.

FD: We were wet behind the ears.

VC: I'm sure.

FD: Not knowing anything.

VC: ??

FD: And suddenly we were being...

VC: ...you were in Jo'burg.

FD: We were being taken from ground level and we were being lifted ...

VC: ...to this place.

FD:... and, and there were these actors...

VC: ??

FD: that were amazing, you know, professional actors. You know, and, and Barney Simon, you know. And then eventually Mr Manim arrived.

VC: Mr Manim.

FD: We arrived at the Market Theatre.

VC: Did you come up by road?

FD: Yes we had a combi.

VC: Toyota.

FD: No it was a VW.

VC: Those old ones.

FD: One of those old ones with the round front, that Rob had bought from Uitenhage, because they were using it as a test drive car.

VC: OK.

FD: But it was good.

VC: Demo model.

FD: Ja demo ja. We got out and we've never slept in a hotel.

VC: Where did you stay?

FD: At the Holiday Inn.

VC: (laughs) Sorry.

FD: Holiday Inn. You do not understand the culture shock.

VC: I, I can just imagine I mean the Holiday Inn (disturbance).

FD: The culture shock, I mean. We're coming to the Holiday Inn and...

VC: ...in town.

FD: ...in Johannesburg! And we are carrying spears.

VC: All your props and everything.

FD: And we are singing the songs from the play and the white people in the Holiday Inn think – die swart gevaar has arrived.

VC: Mm.

FD: You know, the spears and everything.

VC: Yes – because they had not seen anything like that themselves.

FD: Exactly so we were allocated rooms, and...

VC: ...and breakfast and...

FD:...but even before that, you know you got the key to your room and you had your roommates and everybody was looking inside, downstairs, because we were up somewhere in those floors up there and they saw the swimming pool and they didn't wait. They all ran downstairs and they jumped into the pool and as they jumped into the pool all the white people jumped out of the pool.

VC: (laughs) It's like a painting.

FD: ...and...

VC: But you were guests.

FD: Yes so we were paying guests. Then we came to the Market.

VC: Another whole thing. Whew God. The Market was so new then.

FD: Exactly.

VC: We didn't even know what we were doing.

FD: No.

VC: At all.

FD: We were carrying the spars and we were carrying the karosses from the animals skins, but there was complete silence in the group because we were...

VC: (whispers) the Market Theatre.

FD: (whispers) we were in awe of the Market Theatre – of this place.

VC: You must have been terrified though.

FD: You do not understand. And every night we would go right up. You know that place in the Main Theatre.

VC: The gallery.

FD: Ja and very quietly we would watch MARAT /SADE rehearsals and we would come out when the rehearsal was finished.

VC: And that was crazy hey.

FD: Ja.

VC: Marat Sade.

FD: We were looking at 32 people onstage.

VC: Ja.

FD:... and they were all like ??

VC: I didn't move. I had to be moved. I was a catatonic.

FD: And there was Wilson Dunster in the bath.

VC: In the bath.

FD: We didn't. I mean.

VC: Janice [Honeyman].

FD: We had seen – exactly – we had seen productions you know. European productions at the Space.

VC: But I mean.

FD: Quite a lot of stuff but MARAT/ SADE!

VC: All those mad people on the stage.

FD: No.

VC: No ?

FD: We were in awe of the acting

.

VC: ...with Marcel [van Heerden and oh.

FD: And we would tiptoe out, you know, after the rehearsals.

VC: Right.

FD: And there would be silence.

VC: And no one ever knew you were there, I'm sure.

FD: Yeah we used to creep in and out. We were scared, maybe they'd say get out. So we used to creep in, but we were so fascinated with that process that was happening downstairs and of course Barney was directing that, and then he was going to come and direct us. You know that kind of thing. And so, but we would go into the hotel and it's in one room as a group and there'd be just one word – we have to follow that act.

VC: That's our responsibility.

FD: Are we – we have to follow that act.

VC: Did you come to the opening night?

FD: Of course!

VC: When all those people walked out – do you remember?

FD: Ja.

VC: Mannie [Manim] tells a very funny story about that. He said they started to leave, they started to leave. He said that by then he was standing there (in the foyer). Get out! Don't come back! (They laugh).

FD: But Mannie, okay that's the last there's the end. We did SACRIFICE OF KRELI.

VC: I remember it very clearly.

FD: You have no idea. I would be sitting in the lighting box with Bridget [?] and I would keep asking myself, did I do that...

VC: Is this real?

FD: Unbelievable. We did a seven minute shot for SABC. You remember they went around collecting stories.

VC: Ja.

FD: About black theatre. When they saw SACRIFICE OF KRELI they said to us – we're very sorry we cannot give you 4 minutes, we'll give you 7 minutes. And Mzwandile [?] who was the spy – who used to stand at the Mouth of the hole watching to see if the British were coming to attack on a daily basis. He would stand guard there. Then when he sees Tiyo Soga and the white reporter coming he used to come down running, and then he would just take the skip, you know, just jump and then his kaross would just open up and he would look like a bat in flight, and he would just land on the stage

so gracefully. That was one of the most amazing things when they saw that, they told us – we need that shot. So they gave the play 7 minutes. But all of these things, things were happening fast.

VC: We didn't know all this stuff.

FD: Ag we were kids. I mean I was 28 years old but you know I was a child.

VC: ??

FD: I was a child. Didn't know these things and so began our relationship with the Market Theatre from that time. When the SACRIFICE OF KRELI closed down I remember. We came into this building with our spears and we were singing. We went in, out into all the departments, you know. Just singing, singing, singing. Mannie still remembers that – he reminds me of it.

VC: You being there.

FD: He said to me: "You know when you did that I felt you were blessing the Market. And it was such a beautiful way of saying thank you.

VC: Mm.

FD: We came in and we went out. But...

VC: Then you went back to Cape Town.

FD: Yes. But that was the beginning of the relationship. Long after the Space closed the Market was always my second home, because, if you remember...

VC: Tell me quickly about Nadine [Gordimer] and then we'll move on.

FD: (laughs) So what had happened was that there was a standing ovation that went on and on and on and on. And then, I think it was the guys from Workshop '71...

VC: Oh yeah.

FD: who were chanting "Author, author, author and then Pieter [?] said to me "Come on go on stage." I said no it's not my day. It's the actors' day, today.

VC: Author, author.

FD: Until they gave up, but it was one of the longest standing ovations that they got on that opening night. And of course we ran during the ?? I remember Ian Bernhardt was there. 1976 but then someone came to me and said: "Nadine Gordimer is looking for you."

VC: My God.

FD: I said "What you – I can't speak to that woman. She is a big white woman of books. She's a big white woman. I can't".

VC: What does she want with me?

FD: Exactly, so I ran down the, the box, the lighting box stairs...

VC: ...and these stairs I'm sure (indicating Market stairs).

FD: ...and I had, because as I was just...

VC: There she was.

FD: Whew – I jumped behind the, the cold room door (VC laughs) because there is that space...

VC: You can see it.

FD: ...and I was seeing, she was still asking people “Where’s, where’s she.”

VC: Where is this...

FD: And I was, I was giggling.

VC: Did you ever meet her?

FD: No I met her later – but that day. Haai. I’m not going out there. (She laughs) Anyway that was the beginning of my history. Of course the thing was that’s what I liked. And this is something I wanted to talk about in the meeting (refers to discussion) is, is the cross-pollination of productions because Workshop ’71 who came from the National Theatre to the Space and things would come from the Space to the Market.

VC: Always ja.

FD: There was always that.

VC: Always.

FD: And oh how I miss that.

VC: That’s how we met Thoko. That’s a lot of people.

FD: Yes.

VC: Up and down.

FD: That’s how. I miss that, that relationship.

VC: It isn’t anymore.

FD: It’s not, you know we’ve all become individual closed door companies.

VC: I miss that.

FD: Ja.

VC: And I miss that – let’s do something. OK we could say to each other now – let’s do something on Nadine...

FD: Yes yes.

VC:... as a tribute.

FD: Ja.

VC: And we’d work.

FD: Exactly – that’s gone.

VC: It’s gone.

FD: Mm.

VC: And that's what everybody says – like Marcel van Heerden. He said – I could put on what I wanted to do.

FD: Yes.

VC: There was somebody who said yes. Not no.

FD: No.

VC: Yes.

FD: You could do anything you wanted. The same thing that they did at the Space.

VC: If you make money okay.

FD: That's true.

VC: Don't worry, it's OK.

FD: Mm.

VC: Fifty fifty. Do it.

FD: Exactly, it was like that.

VC: There's no one who says yes. Why can't people just say...

FD: Yes.

VC: Even if it fails it doesn't matter.

FD: It's true.

VC: Otherwise we wouldn't have had all those incredible things.

FD: No.

VC: And it wasn't only Barney.

FD: No.

VC: The Market wasn't Barney.

FD: No.

VC: It was because Barney also said yes.

FD: Yes.

VC: Come.

FD: But there were so many things that were happening.

VC: Ja.

FD: There was so much.

VC: The Space, here. It was amazing. And nobody said we've got to do this kind of theatre.

FD: Ja.

VC: We just knew what we had to do.

FD: Exactly. When I left in 197? When I had to go to America.

VC: Oh that's right.

FD: Then I came back at the end of November '83.

VC: Did you stay in Joburg then?

FD: No.

VC: No you went back to Cape Town.

FD: Ja, but in 1984 my brother-in-law passed away and he left a lot of businesses so we ended up working in the businesses helping my sister.

VC: Oh okay.

FD: But in '85, '86 South Africa was burning. And so I got back from America from '84 and then finally in 1990 I just felt now I want to come back and write and I was in Joburg.

VC: Yes I remember.

FD: So I came home.

VC: To write.

FD: I came home to the theatre, to the Market Theatre again and that's where the second phase of my writing started.

VC: Ja.

FD: And I did SO WHAT'S NEW and...

VC: With the old man, by now, the old man.

FD: No wait!(VC laughs) Mark Fleischman.

VC: Was at the Lab ja.

FD: Mm. And he gave me that space...

VC: ...the two month...

FD: That was a blessing because I'd never done a play, an improvised play.

VC: Workshop.

FD: Ja a workshop play like that. But it was lovely because it was a story that I'd picked up here in Joburg.

VC: Soap operas.

FD: Exactly even the stories, all the stories...

VC: ...were here.

FD: Ja and then.

VC: Doris [Sihula] was in that.

FD: Doris was in it, Pat [Maboe], Patricia oh I've forgotten her surname. Ma something and ...

VC: Motshabi.

FD: Motshabi Tyelele played Mercedes.

VC: Yes.

FD: And the 4th character was Thoko the singer. Thoko who was in Joy.

VC: Oh ja, ja, ja, ja. But Pat had the space in her teeth.

FD: No there was a lady called Pretty Nomhle who played that role then we...

VC:... we...

FD: ...fell out with her. I think that's when we brought in, I can't remember. I think we brought in Thoko because you remember that other lady – Nomsa.

VC: Nomsa Nene.

FD: No Nomsa who ended up in Bloemfontein. She was in the play. But anyway.

VC: Oh I can see her face but...

FD: So she was in the production anyway.

VC: Coz I was still around the Lab then.

FD: Ja.

VC: Starting the union. PAWE.(Performing Arts Workers Equity)

FD: PAWE ja.

VC: We have to start again, again, again. Ja yes so that was SO WHAT'S NEW.

FD: SO WHAT'S NEW. When we had finished the story I wasn't talking to Barney. I don't know what we had fought about.

VC: It was easy to fight with him.

FD: And he wanted it on...

VC: He wanted to direct it.

FD: Ja and so we went to read for him and they, they...

VC: Oh ja coz Mannie had left by then.

FD: Ja, and so immediately John (Kani) said "Definitely" and of course Barney wanted to be in on it. So he used to come when we were work shopping. The first time he came in he sat and listened. He

didn't ask my permission he just sat there and watched and on his way out... he really, you know, sat on my...

VC: Tits.

FD: Since he was leaving he gives an instruction to the stage manager – he must bring a table, an armchair there, an armchair there and go and get a fridge.

VC: So he's already doing the set now.

FD: He hasn't even spoken to me. (VC laughs) Oh Barney. But you know the long and the short of the story, he ended up directing the play.

VC: I remember it very well.

FD: He got hooked on the soaps.

VC: Himself.

FD: He, he used to make us come and tell him the episodes everyday, of the Bold and the Beautiful.

VC: Doris liked the soaps. She used to watch with Busi [Zokufa] and them.

FD: So really when I look at the Market Theatre and...

VC: What would you say was that thing, that thing about the Market? Yes there was that cross-pollination.

FD: You know if you thought Market. I know what I'm saying is wrong. It was a black space. Totally. A black space. A space where there was always something happening, always something interesting happening and of course Kippies opened.

VC: Ja. That was another whole thing.

FD: ??

VC: There was the Café first I remember.

FD: Yes, yes.

VC: Malombo and people we'd never heard of.

FD: Ja my god there was this energy about the Market you know. This incredible, incredible energy.

VC: And I guess that's what one can't explain to anyone.

FD: You can't explain to anybody. Because people could walk into this space and create.

VC: And say whatever they bloody wanted to as well.

FD: And that was that. And to me it's like – ah the Space has gone but I still feel, I belong here. Ja I feel I belong to the Market Theatre.

VC: Of course you do.

FD: I feel like I'm a stakeholder because you know.

VC: That's why you get upset when you see something – that's – why are they doing that?

FD: Mm.

VC: They don't understand, they mean they don't understand.

FD: No.

VC: Mannie said something very sweet in his interview. He said – the thing was it became that you worked with people who didn't need an explanation.

FD: Mm.

VC: About what we were doing. If they needed an explanation – no, no, it didn't work, because why explain to somebody what we doing?

FD: Ja.

VC: Either you got it, or you didn't get it. (FD laughs) It's amazing.

FD: Ja.

VC: It's amazing.

FD: 1976, November when we did KRELI...

VC: We started in June, same time as the riots.

FD: Ja.

VC: With THE SEAGULL of all things. (FD laughs) That's what we were doing. And then it changed, everything just changed completely. And the weird thing, talking about funding. I sometimes think that all these theatres get too much funding actually.

FD: Ja.

VC: Barney never, he died the day we got the cheque from the government. We had to come up to a cocktail party after he died at 4 o'clock in the morning. That evening we had to get the cheque for the government funding. He never saw it. And I think he wouldn't have liked it. (FD laughs) I don't think he would have liked it.

FD: I think, you know, in telling our stories, it's what I keep telling black actors, the contribution that was made by the white fraternity, you know, in the struggle...

VC: Ja.

FD: When I got my second lifetime – what was it ja, Lifetime Achievement Award this year I was saying that I said – you know it's very funny, all of us who were there we never spoke about Barney Simon's you know, who were the people who were our sounding boards, you know, the Mannie Manims, who'd climb up and do the lighting, you know. Because at that time there was Mannie...

VC: That was it. There was Mannie.

FD: Barney ? we've never thanked those people for their contribution, the Rob Amato's.

VC: He was a sweet man.

FD: No.

VC: Wasn't he?

FD: No he just used to be, be very scary.

VC: He was very sweet to everybody. (FD laughs) I didn't know him well though.

FD: We never thanked these people for their contribution, coz they were the people who gave our theatre, which was protest theatre, a sense of direction, you know.

VC: Ja.

FD: In the same way that I'm working with the young writers.

VC: You do it now.

FD: Exactly, give that direction.

VC: And at least thank god you can. Thank you.

FD: Thank you. (FD laughs)

VC: Thank you very much. I love it.

Collection Number: AG3406

Collection Name: Market Theatre Oral History Project, 2014-2015

PUBLISHER:

Publisher: Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand

Location: Johannesburg

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