

**TELEVISION THEATRE: INVESTIGATING THE POSSIBILITY OF A
TRANSLATION OF AFRIKAANS THEATRE TO SCREEN**

by

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

South African theatre and especially Afrikaans theatre has become increasingly dependent on the annual arts festivals. These events only last for a week at a time and most productions are unable to make the move to a larger, more commercial urban venue, and are therefore unable to survive beyond the festival. In addition to being lost to future audiences, little attempt is made to keep record of these productions, which makes research surrounding festival productions very problematic.

Television has the ability to make audio-visual records of events and to showcase them to a large audience. The primary aim of this study was to investigate the possibility of translating theatre to television for the purpose of expanding the potential audience of Afrikaans theatre productions, while simultaneously making audio-visual records of these events. After the possibilities had been examined, the study began to construct a proposed mode of operation for a season of Afrikaans theatre on television.

International trends in the practice of translating theatre to screen were examined which included film and television adaptations of stage plays and live recordings of stage plays. The most significant initiative the study encountered was the NT Live (National Theatre Live) project that records live performance on the stages of the National Theatre, while simultaneously transmitting them live in high definition to cinemas across the globe.

The study then shifted its focus to South Africa where it determined what had been done in the practice of translating theatre to screen in this country. The struggle to obtain sufficient and easily accessible information on local examples proved that there is an overall lack of theatre documentation and archiving in South Africa. It also found that South Africa did not have an equivalent to a project such as the NT Live. After discovering that there have been South African television endeavours that involved the recording of live performance, the study used the NT Live initiative as case study in constructing a South African model for television.

While constructing a proposed mode of operation for a series of Afrikaans theatre on television, it was indicated how these recordings could serve as a documentation process and research resource for productions. Three possible models for translating theatre to television were constructed to better determine what the possibilities were in terms of the content and format of such a series.

OPSOMMING

Suid-Afrikaanse teater en veral Afrikaanse teater, is besig om al hoe meer afhanklik van die jaarlikse kunstefeeste te word. Dié geleentheid duur gewoonlik net 'n week op 'n slag en vir meeste produksies is dit nie moontlik om 'n speelvak in die groter, kommersiële teaters in die stede van die grond af te kry nie en dus het die produksies nie 'n lewe ná die fees nie. Verder gaan moontlike gehore ook verlore en word daar nie veel van 'n poging aangewend om die produksies te dokumenteer nie, wat navorsing rondom feesproduksies baie problematies maak.

Telesie het die vermoë om oudio-visuele rekords van gebeure te maak, sowel as om hierdie gebeure aan 'n groot gehoor bloot te stel. Die hoofdoelstelling van hierdie studie was om die moontlikheid van 'n verplasing van teater na televisie te ondersoek, met die doel om Afrikaanse teaterproduksies se potensiële gehoor te verbreed en terselfdertyd oudio-visuele rekords van hierdie produksies te maak. Nadat die studie die moontlikheid ondersoek het, het dit 'n voorgestelde modes operandi vir 'n seisoen van Afrikaanse teater vir televisie begin konstrueer.

Die studie het internasionale tendense in die praktyk van die verplasing van teater na die groot en klein skerm ondersoek. Die voorbeelde het film- en televisieverwerkings van verhoogstukke, sowel as lewendige opnames van verhoogproduksies ingesluit. Die merkwaardigste inisiatief wat die studie teëgekomp het, is sekerlik die NT Live (National Theatre Live) projek, wat lewendige opnames van toneelopvoerings op die National Theatre se verhoë in London maak en terselfdertyd hierdie opnames lewendig in "high definition" uitsaai na film-teaters regoor die wêreld.

Daarna het die studie die fokus verskuif na Suid-Afrika om te probeer vasstel wat al in hierdie land gedoen is in die verplasing van teaterproduksies na die skerm. Die gebrek aan maklik-verkrybare en toeganklike inligting het dit duidelik gemaak dat daar 'n algehele gebrek aan teaterdokumentasie en die bewaring daarvan is. Die studie het ook ontdek dat Suid-Afrika nie iets soortgelyks aan die NT Live inisiatief het nie. Nadat daar televisieprojekte ontdek is wat wél in een of ander manier die opname van lewendige opvoerings behels, het die studie besluit om die NT Live inisiatief as gevallestudie te gebruik om 'n Suid-Afrikaanse model vir televisie te skep.

In die proses om 'n moontlike produksieproses vir 'n seisoen van Afrikaanse teater of televisie te definieer, het die studie ook probeer vasstel hoe hierdie tipe opnames kan dien as 'n dokumentasieproses en navorsingsbron vir produksies. Drie moontlike modelle vir die verplasing van teater na televisie in reeksvorm is geskep om 'n beter idee te kry van wat die moontlikhede in terme van die inhoud en formaat van so 'n reeks is.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

During four years of drama studies at the University of Stellenbosch I took part in 13 full-length theatre productions. Each production enjoyed the luxury of a four-to-five-week rehearsal process, with sets and costumes being designed for each show. These productions were essential to my development as a young aspiring actor, but they were certainly not an accurate reflection of the professional world. I was constantly in a production, moving from one role to the next, and in some cases we had an audience of two hundred people per night for a week. Neither of these phenomena is typical of professional theatre.

Despite relatively good attendance for some of the university productions, a few days or even a week after closing night I still had people coming up to me in the street and asking when the next performance of a particular production would take place. We discovered that word of mouth as a publicity medium had taken its course, but it proved to be too late and many potential audience members were lost. This proved to be a recurring and frustrating problem.

Following my personal experiences as a professional actor over the last two years, it has become apparent that the festival setup is equally problematic. Afrikaans arts festivals are an annual occurrence and are usually only a week in duration. A production rarely has more than five performances, which is very little time (in the case of a new production) for it to develop properly. Most practitioners are unable (usually for financial reasons) to make the move to a larger, more commercial urban venue, and if another festival is unable to include the production in their programme, the particular production's life comes to an end.

In addition to being lost to future audiences, these productions are also not documented and in some cases it is very difficult to find any record that they even occurred. The South African theatre industry's tradition of preserving theatre documentation in archives has declined rapidly over the past two decades. The little documentation that is preserved usually consists of literary documents, and one seldom finds any audio-visual material on productions.

I began to wonder what effect television could have on these problems, because it has the ability to reach a larger audience and can make an audio-visual record of an event. This study's main aim, therefore, is to investigate the possibility of translating theatre to television for the purpose of exposing the work of local practitioners to a larger audience while simultaneously documenting it.

1.1.1 A lack of public participation in South African theatre

In an attempt to pursue the basic questions posed by the study, it is perhaps useful to determine why theatre is a struggling art form in South Africa. South African theatre, and especially Afrikaans theatre, survives mainly because of arts festivals such as the Clover Aardklop festival, ABSA KKNK, Standard Bank National Arts Festival, Innibosfees, Vryfees (previously known as the Volksbladfees) and Woordfees. Unfortunately, these festivals are an annual occurrence and usually only last for a week at a time, which does not make for a sustainable theatre. The festival setup can also be problematic, because venues are shared by more than one production and performances are scheduled too close to one another. Festival-goers are sometimes forced to leave a performance early to be in time for the next production at another venue.

One also has to take into consideration that these festivals are “arts” festivals and not “theatre” festivals. In other words, theatre has to compete with other artistic forms that include dance, music, poetry readings, visual art exhibitions, colloquiums, etc. Attending these festivals is also a very expensive exercise when one considers that the festival-goer's budget has to cover transport, accommodation and tickets. It is therefore also very likely that many devoted theatre enthusiasts are simply not in a financial position to attend these festivals.

However, the mere fact that these festivals exist is evidence of some kind of need for theatre or at least the performing arts. To better understand the significance of this “need”, the National Arts Council (NAC) of South Africa conducted a survey in 2010 that examined the South African public's participation in the arts. Approximately 1,800 people (150 – 250 from each province) took part in the survey, which consisted of a questionnaire that was “conducted on a face-to-face basis in households in both rural and urban areas, from the big urban metropolises to isolated rural communities” (NAC 2010: 7). This carried the implication that respondents from all races, classes, and walks of life were incorporated to ensure fair and accurate findings.

Arguably, the most distressing statistic the report revealed was when respondents were asked if they were aware of arts and cultural events within their community. These events were divided into the categories of music, theatre, dance, literary, crafts and visual arts events, and respondents had to answer “yes” or “no” to each category. A staggering 93.8% answered “no” when asked if they were aware of a theatrical event in their community, and on top of that only 16.9% of respondents had attended a theatrical event in the previous year (NAC 2010: 19). When asked why there is such a lack of participation in these events, the majority felt that they were too expensive to attend, and also that there is an overall lack of availability of these events in their area.

The growing number of sustainable festivals enjoy the support and participation of the public, yet they only do so for a week each year and are mainly attended by specific social groups. It is expected that it is mainly Afrikaans mother-tongue speakers who attend Afrikaans arts festivals and mainly English mother-tongue speakers who attend the National Arts Festival (a predominantly English festival). In other words, these festivals are not a reflection of how the South African public in its entirety participates in the arts and they are not sufficient to sustain a theatre industry.

1.1.2 Financial difficulties and funding agencies for the arts in South Africa

During the apartheid period the performing arts enjoyed great financial support from the state. The apartheid administration also invested great effort and capital into the establishment of new theatre complexes. However this was aimed at the promotion and development of white, Western-style theatre and especially Afrikaans theatre, and it was mostly the provincial arts councils who benefitted from this support. When South Africa finally became a democratic nation, state policies around funding and the dynamics of theatre complexes changed dramatically.

In South Africa today we have a unique multicultural society that should provide us with endless possibilities in the arts. However, our unique situation comes with enormous challenges. State policies are understandably more concerned with rectifying the social injustices of the past, and in a developing country the arts are often very low on the priority list. According to the NAC (2010: 25), the “Department of Arts and Culture receives the smallest budget allocation from central government”, and with the very few funds at its disposal has to accommodate the needs of various cultural groups who all have different ideas

of what ‘the arts’ consist of. It should therefore come as no surprise that state funding for the arts has become a complicated affair.

Since the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) does not have the capacity to attend to all South African artists’ financial needs, it consequently established Business and Arts South Africa (BASA) in 1997. BASA is a “non-profit company whose primary aim is to promote mutually beneficial and sustainable business-arts partnership that will benefit society as a whole” (BASA, n.d.a). This DAC initiative is designed to encourage private sector investment in the arts in South Africa, and its grant scheme works on the basis that it will provide financial support to arts projects that have an existing relationship between an arts organization and a business establishment (BASA, n.d.b). Unfortunately, artists benefit indirectly from this kind of scheme, because BASA’s eligibility requirements clearly state that the scheme is aimed at non-profit organizations and amateur theatre groups and it is therefore not a realistic option for professional theatre practitioners.

Another attempt by the state to provide funding for the arts is via the National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund (NLDTF). The fund is managed by designated members of the National Lottery Board, whose responsibility it is “to safeguard this money, invest it wisely, and ensure that it is put to the best possible use to benefit good causes” (National Lottery Board, n.d). However, like the BASA initiative, only non-profit organizations are eligible for funding. According to Van Heerden (2008: 53), professional theatre practitioners can only benefit from the NLDTF indirectly via arts festivals if the festival management applies for financial support from the fund.

Many theatre professionals feel that the fund has the means of making a real contribution to the arts, but feel that it is severely mismanaged. This opinion is echoed by the NAC (2010: 33), which stated the following in its 2010 survey report:

The National Lottery fund could in principle make a major contribution to financial investment in the arts, but the National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund (NLDTF) is poorly managed and is unable to process funding applications in a regular and predictable manner. The NLDTF contains huge amounts of money that exceed that available for arts and culture in government and the private sector combined, but which are under spent due to bureaucratic inefficiencies. According to the NLDTF 2008/2009 Annual Report, of the R949 million allocated to the arts, culture and heritage projects, only R236.8 million was spent on 77 beneficiaries.

Considering the findings of the NAC survey report, one can understand the frustration of artists who battle to get their work off the ground.

It is interesting to note that the NAC has also been severely criticised for poor fund management. According to Van Heerden (2008: 50), in 2004, Fleur du cap winner Nadia Davids applied for funding from the NAC in order for her award winning production *At her Feet* to tour the country. Her play deals with “a young Muslim woman’s experience of life in her community, the claustrophobia she senses and the perceived freedom she sees on the other side of the fence in westernized South Africa” (Van Heerden 2008: 49). Given that the play deals with a woman belonging to a marginalized group from a previously disadvantaged community, one would assume that Davids was an ideal candidate for funding. Instead she was rejected and received a letter from a grant officer at the NAC stating that her play “does not represent the races and religions of South Africa” (Van Heerden 2008: 50).

With funding agencies that are unpredictable, mismanaged, and few and far between, it is perhaps essential for professional theatre practitioners to look to other means to make their work possible, or at least to extend the life of existing work. How is it possible for the work of artists such as Nadia Davids to be seen by a larger audience without the proper funding? Could television help in this regard?

1.1.3 Potential for Afrikaans theatre on television

What is significant about the increasing number of arts festivals is that most of them are Afrikaans festivals. The Clover Aardklop festival, Absa KKNK, Innibosfees, Kalfiefees, Suidoosterfees, Vryfees and Woordfees are all festivals dedicated to celebrating the arts, but more significantly, doing so in Afrikaans. It is safe to assume that due to the increasing number of arts festivals, there is indeed a demand for theatre, but more significantly, a demand for theatre in Afrikaans.

Afrikaans mother-tongue speakers are becoming increasingly concerned about the survival of their language in the New South Africa. Milton (2011: 250) deems it is an understandable concern when considering the “suppression and downscaling of the language in government, big corporations, and the national public broadcaster, i.e. the SABC”. Afrikaans was once the language of the oppressor and one can understand the pressure on the current government to promote and accommodate all of the 11 official languages equally.

As a result, the public broadcaster had to revise its structures and policies after 1994. However, Milton (2011: 250) argues that instead of an attempted equal linguistic distribution, the SABC has made it increasingly clear that it intends English to be the lingua franca of South African television when considering how language is spread over the three SABC channels: SABC 1 broadcasts in Nguni and English; SABC 2 in Sotho, English and Afrikaans; while SABC 3 broadcasts mainly in English (Milton 2011: 251).

The downscaling of Afrikaans programming has also led to great financial setbacks for the SABC. According to Milton (2011: 251), the national broadcaster has three main sources of income: licence fees, advertising revenue and government funding. Advertising revenue is by far the most significant funding source and the broadcasters' programming is usually aimed at lucrative audiences, since advertisers will want to buy slots that are scheduled around popular programming (Milton 2011: 251).

However, the SABC has ignored the spending potential of the Afrikaans audience by downscaling Afrikaans programming, and this has proved a great contributing factor to the corporation's financial crisis. Milton (2011: 256) notes:

As a result, the SABC experienced its first major financial crisis in 1996 due to increased competition, reduced revenue resulting from the loss of significant sections of the well-to-do Afrikaans audience, and 'the provision of local programming in a plethora of languages way beyond the resource capacity of the Corporation' (Teer-Tomaselli in Milton 2011: 156).

Consequently, the pay-television channel M-Net capitalized on the situation by introducing its own dedicated Afrikaans channel, KykNET. Steyn (2001: 123) refers to the channel's rapid growth with the following:

Die belangstelling in die nuwe kanaal is reeds aan die begin van sy uitsendings "amper skrikwekkend" genoem. Navorsing het getoon dat 38% van die 463 728 huishoudings wat teen November 2000 oor DSTV beskik het, gereeld na kykNET oorskakel. Van dié groep is 31% Engelssprekend. Volgens 'n vroeëre meningspeiling het 81% van die Afrikaanssprekende intekenare in Augustus 2000 gereeld na kykNET gekyk, teenoor 77% vier maande tevore. kykNET het in sy eerste jaar sowat sewentig nuwe Afrikaanse programme vervaardig

[The interest in the new channel became incredibly apparent with its first series of broadcasts. Research has shown that of the 463 728 households that had subscribed to DSTV by November 2000, 38% switched over to KykNET regularly. 31% of this group are English speakers. According to earlier findings, 81% of the Afrikaans-speaking subscribers switched over to KykNET in August 2000, in comparison to the

77% of four months earlier. KykNET produced around seventy Afrikaans programmes in its first year].

Today, KykNET is the main producer of Afrikaans programming on South African television. It is possible to assume that since it is a pay-television channel on DSTV, it would exclude a great number of Afrikaans speakers who are not in a financial position to afford a DSTV subscription. The ratings, however, suggest otherwise. According to De Bruin (2010: 4), the number of KykNET viewers increased with 30% to 40% between 2009 and 2010, and advertisers are becoming increasingly willing to purchase airtime on the channel. Following KykNET's success, the SABC has become so desperate for Afrikaans content that it is buying the pay channel's programming at a cheaper price than it would cost to produce the programming itself.

It is very positive that there is such a demand for Afrikaans programming but a lack of competition from the SABC is also problematic. If there is no competition, how are you able to measure the quality of your programming? In an interview with *Die Burger* on 4 April 2011 regarding the failure and embarrassment caused by the programme *Thysnywerheid*, Karen Meiring, the head of KykNET, revealed that although the programme was a severe embarrassment, the ratings were not as bad as expected, and it is possible that this is a reflection of the strong demand for Afrikaans programming. Meiring (in De Lange 2011: 4) added that KykNET has a huge responsibility to promote Afrikaans and produce quality Afrikaans content on television, because it is currently the only television channel in a position to do so.

It is evident that the channel is attempting to fulfil this responsibility, if one considers its committed support to the Afrikaans arts festivals. It dedicates programmes like *Fiësta* to provide coverage of arts festivals and as of 2011 have launched the annual *Fiësta Toekennings* (awards) that honour Afrikaans theatre practitioners and productions that were showcased at arts festivals. KykNET has also expanded its variety in programming and seems to produce more local content each year. Considering the growing popularity of KykNET, as well as the channel's dedication to Afrikaans theatre, it would appear that there is indeed an opportunity and platform for more theatre-based programming on South African television.

1.1.4 Translating theatre to television

When attempting to investigate the possibility of taking theatre to another medium, it is perhaps useful to distinguish among particular techniques or methods. For example, there is a difference among film and television adaptations, recorded stage productions and theatre productions streamed live via the internet.

Film and television adaptations of stage plays are fairly common and appear on a regular basis. Zatlin (2005: 155) argues that Geoffrey Wagner's three techniques of adapting literature to film are very applicable to theatre, although the techniques were devised with the novel form in mind.

Wagner's first approach is called "analogy" and involves departing from the original to a considerable extent in the pursuit of creating a new work of art (Zatlin 2005: 155). The piece is shifted to the present in the pursuit of creating a new story. Movie sequels often serve as the most recognizable examples, where the original's characters have been used to further a story that does not yet exist.

The second of Wagner's approaches is referred to as "transposition" (Zatlin 2005: 155). This is when the piece is represented on screen with a minimum of alterations or interferences, for example, a screenplay that is closely based on the original stage text with a few minor changes. Most films based on stage plays fall into this category, but do not necessarily live up to the definition's expectations.

The final approach that Wagner defined is "commentary" (Zatlin 2005: 155). This is when an original piece is altered on a conscious or unconscious level to re-emphasize a certain element or aspect, and in most cases does not lavishly follow the original. An example could be a film that rearranges the line order and ending of an original play text. Many adaptations are able to capture a great deal of theatricality, but essentially remain 'films'.

Another means of translating theatre to the screen is by recording it on stage. This approach has often been criticized for delivering results that are 'static'. According to Auslander (1999:19), many argue that television is not able to grant its spectators the opportunity to control their own gaze and that they do not enjoy the freedom of choice they do in the theatre. Hunter (in Auslander 1999: 19) counters the argument by noting that "the spectator's gaze is always directed in the theatre by means of focal points in the staging that are equivalent to camera views".

Recent developments in the field of recording live performance have also challenged the traditional view of live recordings being unsatisfactory. The National Theatre in London and the Metropolitan Opera in New York, have recently started to record and transmit their productions live in high-definition to cinemas around the world, and these productions have been received with great enthusiasm.

The National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) is one of the key patrons of NT Live (National Theatre Live) and has recently conducted research surveys in relation to audience reaction to the first season of NT Live, which debuted with Jean Racine's *Phèdre* starring Helen Mirren and Dominic Cooper. It found that "when asked to rate the different factors affecting their decision to attend the live screening of *Phèdre*, over 90 percent of attendees identified proximity to the cinema as important" (NESTA 2010: 5).

It is interesting to note that the survey revealed that audience members were more motivated than ever to pay for theatre tickets. Most respondents were willing to pay up to 15 pounds for the cinema screening, while they were willing to pay up to 40 pounds for a theatre ticket. NESTA (2010: 6) notes that "in this sense, the constraints on audience size which motivate innovations like NT Live may also contribute to the theatre's particular sense of worth in the audience's eyes".

NT Live is an exciting initiative and has been successful with audiences thus far, but simply applying a British model in a South African context is easier said than done. It is possible to argue that what may prove useful is to investigate the principles, structures and techniques of such a model and adjust it according to the requirements and resources of the South African television industry. In terms of a transition to television, Binge (2011) believes "adapting an already rehearsed play with a small cast in a setting that is already minimized for the stage should prove to be cost effective television". In South Africa, television, like theatre, has to strive to produce a high-quality product without quality resources.

Binge (2011) notes that there are some advantages for television in adopting a theatre piece by arguing that the "well-thought through and rehearsed theatre script that has been tested in 'performance' should prove to be of a higher standard than the often 'first draft' or instant offerings of the television script writers". A stage production that has a small cast and simple setting is most likely to be able to make a transition. If one considers the work presented at festivals, it is clear that theatre makers have all mostly conformed to this notion out of necessity.

1.2 The research problem and objectives

Given the serious lack of overall accessibility, audience participation and state funding for regular and sustained Afrikaans theatre in South Africa, is it not worth using theatre to create cost-effective Afrikaans television programming, since the most well-off and loyal sector of the South African television audience is Afrikaans?

Given the growing popularity of KykNET and the apparent demand for Afrikaans theatre suggested by the festivals, this study investigates the possibility of taking Afrikaans theatre to television for the purpose of creating cost-effective programming that will, it is hoped, expand theatre audiences, extend the life of artists' work and at the same time make audio-visual records of Afrikaans theatre productions.

The research objective of the study is to construct a proposed mode of operation for a season of Afrikaans theatre for television.

In doing so, the study has:

1. analysed international trends and projects' structures and aims to determine how they can be adjusted in a South African context;
2. analysed what has been accomplished in South Africa in terms of translating theatre to television; and
3. investigated the current state of our performing arts archives by comparing them to international trends, and tried to determine whether audio-visual documentation could be preserved and made accessible to researchers in South Africa.

1.3 Methodology

The study makes use of existing theories on the translation of theatre to television and film. Since very little published material exists on the translation of theatre to screen in South Africa, a fair number of internet resources have been consulted, while interviews and email correspondence with local practitioners assisted the process. Chapter Two refers to interviews found on DVD special features. In Chapter Five the study uses the NT Live initiative as a case study to determine how the initiative's principles can be applied in the context of South African television.

CHAPTER TWO

INTERNATIONAL TRENDS IN THE TRANSLATION OF THEATRE TO THE SCREEN

2.1 Introduction

Most households in modern Western countries have television sets and their members are able to be educated, enriched and entertained from the comfort of their own home. Auslander (1999: 12) notes that “in the 1930’s and 1940’s, television was envisioned primarily as a medium devoted to the transmission of ongoing live events, not to reproduction”. In other words, early television seemed to have more in common with theatre than with film.

Being a primarily visual medium, one would have expected television to form itself on cinematic principles. However, if one considers how early television functioned, the medium had more in common with theatrical principles. Like theatre, early television offered a live and intimate experience of an event to an audience or spectator. However, the rapid development of sophisticated technology, especially videotape, provided for the possibility of television screening a variety of programming and not only live transmissions of events.

What is currently known as ‘television drama’ has its roots in a television format that would seem foreign to the average twenty-first century viewer. ‘Television play’ (or teleplay), ‘single play’ and ‘single drama’ are all terms used to describe a television format that makes use of an existing stage play or plays written specifically for television (Duguid 2013a). The format developed rapidly after the Second World War and enjoyed its greatest popularity in the United States (US) in the early 1950s and in Britain in the late 1950s and 1960s. Brandt and Schaefer (2002) note that “in the early post-war period, when television plays went out live, they were necessarily continuous – in other words, very much like theatrical performances”.

In the early post-war era, with the medium still in its relative infancy, television placed great emphasis on the element that distinguished it most from film: live transmission. This does not, however, imply that television dismissed the use of film in early programming. Wake (2013) notes that “although it was possible to transmit film, this accounted for filler material only and all original television programmes were broadcast live”. The second half of the 1950s saw the rapid development of film and videotape, which changed the single play format, but for most of the decade television strived to recreate live theatre.

According to Rothwell (1999: 102) the US led the television revolution after the Second World War and had the most television sets, estimated at ten million in 1951. American television packaged the single play format in what was called ‘anthology drama’. These dramas differed from contemporary formats such as series or serials in that each episode would showcase a new play. In the US, the 1950s is often seen as the ‘Golden Age of Television’ and for the first half of the decade live television drama was the dominant format.

According to Wake (2013) critics dismissed early live television drama as “photographed” theatre, because producers adopted a “one-camera-per-scene” approach that critics felt had a “flat” affect. Only later, through a process of trial and error, did practitioners begin to explore a multi-camera setup that enabled them to develop a technique of editing on set that allowed them to alternate from one camera to another in a scene. Wake (2013) notes that filmed sequences were used during live transmissions, but merely to establish locations, while most of the action remained live.

Although the US led the television revolution, it was Britain that started the trend of translating theatre to the small screen. According to Brandt and Schaefer (2002) the BBC was responsible for the first ever televised drama, Pirandello’s *The Man with a Flower in His Mouth*, as early as 1930. These early transmissions were basic and usually consisted of extracts from dramatic works. According to Rothwell (1999: 95), the first ever Shakespeare work to be broadcast on television was an 11-minute extract from *As You Like It* in 1937.

Between 1937 and 1939 the BBC produced close to 24 Shakespeare extracts that were shot in studios. Televised Shakespeare has a rich history in both Britain and the US, and at first American television broadcasters tended to import British versions of televised Shakespeare. However, by the 1970s the US started to produce more local versions that starred highly acclaimed American actors. Rothwell (1999: 106) deems a 1977 production of *King Lear* to be one of the more notable examples, starring renowned African-American actor James Earl Jones in the title role.

The 1950s would prove to be the most significant decade in the history of theatre on television and it saw live television drama achieve the height of its power, only to change dramatically until its decline toward the end of the decade. It is evident that the development of film technology and videotape in the late 1950s changed the format of television drama forever. Shooting television dramas on film came with advantages that a broadcaster could not resist.

Sterling (in Davis 2009: 201) deems “the economic logic of shooting on film as ‘inarguable’”. Film, and later videotape, meant that dramas could be recorded and rebroadcast, as opposed to live transmissions that were a once-off event. This was mutually beneficial to both broadcasters and producers, because rebroadcasts generated more income for all involved parties. Davis (2009: 202) notes that filmed programmes could also now be sold and distributed to more than one market and often to other television networks.

The American anthology drama was also seen as a New York -mode of production, and almost all anthology dramas produced for television were created and broadcast by television networks in that city. Boddy (1984: 100) argues that live television drama in New York and the Hollywood film industry were seen as two opposing forces with very different attitudes towards dramatic strategies and acting styles. However, as film and videotape proved a profitable mode of production, Hollywood began to take interest in television that would have a significant impact on the anthology drama format. Boddy (1984: 101) notes that “the programming changes of the late ‘50s was evident within the anthology drama series themselves; the series increasingly turned to melodrama, to Hollywood stars and to the film format after the mid ‘50s”.

By the end of the 1950s the trend of transmitting plays live from studios in New York had come to a halt. By shooting plays on film, creators could now move their plays out of the studios and off stage, and film on location. According to Brandt and Schaefer (2002), the later development of videotape also meant that camera equipment became more portable, enabling creators to film at more than one location, thus steering television’s mode of production closer to that of the cinema.

Not only was the American anthology drama format’s mode of production becoming extinct, but its content was following the same pattern and the trend of showcasing a new play every week also faded as continuing-character series became the preferred format. Brandt and Schaefer (2002) argue that formats such as series were easier to schedule, more cost-effective, and more capable of encouraging viewer loyalty, and therefore preferred by network executives and producers. In Britain, the anthology drama format suffered the same fate as in the US, but the decline seemed to have been more gradual, with well-known anthologies such as *Armchair Theatre* (ABC) and *The Play for Today* (BBC) running until 1974 and 1984, respectively, despite their decline in popularity.

Although the drama anthology format disintegrated, it did inspire very well-respected and memorable film undertakings that resembled those of the old television format. Once such endeavour was the very well-known American Film Theatre, which produced a series of 14 film adaptations of stage plays consisting of famous works by the likes of Chekhov, Pinter, Albee, O'Neill and Genet that were screened in cinemas across the US (Grove 2002).

It is interesting to note that in the modern digital era practitioners who want to translate theatre to screen are once more attempting to adopt a mode of production that aims to deliver a product that comes as close to the live theatre experience as possible. Only now it seems that television is no longer the preferred medium to do so. One such example is NT Live, which transmits live performances from the stages of the National Theatre in London to cinemas around the globe.

Another interesting trend that come out of Britain in 2009 is digital offerings of live recorded theatre on the internet. One such example is an initiative called Digital Theatre UK, where live performances are recorded in London's most prestigious theatres and made available to the public online to download and watch on their personal computer or smart TV (Digital Theatre, n.d). Thus theatre is able to make a return to television screens, but now the content is not provided by the television networks, but via digital technology and the internet.

This chapter will examine international trends to determine the possibilities for translating theatre to the screen. It will investigate the mode of production of the live anthology dramas of the 1950s, with Studio One and Armchair Theatre as prime examples; American Film Theatre, which is strictly speaking not a television project, but one inspired by the television format sharing a similar mode of production; and perhaps the largest and most significant British television-theatre undertaking of the twentieth century, BBC Television Shakespeare. Subsequently the chapter will examine theatre on screen in the digital era, with NT Live as the prime example. All of the studied examples aspire to bring theatre to the screen and all share something of the principles and mode of production of the 1950s anthology dramas.

2.2 Live television anthology drama: Studio One (US) and Armchair Theatre (Britain)

Wake (2002) argues that because early television drama producers, writers and actors all came from a theatrical background, it was only natural that drama on television strove not only to be theatrical, but to be live as well. According to Lafferty (1987: 26):

Early television practitioners and critics alike argued that video, like radio, embodied an essential nature, its immediacy, and that the medium's aesthetic potential could only be realized through live origination.

By the late 1940s live anthology drama series such as NBC's Kraft Television Theatre (1947 – 1958) and Philco Television Playhouse (1948 – 1955), as well as CBS's Studio One (1948 – 1958) were among the most popular. Britain adopted the format between the late 1950s and early 1960s with popular live anthology drama series such as ABC's Armchair Theatre (1958 – 1974) and the BBC's The Wednesday Play (1964 – 1970) and The Play for Today (1970 – 1984).

Raw (2009: 91) argues that Studio One stood out from its rivals in the US because it was unique in its structure, style of production and shot composition. One of the reasons behind the unique nature of the series was that its first producer, Worthington Miner, had a specific vision and created a working environment in which his creative team were encouraged to express themselves fully. According to Brandt and Schaefer (2002), writers had very few limitations imposed on them apart from the basic structure of the format and "directors were in control of performances and camera work, and with no time for 'second guessing', a singleness of viewpoint provided the setting for actors and actresses to give first night once-only performances".

Miner was in a position to do what he pleased because the series had a very open relationship with its regular sponsor, Westinghouse, which granted him the freedom to do as he saw fit as long as the show attracted favourable ratings. According to Raw (2009: 92), Westinghouse liked to be associated with a respected drama series like Studio One, because the series reached a wealthy middle-class viewer to whom the company wanted to sell its products. What also worked in the favour of Miner's live drama vision at first, was that CBS was adamant on keeping production live within its studios. Raw (2009: 92) argues that a hasty move to filmed content would enable individual stations to make a direct deal with the sponsor and producers to acquire the rights to the dramas, making the network a middle man that merely sells airtime.

Given a favourable working environment, Miner could decide on whatever material he desired to pursue. He was, however, very specific in the kind of dramas the series would broadcast. Raw (2009: 92) believes that Miner's ideals reflected that of a practitioner who was "centre-left to the core", because he believed that drama should make important socio-

political commentary, and his choice of material reflected this belief. An example that was also seen as one of the series' early successes was a modern-dress production of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* that provided strong commentary on state power in the US.

Before a chosen piece of material could go into production the play script usually had to be adjusted to fit the structure Miner had developed for Studio One. The same applied to a newly written text that had to be shaped to fit the show's structure. Raw (2009: 93) notes that Miner believed in a three-act structure, with act one establishing character and basic premise, act two focussing on exposition and the development of the main characters' relationship, and act three providing a resolution. This structure also allowed for a commercial break after the first and second acts. However, the three-act structure was not designed to accommodate commercial breaks, but rather to emulate a traditional theatre structure. Arthur (in Raw 2009: 93) notes, "You write for three curtains. And they are dramatic curtains and have nothing to do with the fact that they are followed by commercials. It's [The programme is] constructed as a play".

Studio One's style of production and shot composition also had to strive toward theatricality to accompany the structure of the material. Various techniques and strategies were employed to achieve this aim. One of these strategies included the use of a moving camera that circled the actors while they remained stationary. Miner (in Raw 2009: 93) argues that this was an unusual choice for a television programme at the time, because actors would usually step into a fixed frame, whereas the camera was now moving around the actors in an attempt to focus the viewer's attention on the characters' reactions.

The shot composition was also designed to complement the idea of focussing on characters' reactions. Raw (2009: 92) notes that the creators of Studio One were pioneers in that they preferred vertical shot compositions to capture a number of characters performing actions and reacting simultaneously, while at the same time creating a sense of depth in the frame. Achieving the desired style of production with its unique shot composition in a live broadcast meant that the margin for error was very small and rehearsals were needed to keep mistakes to a minimum. According to Hawes (in Raw 2009: 93), the directors of Studio One usually reserved three days for blocking and close to 11 hours for camera rehearsal before a broadcast.

Although live anthology dramas like Studio One were immensely popular in the early 1950s, they soon fell out of favour. Filmed drama as a mode of production for television

programming became more popular due to its commercial possibilities and its ability to provide more variation in production. Raw (2009: 92) argues that live drama anthologies became too stagey, too fixed, without enough variation, with the actors restricted to the confines of the studio walls, while filmed drama could provide more variation in location and shot composition. Although anthologies such as Studio One tried to have longer shots with their vertical shot composition, a studio space remains limited and contained, with close-ups and medium shots making out the majority of the shot composition. Wake (2002) argues that good producers could make these limitations work to the production's advantage by shifting the focus to performance and intimate storytelling. However, by the end of the 1950s the trend of broadcasting drama live was in serious decline.

In Britain, however, the format of live anthology drama came a little later. One of the more notable British examples is ABC's Armchair Theatre, which began in 1956. Like Studio One, the creators of Armchair Theatre were all from a theatrical background. Duguid (2013a) argues that the show's dependency on theatre practitioners was also why it was allocated a Sunday night slot, because theatres were closed on Sundays at the time.

Armchair Theatre's first producer, Dennis Vance, liked to pursue adaptations of classical dramatic works in the anthology's early years, drawing from canonical texts of the naturalist playwrights such as Ibsen and Strindberg. According to Duguid (2013b), Vance's contribution to the Armchair Theatre's legacy is often unfairly overlooked because he was criticised for his preference for 'highbrow' writers, despite the fact that the anthology did feature new texts by British writers created specifically for television. Vance would only last two years (1955 – 1956) and was replaced by an imported Canadian producer, Sydney Newman.

1956 proved to be a significant year in British theatre history. Works such as John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* sparked a revolution in British drama. Osborne's main character, Jimmy Porter, reflected the attitude of a furious youth fed up with the conventional ideals of the older generation and the establishment. The play sparked great controversy and upset the traditional British theatre-going public. Hodgson (1992: 149) argues that the success of Osborne's play lies in the fact that he mixed "social levels, placing his more recognizable middle-class characters in or against a dingy setting which discomfited the West End audience".

When Newman took over as producer of Armchair Theatre he was adamant that the show should embrace the revolution sparked by Osborne's play and that it should produce new works that reflected and addressed a changing Britain. However, his vision did not materialize overnight. According to Duguid (2013b), Newman initially imported North American works while he assembled and trained a new group of British television writers who could eventually develop original British content.

At first the show proved fairly limited in what it could offer aesthetically. The action would be framed by the camera very much like the proscenium arch frames the action on stage, and early transmissions were very static. Only later did Newman and his team adopt similar strategies to that of anthologies such as Studio One, which used multiple, moving cameras. Duguid (2013b) notes that these new strategies came with new challenges for the creators, with more cameras in studio reducing the amount of space available for actors and crew members to move around in freely, while increasing the amount of equipment that had to be kept out of frame. However, Wake (2013) argues that although the new approach gave the anthology a "rough around the edges" style, many welcomed the imperfection and felt it gave the format its spontaneity.

Armchair Theatre enjoyed its greatest popularity in the early 1960s. Later in the decade the show moved more toward a filmed format and gradually moved away from serious dramas by pursuing commercial choices to adapt to a television environment that was constantly changing, with serials and series becoming increasingly popular. However, Duguid (2013a) argues that Armchair Theatre's greatest contribution to television was its diversity of style and theme, which he finds more interesting than the "endlessly reworked formulae that have come to dominate mainstream TV drama today".

2.3 Filmed drama: American Film Theatre

The American Film Theatre does not fit neatly into the category of theatre on television but its mode of production and philosophy of capturing theatre on screen reflected that of the early television dramas. The creators of the American Film Theatre were New York-based television producers Ely and Edie Landau, who had previously enjoyed moderate success with a filmed television drama anthology called *The Play of the Week* (Channel 13) that ran from 1959 to 1961. At that stage the Landaus were the owners of the independent Channel 13 network, which put them in a position to deviate from the conventional format of television anthology drama.

In an interview included in the extra features of the American Film Theatre's 2003 DVD release of Simon Gray's *Butley*, Edie Landau explains that "in those days broadcasting was very confined to the hourly breaks. There was a half hour show or an hour show and at the end of the hour the show had to be over because the new show started at nine o'clock or ten o'clock" (Landau in Scott 2003a). The Play of the Week, however, ran as long as it needed to and varied in length depending on the play being presented.

The Play of the Week experience would later provide the Landaus with the impetus to try something similar on film. However, it was another project that would provide the final ingredient to the format of American Film Theatre. After Martin Luther King Jnr. had been assassinated, the Landaus decided to make an hour-long documentary to celebrate his contribution to the civil rights struggle. They ended up with a documentary epic of nearly four hours entitled *KING: A Filmed Record...Montgomery to Memphis*. The documentary's length made its release problematic, but the Landaus came up with a distribution plan that was unheard of at the time. They arranged that close to 550 movie theatres would screen the documentary simultaneously throughout the country for one night only.

It was this distribution technique that would convince the Landaus to try something similar with theatre on film. Landau (in Scott 2002a) notes, "It was combining The Play of the Week with the distribution pattern of *KING* that gave birth to the idea of doing great plays on film". The American Film Theatre would develop a system in terms of which members of the public could subscribe to a ticket for a monthly screening of a film at their local cinemas. This system would, however, prove to be one of the determining factors in the American Film Theatre's downfall.

The Landaus were aiming to bring modern drama classics to the screen. According to Mandell (2003), Ely Landau at one stage referred to their project as "a national theatre on film". The series was divided into two seasons and produced 14 films in total, drawing on high-profile talent such as Katherine Hepburn and Alan Bates as well as iconic playwrights of the international theatre, including Chekhov, Genet, Ionesco, Pinter, O'Neill and Albee.

Ironically, one of the less complicated phases of the American Film Theatre endeavour was to secure the services of such high-profile talent. In the 2003 interview Landau reveals that these stars had to settle for salaries that were way below their standard rates, because they were so eager to do these modern classics and realized the importance of recording or

documenting their performances. Landau (in Scott 2002a) notes that “they understood that it was a chance of a lifetime to record for posterity, something they all felt very strongly about”.

Acquiring the rights to do the plays also proved easier than the producers thought. Many plays belonged to studios that had no real ambitions to use them and were therefore willing to sell ownership of the rights to the Landaus. The plays were all shot on location, often using actors and directors who had performed them on stage. Most of the texts underwent very little alteration for the screen translation and in some cases, for example *The Homecoming*, the playwright was directly involved in the filming process.

Another interview found on the American Film Theatre’s DVD special features is one with Richard Peña, a film programmer and the director of the Film Society at the Lincoln Centre in New York, who was involved in the process of releasing the films on DVD. He believes that the most successful films in the series were those that embraced the theatricality of the text and acknowledged that they were dealing with a theatre piece on film. Peña (in Scott 2002b) notes: “One way of adapting theatre, is by confronting theatre head-on”.

Critically, Landau felt that the American Film Theatre series was a success after most of the films received positive reviews. Peña (in Scott 2002b) admires the creators for what they achieved, but notes that many criticised the series for attempting “high culture film making” where everything “had to be the best”. In another interview found on the DVD’s special features one of the executive producers of the series, Otto Plaschkes, reveals that he felt that the series achieved its artistic ambitions, but “commercially it left much to be desired” (Plaschkes in Scott 2003a).

Landau (in Scott 2002a) echoes this view by citing the subscription system as a major problem, with the communication gap between the creators and the company responsible for servicing the subscriptions. She and her husband would receive letters from disgruntled subscribers who had experienced ticketing problems, and when she and Ely tried to rectify the mistakes it was too late. However, Plaschkes (in Scott 2003a) believes that the audience just was not big enough and argues that the largest segment of the American Film Theatre’s audience was located in the major cities, and many of them did not necessarily want to see the plays as films, because they had already seen them live on stage.

Although the American Film Theatre failed to sustain a regular format, it was able to make a record of some of the best international actors of the period performing some of the best modern dramas under the guidance of the best directors. Peña (in Scott 2002b) notes, “film

can do a lot of things, I mean, among the things film can do is preserve a great performance, and that's one of the things I think the American Film Theatre is valuable for". Landau (in Scott 2002a) shares Peña's sentiments by noting that "that's the thing about theatre, here today, gone tomorrow, whereas when you can capture that performance, that production on film, that really is a gift".

To better understand the American Film Theatre's mode of production, it is perhaps useful to examine a film in the series as an example. Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming* (directed by Peter Hall) is often seen as one of the series' more 'successful' translations. Peter Hall, at the time working for the Royal Shakespeare Company, directed the first ever stage performance of *The Homecoming* in 1965, which made its debut in Cardiff before moving to the West End in London where it had a run of 18 months. Pinter trusted Hall with his work because he knew Hall had a thorough understanding of the technicalities of his texts. Hall realized the importance of the punctuation in Pinter's work and made sure his actors shared his understanding of how to approach the text. Hall (2003) notes, "I was as rigorous with the actors over Pinter's punctuation as I had been with them over Shakespeare's line-endings. I even held a 'dot and pause and silence' rehearsal".

The Homecoming provoked a strong reaction in London and later the US, with reports of audience members walking out in fury. The play uses the familiar model of a family reunion, but upsets conventional expectations by parodying the traditional roles in a family by making the reunion unfamiliarly abusive and vicious. Hall (2003) notes that it was especially the portrayal of the sole female character, Ruth, that so upset audiences. Vivien Merchant (Pinter's wife at the time) gave a very sexy and enigmatic edge to the character who abandons her family to stay in her father-in-law's house to work as the family's prostitute, while her husband returns to America. The outrage, however, only came from certain segments of the audiences and the play enjoyed great success, being rewarded with various Tony Awards.

Hall was not comfortable with the idea of filming plays, believing that film and theatre were two different media that tried to achieve very different things. In an interview also found on the American Film Theatre's DVD special features he bluntly states, "I'm not for filming plays", but he agreed to translate *The Homecoming* to screen when the Landaus approached him to be part of their series (Hall in Scott 2004). Landau (in Scott 2002a) argues that it is

possible that Hall saw the American Film Theatre as an opportunity to record and preserve a piece of work that he was immensely proud of.

Hall decided to approach the series with the idea that he was not making a film. Later in the interview Hall (in Scott 2004) notes, “I believe and think, and I tried to make it, a play which uses certain techniques of film in order to express the play”. He also believed that a full-scale film adaptation would require the play to be more realistic. In the theatre a bare stage can be an entire city, while on film it remains a bare stage. Hall’s approach would attempt to emphasize the theatricality of the play and he “hoped that by endorsing the theatricality of the text, [the production] could progress to an artificiality that was genuinely surreal – in fact, be more real than real” (Hall 2003).

Hall and Pinter made minor alterations to the text, but not one word of dialogue changed from the stage script, and the film version would only include short outside scenes to establish location. They were able to employ the majority of the original cast members of the stage production, which meant that when they arrived on set the actors would have a thorough understanding of the script and their characters. Hall was, however, concerned about the actors having to play ‘smaller’ and feared that the intensity of Pinter’s dialogue might be lost on film. Judging from his remarks in the special features interview, they seemed to have achieved a kind of balance: “One of the great problems, I thought, was how we could get the verbal intensity without being over-the-top, and I think we succeeded” (Hall in Scott 2004).

The first thing one notices when watching *The Homecoming* is that the action is not set in a realistic portrayal of a London home. Most of the action is situated in the particularly large living room with very few pieces of oversized furniture. Judging from Hall’s earlier remarks regarding his surrealistic approach, it appears to have been a deliberate attempt to break from a genuine realism, if one considers that the play was filmed on stage at Shepperton Studios in London. The set has very little colour, being dominated by black, white and grey, and although fairly pale, the living room is very brightly lit. In an interview with cinematographer David Watkin found on the *The Homecoming* DVD’s special features, he argues that it was possible to use a lot of light because the ceiling of the stage was very high, which meant that the hot air could rise without making the set hot and uncomfortable. Watkin (in Scott 2003b) notes that he needed a lot of light to achieve the sharp focus that he and Hall wanted, because the long lens he was using needed more light to do so than a wide lens would.

The pale set is accompanied by a very ominous and hostile atmosphere throughout the play and the actors' performances are loaded with an unnerving intensity, while using very few facial expressions. The acting style is effective, but one takes time to adjust to it, because it borders on the absurd, ranging from moments of nonsensical jabbering to brilliantly orchestrated verbal attacks by the characters on one another while using very little physical effort. The style Hall pursued also has a very specific rhythm that lies in Pinter's text, with the ever-present Pinter pause changing the dynamics among the characters. The rhythm of the dialogue is accompanied by the actors' movements, which are extremely mechanical at times. Max's dialogue, for example, is very volatile and he moves in a similar fashion, alternating between grounded gestures and very jerky and aggressive gestures.

The performances are very compelling and the actors are able to give Pinter's text a very unsettling edge, but it is difficult to imagine the film being enjoyed by a more commercial audience, and especially a contemporary audience. There is very little 'action', the play is mostly driven by Pinter's dialogue, and the film is perhaps aimed at theatre enthusiasts or those who have some knowledge of Pinter's work. The film makes use of very little wide coverage and most of the action is captured in close-ups and medium shots. It is possible that Hall did this deliberately to intensify the sense of claustrophobia that is very present in the text. For a student of drama it is most certainly a very good example of how one could approach Pinter's texts, seeing that Pinter's plays are often viewed as 'difficult' to perform, and it is arguably also a very good example of a play's essence being captured on film.

2.4 Filmed television anthology drama: The Shakespeare Plays (BBC)

According to Wells (1982: 261) the BBC had already produced 30 full-length adaptations of Shakespeare plays for television between 1937 and 1978 that were either captured on stage in the presence of a live theatre audience or adapted and recorded in television studios. Some of the plays were produced as part of a series, while others were once-off productions. In 1978 the BBC embarked on what is perhaps one of the most ambitious drama projects in television history. Under the leadership of producer Cedric Messina, the BBC proposed to adapt 36 of Shakespeare's plays for television in a series (consisting of six seasons, with each season presenting a total of six plays) entitled *The Shakespeare Plays* that would run from 1978 to 1985.

The pursuit of such an ambitious project of such a grand scale would obviously need significant financial backing. According to Brooke (2013), the BBC series needed to secure

the sponsorship of an American partner to gain better access to the US market in order to increase the commercial possibilities of the series. The BBC managed to secure a partner from across the Atlantic, but the partner would cause some controversy after stipulating very specific conditions under which it would participate in the series.

The BBC, along with its partners, had to emphasize the educational value of the series in order to sell the series to schools and tertiary institutions. One of the major aims of the series would be to provide versions of the plays that educators could use to teach with, expanding the series' commercial potential. According to Wells (1982: 267), Jonathan Miller (Messina's successor) felt that one of the main restrictions of the series was "the original contract with American co-producers – it had to be so-called traditional, in the costume of the period", giving very little room for inventiveness and experimentation.

After securing financial backing for the series, the producers had to decide on a mode of production. Having an educational aim in mind, the producers wanted to cut as little of the texts as possible in an attempt to stay as true to Shakespeare's texts as possible. According to Wells (1982: 165), it was, however, decided that none of the productions could run longer than 150 minutes for fear of losing the audience's attention. Each adaptation was allocated the same amount of time for rehearsals and production, which allowed approximately four weeks of rehearsal and six days of filming. All of the adaptations were shot in the controlled environment of the BBC studios where the producers could create a standard system and infrastructure. The producers attempted to draw from high-profile talent to direct and star in the grand project.

It is interesting to note that while the series managed to secure the services of highly skilled, seasoned actors such as Anthony Hopkins (*Othello*), Derick Jacobi (*Hamlet*) and Helen Mirren (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), it failed to attract the kind of director it was looking for. According to Wells (1982: 269), renowned directors like Ingmar Bergman, Trevor Nunn and Peter Brook were all either unavailable or uninterested in conforming to the BBC's specific format for the series.

Overall, the series proved to be a commercial success. Brooke (2013) notes that the series had already broken even by 1982, three years before its final season. The growing popularity and possibilities of videotape release also meant that the education market was even larger than the producers had predicted. Critically and artistically, however, the series seems to have left much to be desired. Wells (1982: 263) criticises it for falling into a "routineness" and

although it was noble in its intention to cover so much of Shakespeare's work, its tight scheduling and rigid format made it very difficult for directors to engage creatively with the texts. Wells (1982: 263) notes: "The cameras must keep turning, whether or not the ideal director or actors for a particular play are available."

It would appear that more suitable, creative directors would have made a difference. Wells (1982: 269) notes the directors used were usually "ones who have worked mainly for television, and who have little or, in more than one case, no previous experience in directing Shakespeare in any medium". It is, however, very possible that a director of more experience and creativity would have clashed with the producers over the limitations of the format, and is possible that it would have been a very counter-productive way of working, which the BBC could obviously not afford.

Some scholars argue that the arrival of Jonathan Miller as producer of the series in 1980 made a great difference to especially its aesthetics. Rothwell (1999: 114) argues that Miller learnt from Messina's shortcomings and changed the design codes of the format "by looking to contemporaneous paintings and architecture as models for costuming and *mise-en-scène*". Wells (1982: 268) agrees that the new design codes made a difference, but notes that "this alone will not rescue a production that is deficient in other respects". Among other things, one of his greatest queries regarding the series is the acting style, which he deems inconsistent and losing something in the transition between stage and screen (Wells 1982: 268).

To gain a better understanding of The Shakespeare Plays series' approach, it is perhaps useful to examine the series' television translation of one of Shakespeare's greatest works, *Hamlet*. Rothwell (1999: 113) is very critical of this translation, arguing that the production "suffered from the recurring indecisiveness about whether to be theatrical or telegenic, and succeeding in neither". After viewing the DVD release of the BBC's three-and-a-half hour epic, one cannot help but find truth in his view. Under Messina's leadership the series format maintained the rule of not exceeding the two-and-a-half hour mark, but when Miller took over this was no longer a prerequisite. In the case of *Hamlet*, the film is too long and there is not enough variation and visual stimulation to keep an audience interested for such a lengthy period of time.

The "indecisiveness" that Rothwell refers to is very evident throughout the film. The most striking example is the inconsistency in acting style. It is perhaps most clearly illustrated in

the contrast between Patrick Stewart's and Derick Jacobi's approaches to Shakespeare's language. Stewart delivers his lines at a tempo that is unrivalled by any of the cast members, while Jacobi tends to make a meal of every word. Both seem to project their voices a great deal when compared to the actor playing Horatio, who does very little in this regard. The difference in style could perhaps be the reason why it appears that the actors are not interacting with another, but rather taking turns to deliver lines. Rothwell (1999: 113) notes, "The actors acted, but did not interact". One also struggles to believe that Stewart could be Jacobi's uncle, especially when considering that Jacobi is two years Stewart's senior.

It is possible to argue that *Hamlet* is one of those plays that requires the leading man to be memorable in order for the play to be 'successful'. So much depends on the actor playing the title role. His soliloquies are among the best-known and best loved in Western literature and he is also the character who sets the pace of the play, with the other characters having to react to his unusual behaviour. Jacobi does not succeed in this regard. His interpretation is somewhat of a spectacle. In the scene that Hamlet is first introduced in the text one has to keep in mind that here is a man in deep depression. He is mourning the death of his father while having to cope with his mother's hasty marriage to his uncle so shortly after his father's death. Jacobi's bold, flamboyant approach to this particular scene reflects that of a cheerful, cheeky young man who seems to enjoy embarrassing his mother and uncle in front of their guests. Although his technique is superior, having a very commanding presence and outstanding clarity of diction, he is unable to capture the vulnerability and subtle shifts of Hamlet's character.

It is especially his portrayal of Hamlet's first soliloquy that fails to evoke sympathy for the character. He is too self-aware, too focussed on the clarity of the language and the quality of his voice. It is a very difficult soliloquy, given that it is so emotionally charged, and one can very easily fall into the trap of going over-the-top, especially on camera, and unfortunately the camera takes fright at Jacobi's bold approach, which fails to create an inner landscape for the troubled Danish prince.

The play also fails to create a distinctive atmosphere, partly because of the lack of consistent sound quality and clarity. In certain scenes the sound takes on a very distracting buzzing quality, while in other scenes, especially those set in the grand hall, one becomes aware of a faint echo. The lack of sustained clarity of the sound is accompanied by very inconsistent lighting choices. The opening scene is very effective, with Horatio and the guards dimly lit

against a mysterious dark blue backdrop as they discuss the appearance of the ghost. It creates an ominous atmosphere that is appropriate to the sense of fear and uncertainty that is present in the scene. The lighting in interior scenes, however, leaves much to be desired. The overwhelming majority of the scenes are too brightly lit and one is able to see the actors and their surroundings in too much detail, reminding one more of a documentary than a film. This approach could perhaps have worked if the production had opted to achieve full-scale realism, but the bare, minimalist *mise-en-scène* found throughout the play suggests that it was not the case. It is difficult to determine whether the BBC's television production of *Hamlet* strives to make a film using stage content or to use television as a medium to express something about the play. The production is lost somewhere between television and theatre.

Although the production is unsatisfactory in many regards, it is possible to argue that its value lies in the fact that it is one of the few recorded versions of *Hamlet* that retains most of Shakespeare's original text. Although Stewart's and especially Jacobi's approaches are fairly bold for camera, they can be said to serve the educational purpose the producers had in mind for the series. Although they are bold in their approach, there is always clarity in voice, which is accompanied by faultless diction. They are also able to maintain an intensity with little effort and if they adopted the same approach on stage, the result would most likely have been completely different.

Although most critics questioned the artistic success of The Shakespeare Plays series, one cannot deny that the completion of the series was a great achievement in itself. The BBC managed to establish a series of visual records of Shakespeare's texts in performance. Through television, millions have now been exposed to Shakespeare, and future generations will have access to these productions, given that the series has been released on DVD, and it is the spirit of preservation for posterity that has to be admired here.

2.5 Theatre in the digital era: National Theatre Live

When wondering what the future may hold for screen translations of Shakespeare's texts, Rothwell (1999: 124) made quite an accurate prediction by noting that "as the century winds down, the differences among television, video, and movies will increasingly narrow with the emergence of high-definition transmission, and the coming digital revolution will also connect in unpredictable ways with personal computers".

In 2003 audiences across Europe were able to attend a live high-definition (HD) transmission of a David Bowie concert at their local cinemas. The event would inspire a new way of

approaching and looking at live performance and illustrated that modern digital technology could enable live performance to reach audiences on a grand scale. The transmission had a significant impact on those behind the concept and an enormous impact on Bowie's career. According to Mandell (2011: 69), the idea came from Bowie's concert promoter, Robert Young, and Sony marketing executive Sarah Borchard. According to Borchard (in Mandell 2011: 69), the concert led to a significant increase in Bowie's album sales, and ticket sales for future concerts also enjoyed a large increase.

Perhaps eager to see if their initiative could have the same affect in another field of the performing arts, Borchard and Young decided to approach the general manager of the Metropolitan Opera in New York, Peter Gelb, who happened to be an ex-colleague of Borchard's at Sony. Gelb took to the idea of live digital transmissions and launched The Met: Live in HD in 2006. According to Mandell (2011: 69), in a matter of six years the Metropolitan Opera had managed to present "46 operas on screens throughout the U.S. and in 42 other countries".

In London the initiative had impressed the artistic director of the National Theatre, Nicholas Hytner, who wondered if the format could have the same impact on theatre. After securing both public and corporate sponsorship, the National Theatre launched National Theatre Live (NT Live), where plays presented by the National Theatre are recorded on stage in the presence of a live theatre audience while simultaneously being transmitted live in HD to cinemas across Britain. The National Theatre's productions are very well attended and tickets are sometimes very hard to come by if one does not book well in advance. Hytner hoped that the initiative could enable the National Theatre's work to reach those who are unable to travel to London to attend the performances in person.

The National Theatre's mode of production is built on the idea of collaboration between theatre practitioners and broadcast specialists. Hytner had had some previous experience of live broadcasting of stage plays on television and this taught him that camera positions and angles had to be as flexible as possible to achieve satisfying coverage of the action for the screen audience. According to NESTA (2011: 18), the NT Live integrates "the broadcast elements into the theatre production process, establishing a close collaboration between the camera director and the stage director, as well as the wider theatre creative team".

Before a broadcast, the NT Live team have two camera rehearsals, during which the camera director is able to determine where to position cameras to provide the best possible coverage.

According to Hornby (2011: 197), NT Live uses up to eight cameras for a recording, which enables them to provide coverage from a wide variety of angles and positions. The live theatre audience pays a reduced fee for tickets as compensation for the fact that their experience will be affected by the camera crew, who have full licence to position their cameras anywhere in the auditorium.

Hornby (2011: 197) notes that many NT Live productions are presented on thrust stages, which enables the camera crew to provide coverage from three sides of the stage instead of the one that the traditional proscenium stage provides. The use of thrust stages also means that the live theatre audience is visible during the broadcast. This, however, is part of NT Live's fundamental aim, which is to emphasize the live experience. According to Hornby (2011: 197), the camera even goes as far as circling the audience before the start of the performance to instil in the cinema audience the feeling of "sharing the experience".

NT Live's first ever broadcast was a performance of Jean Racine's *Phèdre* in June 2009, starring Helen Mirren and Dominic Cooper, which was received with great enthusiasm. In a review, *Guardian* critic Michael Billington (2009) notes that although the transmission got off to a shaky start, the initiative made an important statement:

The main lesson is that a theatre production can be made democratically available to a mass audience without any loss of quality: indeed because the camera can mix close-up and long shot and because we can all hear easily, the aesthetic impact may actually be enhanced.

After attending more than one of NT Live's transmissions, Hornby (2011: 198) notes: "The element of performance that most impressed me about the NT Live shows was their sound; the actors sounded natural, nuanced, unforced – indeed live".

It is interesting to note that the public seemed to share the critic's enthusiastic reaction to the initiative. As mentioned in Chapter One, in 2010 NESTA conducted a research survey in order to determine the public's reaction and attitude to the initiative. According to NESTA (2010: 6), 42.5% of audience members who attended NT Live's second production (Shakespeare's *All's Well that Ends Well*) were people who had watched the live transmission of *Phèdre*. NESTA (2010: 6) also found that the transmissions made people even more eager to see the National Theatre productions on stage in London: respondents indicated that they were willing to pay no more than 15 pounds for a live transmission ticket, while they were willing to pay up to 40 pounds for a live theatre ticket. This led NESTA (2010: 6) to conclude that "in this sense, the constraints on audience size which motivate

innovations like NT Live may also contribute to the theatre's particular sense of worth in the audience's eyes".

Although the NT initiative has been met with positive reaction in the few years it has been operational, it remains largely self-sustaining and has no real commercial ambitions. The popularity of the initiative is, however, growing at a healthy rate and critics seem to be impressed. NESTA (2011: 48) argues that one of the initiative's greatest achievements is that it has "proved that there is a future in digital theatre".

2.6 Conclusion

After examining the various trends and approaches to the translation of theatre to screen in the US and Britain, it is interesting to note that the trend of capturing 'live' theatre on screen has completed a cycle. 1950s television started the trend, which is returning in the form of digital transmissions in cinemas in the 2000s. It is possible to argue that the popularity of the 1950s anthologies was heavily influenced by the fact that television had not yet developed enough to produce an alternative. As soon as film and videotape technology developed, the live anthology format faced competing formats and declined in popularity.

Regardless of mode of production and critical success, what is evident, is that any translation of theatre to screen has a small potential audience. All of the studied examples in the first half of this chapter fell out of favour due to a lack of a sustained audience. The examples that achieved some kind of critical success seem to be those that were very clear in what they sought to achieve with their specific translation. The BBC's television production of *Hamlet* is an example of a translation that is not completely clear in its intention and appears to be lost somewhere between television and theatre. The possible reason for this is that the television version was not based on an original stage interpretation. When using an existing stage production as basis for the television version, one has a set of performers who are familiar with the material and have established some form of chemistry among themselves.

When pursuing a filmed approach to plays, one has to first acknowledge that one is dealing with a theatre production that can never be as realistic as a film or television programme can be on screen. If a theatre text is presented on screen, it will always have an element of artificiality. It is perhaps therefore more beneficial to move away from naturalism and realism when attempting such a translation.

Peter Hall's translation of *The Homecoming* is a good example of a theatre text in its original form captured satisfactorily on film. It never feels like a traditional film and did not aspire to be one. As previously stated, Hall wanted the American Film Theatre's *The Homecoming* to be "a play which uses certain techniques of film in order to express the play" (Hall in Scott 2004). The setting is not fully realistic and neither is the dialogue or the performances.

What also seemed to have worked incredibly well in the case of *The Homecoming* was that the producers managed to retain the original stage production's ensemble. And if one is to undertake such an endeavour, it would prove immensely economical to use actors who have performed the play on stage, because it is likely that they would already have a thorough understanding of character and text, as well as a sense of ensemble chemistry that would not only shorten the rehearsal process, but make it more productive.

When pursuing a live approach to translating theatre to the screen, it is possible to argue that one has a greater chance of succeeding if technical resources are up to date with the latest technological developments. NT Live has proved that screen audiences respond to the sense of a 'live' experience, and the initiative believes that technology is essential in enhancing this affect, which is why its cinema screenings are aided by surround sound speakers and HD projectors.

Although the live recording can never replace the actual experience of being in the auditorium, the National Theatre felt it important to give the cinema audience access to certain elements of the production that the auditorium audience is unable to experience. Interviews with cast members and directors are screened prior to the transmission, giving the screen audience a sense of being given a kind of 'backstage pass' or 'inside information'. This is certainly an element that could be adopted in a South African approach to live theatre recordings for television.

CHAPTER THREE

RECENT AFRIKAANS THEATRE PRODUCTIONS THAT HAVE ATTEMPTED THE TRANSITION TO SCREEN

3.1 Introduction

The presentation of theatre on television developed much later in South Africa than in the US and Britain. According to Herrington (1993: 53), the single play or single drama format was first employed in South Africa only in 1976, and had gone into rapid decline by 1986, with the last ever English-language single drama being aired in 1991. The SABC's single dramas consisted of plays written specifically for television as well as stage plays that were adapted to suit the medium's requirements. Herrington (1993: 156) argues that the SABC's mode of production for single plays was closely based on the British studio model, because the first generation of South African television personnel were trained by British instructors.

Despite adopting British practice, the SABC never produced live television drama. Herrington (1993: 79) notes that it did, however, go so far as making live recordings of plays. A notable example is a production of Shakespeare's *A Winter's Tale* starring Sandra Prinsloo and Michael Richard that was recorded live at the Alexander Theatre in Johannesburg, but the recording underwent post-production editing before it was aired in August 1988. The SABC Artes Drama Jury had the following to say about this particular drama's mode of production:

The cameras were kept out of the way but the quality of the camera work matched the standard of a studio production. The producer also adopted the novel approach of preparing the television viewer for an enjoyable theatrical experience by including sequences in the dressing rooms and shots of the audience (Herrington 1993: 78).

By the late 1980s the then-manager of English Television Drama, Ken Leach, became increasingly uneasy about the corporation's failure to produce the work of local playwrights. The single plays aired by the SABC consisted mainly of well-known and tested American and European texts (Athol Fugard's texts were a minor exception), and Leach wanted to encourage more local content in English. Referring to Leach, Herrington (1993: 87) notes that "by turning his back on proven and popular overseas plays he hoped that, with encouragement, South African English language drama would emerge as strongly as its Afrikaans counterpart".

In his doctoral thesis, *The English Language Television Single Play in South Africa: A Threatened Genre, 1976 – 1991*, Herrington focusses on the SABC's single plays produced in English. His research, however, reveals that there were as many single plays produced in Afrikaans during this period. According to Herrington (1993: 476 – 489), the SABC's Afrikaans Television Drama section produced a variety of original Afrikaans stage plays, such as Chris Barnard's *Pa maak vir my 'n vlieër pa* (1976) and Uys Krige's *Die ryk weduwee* (1977), as well as translations of canonical international texts such as William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1981) and Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* (1982).

The South African television single play suffered the same fate as the format did in Britain and America. Herrington (1993: i) argues that as the SABC became increasingly commercialised, it came under pressure to create programming that could attract large audiences in order to interest potential advertisers. Series and serials were more cost-effective and popular, and soon became the dominant format on South African television. The introduction of pay-television channel M-Net also had an influence on the demise of the SABC single play. M-Net emerged as the SABC's greatest competitor and placed the corporation under great pressure to compete with the “‘gloss and glitter’ programmes” that it was producing (Herrington 1993: 202).

By 1991 the SABC had virtually stopped producing single plays to make way for series and serials, and very few have been produced ever since on the SABC or M-Net. And if there have been notable examples, they have not been very well documented – there is very little record of theatre on South African television over the last two decades. To investigate the possibility of constructing a proposed mode of operation for translating Afrikaans theatre to television, it is important to examine what has been attempted in this regard in recent South African history.

The examples that the study has identified do not necessarily fall perfectly into format categories such as ‘single play’ or ‘live TV drama’, but have in some way attempted to translate theatre to screen and have created a product that the study deems fit for broadcast. The study has identified examples that vary in approach, intention, and execution to gain a better understanding of the possibilities and limitations of such an undertaking. The examples range from a full-scale television series adaptation, live recordings of plays and film versions of plays to a live improvisation sitcom, all of which, if given the opportunity (some examples were aired on KykNET) could be screened to the South African public.

3.2 *Die Francois Toerien Show*

The stage version of *Die Francois Toerien Show* has been a regular on the Afrikaans festival circuit in recent years and in 2011 Toerien and his team showcased the eighth instalment. The show is based on the sketch comedy tradition of British shows such as Monty Python, The Catherine Tate Show and Little Britain, all of which have been enjoyed by a global audience and in a format familiar to the South African television audience. However, very little sketch comedy has been done locally, and even less in Afrikaans, and it is perhaps one of the reasons that the stage productions have enjoyed success. Botha (2005: 14) notes, “Toerien-hulle is besig met iets skaars in Afrikaans” [Toerien and co. are busy with something rare in Afrikaans].

When asked in an interview whether the show would make the transition to television, Toerien (in Calitz 2011: 6) replied, “Ek sal baie bly wees, want dis nie asof die show ons sakke vol geld maak nie. Die mense hou daarvan; ons sien dit uit die gehore. Dis ‘n goeie produk, maar dit kort ‘n bietjie beweging” [I would be delighted because it is not like the show is making us wealthy. The people like it; we see it in the audiences. It is a quality product, but it needs some movement].

Immediate controversy followed after the first episode of *Die Francois Toerien Show* aired in early 2012. Conservative sections of the KykNET audience launched a series of complaints on social media websites. De Lange (2012a: 4) notes that the majority of these complaints were aimed at what the audience deemed to be “gewaagde en platvloerse taalgebruik” [risqué and banal language]. Toerien (in De Lange 2012a: 4) argues that the show is quite tame in comparison to other shows on the channel and notes that it was never his intention to be controversial: “Ek wou nie kontroversieel wees nie. Dis satire. Jy stuur iemand op. En ja, natuurlik gaan die persoon wat opgestuur word, nie daarvan hou nie” [I did not intend to be controversial. It is satire. It is a send-up. And of course, the person being sent up is not going to enjoy it].

De Lange (2012a: 4) finds it ironic that the harsh language used in the complaints is often more foul than the language used in the show. Toerien (in De Lange 2012a: 4) also notes that it was the same ten people who complained and therefore he did not take the criticism too seriously. The creators predicted that the show might have a slow start in terms of ratings, but hoped that it would gradually build its audience and climb in the ratings. However, according to executive producer Herman Binge, the show never really moved higher than the 18th

position on the ratings list. Binge (2012) believes this could be due to various factors, but deems it impossible to determine the exact reason. Possibly the most influential factor was the awkward time slot allocated to the show.

Since the content was deemed only suitable for adults, the show was allocated an age restriction of 16 and aired on Saturday nights at 21:30. Binge (2012) argues that KykNET was aware of the fact that it was taking a risk and wanted to use *Die Francois Toerien Show* to test and develop an audience in a traditionally ‘difficult’ time slot. It is also possible to argue that an evening slot on a weekend becomes problematic, because people are unlikely to sit in front of their televisions during a time that is usually reserved for socialising.

3.2.1 Intention and process of translating *Die Francois Toerien Show* to screen

Despite having pitched the idea to KykNET previously, the broadcaster finally agreed that a season of *Die Francois Toerien Show* would be filmed in early 2012. The agreement stated that the broadcast rights of the television show belong to the broadcaster. According to Binge (2012), a precedent exists (especially with the SABC) whereby the dramatist is paid a once-off fee for the television rights that is supposed to come out of the budget, and the broadcaster is free to exploit the series as it sees fit. However, this is not usually the case.

Binge (2012) notes: “Wat in die praktyk gebeur is dat die fooi vir die regte uit die wins van die produksie moet kom aangesien daar op ‘n standaard begroting vir ‘n spesifieke genre in ‘n spesifieke tydsgleuf ooreengekom word” [What really happens is that the fee for the rights comes out of the profit of the production, since a standard budget is decided on for a specific genre in a specific time slot]. If there is interest in distributing the series, shares in DVD sales have to be negotiated. In the case of *Die Francois Toerien Show*, the writer’s contract stated that the rights of present and future stage productions lay with Toerien himself, and he was given a 25% share in DVD sales.

It was Toerien’s intention to create a television series using existing stage content. He wanted to use the formula of the stage production and apply it to another medium, and therefore, *Die Francois Toerien Show*’s sketches were adapted to be shot on location. Naturally, certain adjustments had to be made, but to what extent the sketches had to be altered would prove challenging. Binge (2012) believes that when theatre texts are adapted for the screen the main objective should be to maintain the essence of the author’s/dramatist’s intention.

In the case of Toerien's show, some of the sketches were left unchanged and performed as they were in the stage versions, while others were adjusted to the requirements of the new medium, usually having to be shortened. Binge (2012) argues that a minute on stage is "shorter" than a minute on television and the sketches that seemed to be too long were therefore adjusted. After filming had been completed, Toerien (in De Lange 2012b) confirmed this view by noting that, "n Skets wat maklik tien minute op die verhoog kan aangaan en steeds snaaks bly, raak na drie minute op televisie vervelig" [a sketch that is able to go on for ten minutes and still remain funny on stage, becomes boring after three minutes on television].

Binge (2012) argues that this is partly because a television audience has the potential to be more informal than that of spectators sitting in an auditorium. Attending a theatre production is more of an occasion and the audience member has bought his/her seat for the duration of the entire performance. It is therefore more likely that the theatre spectator is committed to following every aspect of the action on stage. A television audience member is more likely to move around in his/her living room and switch between channels, which makes it necessary to keep a television comedy's rhythm relatively fast, so that the audience member does not lose interest.

Before filming began, Toerien and his cast had a four-week rehearsal period in Stellenbosch, where they discussed the material, established basic blocking and developed character. Such a rehearsal process is viewed as a luxury and is certainly not the norm: South African television and film producers generally have limited budgets to work with. No cameras were present at these rehearsals, but were suggested by chairs so that the actors could get used to adjusting their performances according to the cameras' requirements. Binge (2012) argues that this was a great advantage in that by the time the actors arrived on set, they were well prepared and only minor adjustments had to be made at the real location.

Once on set the technical team had two rehearsals with the actors to determine what had to be adjusted to make the sketches as effective as possible. Binge (2012) notes that the cost of technical rehearsals is much higher than when actors merely rehearse with the director. It proved cost-effective and greatly beneficial that the actors were able to be well prepared once they arrived on set for the technical rehearsals.

Once on set, Toerien followed a collaborative route and decided to include the show's stage director, Juanita Swanepoel, to act as a kind of assistant director. This was partly a practical

decision, since Toerien appeared in a lot of the sketches himself. According to Binge (2012), Swanepoel focussed on interpretation and performance; Toerien decided on concept, style, costumes and make-up; while the technical elements such as lighting and camera positions were discussed with and executed by the experienced director of photography, Marc Degenaar.

Swanepoel and Toerien were both highly qualified and accomplished theatre directors, but had no real experience in television. Despite the obvious technical challenges the new medium would pose, the acting styles for stage and camera are often seen as two different disciplines. The traditional view is that when on stage an actor has to project to the back of the auditorium while, acting for camera requires a smaller, more internalised focus for the close-up camera. According to Binge (2012), Toerien's team were initially instructed to play slightly 'smaller' for the camera, but Swanepoel felt that this instruction inhibited the actors, affecting the energy of the sketches and making them less funny. Toerien (2012) notes that there were several discussions about the actors having to go 'smaller' but believes the issue to be an additional facet of the production.

Toerien (2012) believes it is important to remember that all forms of acting should strive to be truthful and should be rooted in some form of reality, and therefore he and his team shifted their focus toward achieving this aim. He believes that the greatest adjustment for the actors proved to be the lack of a live audience. The actors were used to performing the material to a live audience, and such an audience can have a significant impact on the rhythm of a performance, especially in comedy, where actors have to pause for laugh lines.

When working with comedy, one also has to realize that on stage the actor is completely visible to the audience, which means that physical comedy and group reactions do not go unnoticed. On television the camera has to alternate between long, medium and close-up shots to guide the spectator's gaze. Binge (2012) notes that the rule of thumb on set was "if you can't see the hands, it ain't funny!" Toerien (2012) argues that although it was challenging to find a satisfying balance between wide and close-up shots, the reaction shots were the greatest concern.

Toerien (2012) notes, "Daar was 'n paar gevalle waar ons nie die reaksieskote gehad het nie, waar dit van kardinale belang was" [There were a few instances in which we did not have the required reaction shots where they proved to be of great importance]. The series was shot with mostly two cameras and although the sketches were shot on location, a studio approach

was adopted in that a third camera was used to cover a wide angle. Binge (2012) notes that the third camera did not necessarily have an operator and recorded from a safe distance to provide coverage of what happened on the entire set. The other two cameras covered the action from opposite sides of the proscenium in long and medium shots. The sketch was then repeated to cover the action from different corners and closer angles. Generally, the production team tried to shoot an uninterrupted run-through of each sketch to maintain its natural rhythm.

When asked what the greatest challenge of filming *Die Francois Toerien Show* was, Toerien (2012) cites budget and time constraints, because the team were pressed to shoot an episode in two days. If given the opportunity to make a second season of the show, Toerien (2012) notes that he would spend less time on blocking rehearsals, keep his sketches short and shoot enough reaction shots. Binge (2012) cites maintaining the essence of the stage sketches while adapting them to the reality of the locations as a difficult balancing act, but elaborates on the aspect that gave him the most pleasure: “Ons het vir 7 jaar gesukkel om *Die Francois Toerien Show* op televisie te kry. Die blote feit dat dit op die ou end gebeur het was reeds ‘n groot vreugde” [It was a seven year struggle to get *Die Francois Toerien Show* on television. The mere fact that the dream materialized, is already a great source of joy].

3.2.2 Analysis of *Die Francois Toerien Show* on screen (Season 1 Episode 1)

The opening sketch is set in the venue of an unspecified Afrikaans arts festival, where Jolene (played by Esther von Waltzleben), the pop music sensation, is about to perform. Jolene intends to promote her debut album, “Drome” [Dreams] and performs the title song, “Drome”. The performance is a complete disaster after a series of embarrassing mishaps. The sketch appears to be mocking the pop star culture at Afrikaans arts festivals, where the artists are not always the most creative and innovative performers around, with backtracks and American country-themed acts having become the norm (Jolene and her dancers, played by Martelize Kolver and Brendon Daniels, are dressed as cowboys).

The sketch was filmed in a real theatre and there is sufficient coverage of the space and the people who occupy it, with satisfying variation between wide and medium shots of Jolene and her back-up dancers, Divan the incompetent sound technician (played by Francois Toerien) and the unfazed audience members. The comedy is generated by Jolene, her dancers, and Divan’s inability to cope with the unforeseen mishaps that occur during the performance. Some of the most comic moments are reaction shots of the uninterested

audience members, who seem more absorbed in their snacks than in the performance itself, despite Jolene's efforts to encourage them, as she shouts: "O, julle is 'n wonderlike gehoor, gee julleself 'n lekker handeklappie" [Oh, you're a wonderful audience; give yourselves a nice round of applause]. Another great source of comedy is Jolene's confrontations with Divan, who is so busy enjoying the performance that he neglects his duty as sound technician.

The sketch drags slightly after a while and it is possible that the problem lies in the structure. It could possibly have been beneficial to structure the sketch around three mishaps instead of two, because it is said that comedy works in threes and the audience reaction to the degree of mishap could have been enhanced to provide more potential for comedy. The unfazed, uninterested audience members are hilarious at first, but their closer involvement as characters could have helped to make Jolene and Divan seem all the more ridiculous. The duration of Jolene's performance between each mishap is also too long. Although very funny, the content of the song is not sufficient to carry a minute of screen time.

The second sketch of the episode is set in a pub. A distressed rugby player (played by Altan Ungerer) sits at the bar holding a photograph of his ex-girlfriend. The bartender (played by Francois Toerien) is dressed in a t-shirt that reads "Ek het drama geswot" [I studied drama], mocking the stereotypical view that all actors are unemployed most of the time and are forced to work as part-time waiters and bartenders.

The rugby player reveals to the barman that he suffered an injury during a scrum when a fellow teammate grabbed his genitals too hard, forcing doctors to remove his testicles. The operation has given his voice a ridiculously high pitch that his girlfriend found to be hilarious, causing her to end the relationship. The sketch undermines the traditional role of the bartender as counsellor or confidant. The bartender is expected to sympathize with the rugby player's situation, but instead of consoling him, he emulates his customer's squeaky voice, exclaiming, "Jammer om van jou kak te hoor" [Sorry to hear about your shit]. The sketch is simple, yet very effective. The simple bartender-patron situation is covered in sufficient medium close-up and over-the-shoulder angles and the performances are perfectly placed.

The third sketch is arguably the most problematic of the episode. The scene is set in the workshop of an auto-electrician (played by Francois Toerien) who attends to a customer (played by Lorraine Burger). The electrician shocks himself each time he fiddles with the car,

after which he drinks brake fluid that causes him to suffer a fresh spell of memory loss, resulting in him reintroducing himself to the customer, after which the sequence is repeated. After the sequence has been repeated several times the electrician finally appears to have suffered a lethal shock. After speaking to an ambulance over the telephone, the customer decides to slap the electrician in an attempt to make him regain consciousness. He awakes, but appears to have suffered yet another bout of memory loss. After once more trying to fix the car, he suffers another devastating shock, and by this time the customer is so fed up that she leaves.

The premise and the characters are both effective and well-drawn, yet the sketch's tempo becomes rather laboured after a while. The sketch plays for nine minutes and 44 seconds and is more than double the length of the other sketches in the episode. It would have perhaps been more effective to reduce the number of shocks and shorten the sequences between each shock, as they delay the rhythm and fluidity of the sketch. The sketch could perhaps serve as an example of Binge's (2012) argument that a minute on stage is "shorter" than a minute on television. The same sketch could possibly work very well on stage and remain unchanged, while it seems to lose steam on screen.

Sketch number four is set in the office of Attie (played by Altan Ungerer), a gynaecologist, who is seeing an anxious new patient, Maryna (played by guest star Anna-Mart van der Merwe), who arrives for a general check-up. In an attempt to comfort the anxious Maryna, Attie makes a series of inappropriate jokes, making Maryna feel even more uncomfortable. For example, when Attie asks his patient to disrobe, he insists that he will do the same. It appears to be a joke, but as she walks off camera to disrobe, Attie loosens his tie, suggesting that he might well disrobe at his desk.

Towards the end of the sketch Attie finally begins the check-up. Maryna lies at the wrong end of the bed, to which Attie reacts with, "O, Maryna, nee, nee, nee, nee, ek is nie 'n tandarts nie" [Oh, Maryna, no, no, no, no, I am not a dentist]. The dentist gag is then taken further, as Attie instructs Maryna to say "ah", but referring to her legs instead of her mouth. The sketch is very funny but the sound quality leaves much to be desired. There is a distracting echo in certain sequences that could possibly be due to the location the sketch was filmed at.

The final sketch is set in a news broadcasting studio. Eccentric news anchor Bertha Greef (played by Martelize Kolver) announces, "Dit is nou kwart oor sewe en hier volg die nuus om sewe" [It is now quarter past seven, and here is the news at seven]. Bertha has to read

ridiculous news reports from the teleprompter and devoices each time she has to read foul language. The reports poke fun at political figures such as Julius Malema and pop stars such as Juanita du Plessis. Bertha merely reads out the lyrics of Du Plessis' well-known hit single "Skarumba", illustrating how bizarre the lyrics are when read out, and adds, "Meer oor hierdie storie later" [More on this story later]. The news bulletin then later reveals that "Skarumba" has been banned in Iceland, because it translates into something foul in Icelandic. The sketch is simple, short and effective, with satisfying coverage and sound quality.

It is interesting to note that the shorter sketches appear to be more effective on television. It is understandable that the actors experienced difficulties in adjusting to the lack of a live audience, because an audience has a huge influence on the rhythm of a performance, especially in comedy. Audience reaction provides actors with energy and influences their timing, because they have to adjust their timing according to audience laughs. The *Die Francois Toerien Show* cast had to perform the same material without an audience, while the editor is in charge of the rhythm of the performance and uses his/her discretion as to when to insert the laugh track.

It would be interesting to see what the result is when such a show is recorded in the presence of a live studio audience. It is possible that it could improve the rhythm of the sketches, because the actors would be able to feed off the audience. It is perhaps an exercise that can only be refined through trial and error, and if *Die Francois Toerien Show* is to have a second season, there will surely be improvement. However, judging by its lukewarm reception and controversial appeal, it is unlikely that this will occur any time soon.

3.3 Wyk en die meisies

Wyk en die meisies was commissioned by festival organisers to celebrate what would have been Van Wyk Louw's 100th birthday. The play was inspired by J.C. Steyn's biography of N.P. van Wyk Louw, *Van Wyk Louw: 'n Lewensverhaal*, and compiled by Albert Maritz and his all-female cast consisting of Tinarie van Wyk Lodts, Erica Wessels and Frieda van der Heever.

Van Wyk Louw is an Afrikaans literary giant and his sympathetic attitude toward the Nazi cause as a young man has raised some eyebrows over the years. However, Steyn (1998: 111) argues that his attitude has often been misunderstood in that Van Wyk Louw saw parallels in

the treatment of Germany at Versailles and South Africa at Vereeniging, and he later denounced his sympathies toward the Nazis when Hitler started the Second World War. Maritz's production does not, however, dwell too heavily on this aspect of Van Wyk Louw's character. Brand (2006: 16) argues that Maritz's take on Van Wyk Louw's life is refreshing, because it is told from a female perspective. Brand (2006: 16) notes, "Dit bring 'n vars perspektief en verskaf heelwat van die humour deurdat die jong dames baie van Louw se romantiek en eksistensiële wroeging met 'n knippie sout neem en dit deur doelbewuste oordrewe toneelspel parodieer" [It provides a fresh and humorous perspective, because the young ladies take Louw's romanticism and existential agonising with a pinch of salt, while parodying them through exaggerated acting].

Marais (2007) argues that the production is "lig" [light], but not without substance, and believes that an incredible amount of information about Van Wyk Louw is conveyed at a thrilling pace. However, the aspect she found the most thrilling is that as an audience member, one feels like one is eavesdropping on Van Wyk Louw's life.

3.3.1 Intention and process of translating *Wyk en die meisies* to screen

Albert Maritz's first recorded stage production was *Joernaal van Jorik*, an educational production done for the Kaapse Raad vir Uitvoerende Kunste (KRUIK) in 1989, and he has recorded many of his productions ever since. Maritz (2012a) believes that his habit of documenting his work derives from his father's bad manners. He recalls an incident where his father paid a visit to actor Willem de la Querra on his death bed and requested that he [de la Querra] perform the death scene from Pieter Fourie's *Faan se trein*, which he wanted to record with his camera.

As a young boy, Maritz was also instructed to record his father's productions with the family video camera, which made him familiar with the process and inspired him to do so with his own work. In 2010 Maritz decided to approach KykNET with the idea of broadcasting two of his recorded stage productions on television, something he referred to as a "skoot in die donker" [shot in the dark] (Maritz in Malan 2010). After negotiations the broadcaster agreed to air *Wyk en die meisies* and *Elders aan diens* on 29 November and 6 December 2010.

Sadly, due to administrative complications with the rights, the two productions were never aired. In South Africa, many artists have to work through the organization Dramatiese Artistieke en Literêre Regte Organisasie (DALRO) to require the rights if they wish to

perform an author's work. Maritz (2012c) feels that there is a great communication gap when dealing with DALRO and knows of many artists who have had incredibly frustrating experiences when working through the organization. According to Maritz (2012c), DALRO had assured him that he had the rights to the productions, which he thought rested with the original authors. However, a week before the programmes were scheduled to air on KykNET, DALRO informed Maritz that the rights rested with the publishers, who wanted amounts that were out of Maritz's reach.

Although the productions were never aired, they were filmed and ready to be shown to a television audience. It was always Maritz's intention to capture the raw immediacy of the stage play on camera. The text remained unchanged and he had no extra camera rehearsals, using the original costumes, blocking, décor, etc. Maritz acted as director and instructed his actors to do what worked well on stage when he shot *Wyk en die meisies* at the Dorp Street Theatre in Stellenbosch for the first time. Two cameras were used to record a full run of the show without interruption and only afterwards did Maritz ask the actors to repeat certain sequences, which he shot with a hand-held camera himself.

However, Maritz (2012a) admits that he was not happy with the first recording and cites the sound as his main concern. When the process had reached post-production he realized that there was a buzz on the soundtrack. He decided to re-record the production at a later stage and did so in the Jans Rautenbach Schouwburg in Prince Albert the following year, using three cameras and professional sound. Both recordings were done with an audience present and the cameras were operated from fixed positions in front of the stage after which hand held pick-ups were done. However, Maritz (2012a) notes that he was still not completely satisfied, because there were still problems with the visuals and especially the sound.

3.3.2 Analysis of *Wyk en die meisies* on screen

The setup of *Wyk en die meisies* is very simple, with minimal costumes, props and decor, which is appropriate when considering that the show placed great emphasis on storytelling. The stage is fairly bare apart from a piano, a few microphone stands and three bar stools, with the actors dressed in simple black cocktail dresses and using the occasional prop or costume when breaking from the overall conversational tone of the production. For example, when the actors perform an extract from Van Wyk Louw's highly acclaimed play *Germanicus*, they use merely a cloak and steel rod signifying a sword to indicate that they are playing two characters in a play.

The tone of the production is light and fairly tongue-in-cheek and Van Wyk Louw's story is told rather than presented dramatically. One almost gets the sense that the actors are sending Van Wyk Louw up, dealing with the controversial aspects of his character such as his adultery and often-misunderstood attitude toward Nazism in a very light way. As an audience member one experiences their approach as an attempt to present the writer as a human being full of insecurities and imperfections rather than to portray him as a god-like figure by celebrating his achievements and successes. The low-key, conversational approach does, however, become rather contrived after a while. One gets the sense that the actors put great energy – perhaps too much – into coming across as “natural”, and it becomes distracting.

Overall, one feels somewhat detached from the action on stage and longs for a sense of space. The wide coverage is not satisfactory and there is not enough angle variation, while the medium and close-up shots are more effective, but also fairly limited. The production could perhaps have benefitted from more onstage coverage (something Maritz would use in *Elders aan diens* to great affect) to give the audience a sense of the performance space. As an audience member this would make one feel more included, since there is no illusion to be spoiled and no fourth wall to be broken down, because the actors address the visible theatre audience directly. In certain shots one can see the stage lights and there is also no attempt to hide the actors' radio microphones, something that Maritz is in favour of and which works well with this particular production.

It is evident that the screen version of *Wyk en die meisies* alternates between two different recordings of the play. The credits refer to the second version as “dokumentêre insetsels” [documentary inserts], with the three actresses seated next to each other on bar stools. It is especially the sound quality of this version that has an echoing quality that is extremely distracting and reminds one more of a press conference than a stage play. Maritz (2012a) notes that he was never satisfied with the overall sound quality and later realized that the sound should not be on the same power channel as the lights and cameras, which he acknowledges could have been prevented if they had had the budget to acquire the services of a highly skilled and experienced sound technician.

Despite the major sound concerns, the music and visual effects are the production's greatest strengths. Van Wyk Louw's work is handled with great honesty and sensitivity by Van den Heever who composed and performed the music. Visuals such as stills of family photos and footage of extracts from the text helps the audience to digest the large amount of information

conveyed about the author at break-neck speed. This is appropriate to the low key conversational tone of the production and makes it more accessible to an audience.

It is clear that it was Maritz's intention to maintain as many of the stage elements as possible in the recording. He makes the audience aware of theatrical elements and uses them to his advantage.

3.4 *Elders aan diens*

Jeanne Goosen's 2007 poetry anthology *Elders aan diens* was highly anticipated, since she had not published anything since *Uil vlieg* in 1971 and *Orrelpunte* in 1975 (Hambidge 2007: 6). It would appear that the long-awaited comeback lived up to expectations. Steinmair (2007: 10) describes it as "poësie wat 'n mens roer, laat lag, laat huil en hoop gee ..." [poetry that moves one to laughter, tears and hope]. Equally moved by Goosen's work, Hambidge (2007: 6) notes: "Die gedigte in *Elders aan diens* stroom oor jou. Jy lag, huil; daar is verwonding en woede" [The poetry in *Elders aan diens* is like a current that flows over you. There is laughter, tears; there is hurt and anger].

After the enthusiastic reaction to the anthology, Albert Maritz seized the opportunity to bring *Elders aan diens* to the stage in the form of a cabaret. The production (of the same title) consisted of a multi-talented, all-female cast comprising Nicole Holm, Frieda van den Heever and Luna Paige. The production toured the Afrikaans festival circuit, where it was received with great enthusiasm. Although questioning the genre, Steinmair (2007: 10) had the following to say after seeing the production: "Hierdie musiek-vertolkings-teater-stuk is 'n kunswerk van begin tot einde: diggeweef met weifellose intensiteit" [This interpretive-music-piece is an artwork from start to finish: thickly woven with unwavering intensity]. Equally impressed, Burger (2008: 3) refers to the production as "'n blink juweel" [a shiny jewel]. After feeling frustrated with his previous attempt at recording a stage production, Maritz was eager to try his hand at a different medium once more.

3.4.1 Intention and process of translating *Elders aan diens* to screen

Elders aan diens was recorded in 2009 at the Klein Libertas Theatre in Stellenbosch for the first time. As with *Wyk en die meisies*, the intention was to capture the live and raw immediacy of live theatre, and therefore no significant changes were made to the original stage production. There was no rehearsal process and the cast and crew attempted to capture the cabaret that they had performed for the festival audiences.

The production was shot with professional sound and three cameras, and this time Maritz flew down the editor, Johan Engelbrecht, to act as a kind of director of photography. According to Maritz (2012a), he soon discovered that a collaborative effort would be extremely effective, and his editor made an invaluable contribution to the recording process itself. Apart from acting as a director of photography, Engelbrecht also operated one of the cameras. He suggested that the actors look into the camera from time to time, and after viewing this in post-production Maritz felt that it worked incredibly well (Maritz 2012a). The first run-through of the performance was shot from fixed camera positions in front of the stage, after which a second run-through followed where the cameras moved among the actors on stage. Maritz then asked his actors to repeat certain segments, which he covered with his hand-held camera.

Maritz (2012b) cites the lighting as one of the major concerns. He made use of a contrasting lighting plan in the stage production, but had to use more general lighting in the recording to make it more manageable, because the stage lights are only really picked up in a high-density image. He argues this is not a major crisis, as one is still able to alter the lighting in the editing process. Although he was not completely satisfied with the sound, Maritz (2012a) feels that it was a major improvement compared to *Wyk en die meisies*. Maritz had to carry all the costs and thus the recordings of both productions had to be as economical as possible.

When asked what he felt worked best, he elaborated on the importance of the collaboration between himself and his editor: “Met ons wedersydse respek het ons mekaar met idees uitgedaag en hy het absolute skoonheid op die skerm vasgevang” [Given our mutual respect we were able to challenge each other with ideas and he was able to capture pure beauty on screen] (Maritz 2012a).

3.4.2 Analysis of *Elders aan diens* on screen

As with *Wyk en die meisies*, the setup of *Elders aan diens* is simple and practical. The stage has only essentials such as chairs, microphone stands and a piano. The actors are dressed in black, occasionally putting on additional costumes, and rarely using props. The simple setup is appropriate to the production's intimate tone and one feels that anything more would have been excessive. Similar to the Van Wyk Louw production, the actors address the audience directly and there is no need to hide the recognizable stage elements. In certain segments the stage lights appear in the shot and the actors' radio microphones are clearly visible. This is

not distracting, because there is no fourth wall to keep intact and it only enhances the sense of watching a live performance.

The sound and picture quality of *Elders aan diens* is a great improvement over *Wyk en die meisies*. The picture is clear and detailed, while the sound sustains a consistent clarity. The coverage of the production is also more satisfying than that of *Wyk en die meisies*, with effective alternation between wide, medium, and close-up shots and satisfactory angle variation. Maritz's decision to allow the cameras to move among the actors on stage works incredibly well. As an audience member, one feels that you have been granted access to the action from a variety of positions and angles on stage. Effective editing makes a tremendous contribution in this regard. For example, when the actors perform (in this case sing) the poem "Soms wanneer ek wei" [Sometimes when I am grazing], short, sharp cuts between shots of the three performers complement the ominous, restless atmosphere evoked by the music.

Maritz once again makes use of certain visual effects such as extracts from the text moving about the frame. Initially it is interesting to the eye, but soon becomes rather excessive. For example, in a certain sequence, the word "tuimel" [tumble] appears in one of the poems and as the actress utters the word, an extract from the text is displayed on screen and literally starts to topple over. One understands the reasoning behind the effect, but it is perhaps unnecessary to display the imagery that the poetry evokes in such a concrete way. The audience members want to form and experience the imagery in their own imaginations and one cannot help but feel that they are being instructed how to do so.

Overall, the filmed version of *Elders aan diens* is a beautifully polished production and a vast technical improvement on *Wyk en die meisies*. One does not feel as removed from the action visually and it would appear that Maritz was able to rectify the sound issues of his Van Wyk Louw production. The performances also deserve recognition, and especially Nicole Holm catches the eye. She is in full control of the material and is able to move from lighter to darker moments in an instant, while making the transitions incredibly accessible to the audience. She sustains an intensity that demands attention and is never too emotive or melodramatic. Along with Holm, Paige and Van den Heever put Goosen's work to wonderfully appropriate and moving music that is accompanied by pitch-perfect vocals and harmonizing.

It is possible to conclude that Maritz was able to refine his approach to translating theatre to screen through trial and error. It is clear that he identified certain shortcomings and found major solutions for them.

3.5 Rooiland

When Tertius Kapp's *Rooiland* opened at the 2011 Clover Aardklop festival in Potchefstroom it gave South African audiences a better understanding of the harsh realities of South African prison culture, and specifically The Number gang tradition. The Clover Aardklop organizers approached Kapp to write something for the festival as part of their new writers programme, and when asked why he chose to set his drama in a prison, Kapp (in Pople 2012: 8) notes, "Die taalgebruik van die tronkkulture was die eerste ding wat my aangegryp het. Ek praat van *Salambom*, 'n argot-taal wat oorspronklik uit die mynkaponge van die laat 19de en vroeë 20ste eeu kom" [The language of the prison culture was the first thing that fascinated me. I am referring to *Salambom*, an argot language or slang that developed among mine workers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century].

The director, Jaco Bouwer (2012) found the mythological and ritualistic elements of The Number tradition to be the most fascinating aspect when he was approached to do the production. Cast member Wilhelm van der Walt recalls how impressed he was by the authenticity of the dialogue. Van der Walt (2012) notes, "Dis wat so amazing was van die teks, ons het met Aardklop nie een woord gecut of verander nie" [That is what made the text so amazing – we did not cut or alter one word at Aardklop].

Kapp was granted first-hand interaction with the inmates of Pollsmoor Prison in the Western Cape when he accompanied an evangelical filmmaker to the prison, where they ran film-making workshops in which it was Kapp's responsibility to help inmates develop screen-writing skills for short films. Kapp (in Pople 2012: 8) notes, "Die gedagte is dat die praktiese opleiding hul kans vergroot om werk te vind wanneer hulle vrygelaat word" [The incentive is that the practical training will increase the inmates' chances of finding employment once they have been released]. It was during these workshops that he was able to pay very close attention to the finer detail of the dialect and perfect his characters' dialogue. Apart from experiencing the prison first hand, Kapp also did extensive research on the history and culture surrounding The Number gangs, and cites Jonny Steinberg's *The Number* and *Nongoloza's Children* as his most significant sources of research (Steinmair 2011: 8).

Rooiland tells the story of recently imprisoned Frans van Niewenhuizen (played by Wilhelm van der Walt) trying to adapt to prison life after being sentenced to six years in an unspecified prison. He shares the cell with 28s gang member Adidas (played by Brendon Daniels); an older ex-gang member who has become estranged from The Number gang tradition, Pastoor (played by Charlton George); and reborn Christian inmate Chris van Niekerk (played by Leon Kruger). Frans is given a hair-raising ultimatum. According to the code of The Number, a new inmate like Frans is given until sunrise to decide if he is to join The Number or serve out his sentence as a free but highly vulnerable agent.

The tradition and culture surrounding The Number gangs has been a part of South African society for more than a century and remains a real social issue in the communities on the Cape Flats. When asked what he felt the play was trying to convey, Bouwer (in Steinmair 2011: 8) notes, “Subtiel raak dit aan baie goed van die tyd en wêreld, *it’s a slice of life, absolute reality*. Dis duidelik uit gesprekke met mense op die *Cape Flats*, dat daar *youths* is wat so in *awe* is van die *gangs*, die idee van identiteit, *belonging*” [Subtly it touches on many aspects of the day and age, *it’s a slice of life, absolute reality*. Following conversations with people on the *Cape Flats*, it is clear that there are *youths* who are in *awe* of the gangs – the idea of identity, *belonging*].

Bouwer and his team enjoyed great success with the play when it toured to the Clover Aardklop and Absa KKNK festivals, winning various awards. Clover Aardklop 2011 awarded Tertius Kapp with the Smeltkoers award for best new Afrikaans text and crowned Brendon Daniels as the festival’s best actor (Bouwer 2011: 8). However, in the case of Aardklop, it is interesting to note that the accolades were not a reflection of ticket sales. Van der Walt (2012) believes this was due to the fact that the Aardklop audiences are more conservative in comparison to other festivals: “Niemand by Aardklop wou eintlik kyk as jy in die program lees: *tronk* en *bendes* en *sodomie* nie, nee niemand by Aardklop nie” [No one at Aardklop wanted to watch the play after reading *jail* and *gangs* and *sodomy* in the programme. No, no one at Aardklop].

In contrast to Aardklop, when the *Rooiland* team arrived in the Little Karoo for the 2012 Absa KKNK festival they performed to full houses and received four Kanna nominations. Apart from the new audience, Van der Walt (2012) also believes that a more satisfactory venue made quite a difference: “Wat teen ons getel het by Aardklop is ons venue. Ons venue was in ‘n skoolsaal en die akoestiek was sleg en wat Jaco wou bied vir die gehoor kon jy nie

lekker met die venue regkry nie” [The venue counted against us at Aardklop. We were given a school hall with bad acoustics and what Jaco wanted to offer the audience couldn’t be achieved properly].

Given its success, it is astonishing to realise that a play such as *Rooiland* had had no more than ten performances in the space of six months. Only fairly recently did it have two performances at the 2013 Woordfees in March and finally by April 2013 a run at the Baxter Theatre in Cape Town. This remains a great source of frustration for theatre makers in South Africa. A play needs time to develop before it truly ‘settles’, and this process needs an audience. For most Afrikaans theatre productions commissioned by the festivals, the reality is that it takes a year for a play to do a three-week run. The performances are scattered, with months in between them, which affects the momentum and growth of a production, and it takes a very lengthy period of time for a show to reach a wider audience.

3.5.1 Intention and process of translating *Rooiland* to screen

When the cast of *Rooiland* was still in rehearsal, it occurred to Jaco Boucher that the play would make a great film. Eager to try his hand at another medium and get into the habit of documenting his work, translating *Rooiland* to screen would prove to be an interesting exercise and a means of preserving his work. After considering a complete adaptation to film and shooting *Rooiland* on location, he realized that time constraints and a lack of financial resources would prove to be insurmountable obstacles and filming on stage seemed a more interesting and practical prospect.

Boucher (2012) describes his approach as a kind of “hybrid form, which walks in between two media”. He would use the stage performance as the basis and add certain cinematic devices he thought would enhance the film. An example is a sequence he refers to as “die Pastoor tema” [the Pastoor theme] that did not feature in the stage production. The character of Pastoor is filmed as if he is being interviewed while he performs a monologue directly into the camera.

This sequence is intercut with Pastoor performing the same monologue to Frans on stage. Boucher (2012) intended the sequence to serve as a kind of flashback to give the audience a sense of the younger Pastoor and the Pastoor of the present, and it also sets up the ending of the play where we see Pastoor removing his clothes to expose all his tattoos, revealing his

former identity. He argues that apart from establishing a historic context, the sequence also questions and comments on the hybrid form he experiments with.

Rooiland was filmed on stage in the H.B. Thom theatre in Stellenbosch in three days. There were no real rehearsals apart from a screen test a week prior to filming, and this was used mainly to plot and test the lighting on camera. Due to scheduling difficulties and budget constraints there was no time for extensive rehearsals with the actors. Boucher had to trust that his actors were professionals and could make the transition to another medium comfortably. It is, however, possible to argue that by using the existing production for the film, he had a group of actors who were very comfortable with the material and had already made a thorough study of their characters and the text, which meant that by the time they filmed the play their performances would already possess a degree of nuance and depth.

Van der Walt (2012) notes, “Wat gehelp het is die feit dat ons die play so goed geken het en dat ons dit gedoen het by Aardklop en dat ons die play gerun het. Ek wens mens kon alle TV of film goed so skiet as mens so goed rehearse was” [What helped was the fact that we knew the play very well, after having done a run at Aardklop. I wish one could always be so well rehearsed when shooting television or film projects]. Boucher also believed that the camera position and the distance of the camera in relationship to the performer would give the particular actor an idea of when to pull back and when to increase the intensity.

The film was shot with one camera, with the director of photography following the actors, as opposed to the actors having to find the camera. Boucher (2012) notes, “Op die ou einde wat ek baie gedoen het, is ek het meer die kameraman gechoreograph, so ek het hom verander, om aan te pas rondom hulle. It’s almost like I threw him in there” [What I eventually did was to choreograph the camera operator. I changed him to adapt to what the actors were doing. It’s almost like I threw him in there].

After viewing the footage in post-production Boucher was not completely satisfied with the acting style and felt it was too ‘big’ for the camera. Boucher (2012) notes, “Ek dink die spelstyl is te groot vir nou. Generally... Ek dink die spelstyl is te groot vir wat ek geskiet het” [I think the acting style is too big for now. Generally...I think the acting style is too big for what I shot].

During the filming, a colleague mentioned to Boucher that he felt the picture was too dark. Boucher, however, liked the darker quality and thought it enhanced the dark nature of the

play's content, and argues that by using less light the camera would be able to move very close to the action. With a limited budget it is also an uphill battle to acquire the desired lighting equipment and one has to make use of the lighting at one's disposal. Although satisfied with the overall picture quality, Boucher felt that he might have neglected the sound slightly after putting great energy and effort into getting the visuals he wanted.

Boucher (2012) argues that although the quality of the sound is not bad, he believes it could have been much better. Limited rehearsal time meant that the sound technicians had to adapt very quickly, and since they were not familiar with the movements of the actors, the boom operators found themselves playing catch-up and were a fraction too late on cues each time. An alternative approach to sound such as ADR (automatic dialogue replacement), where dialogue is recorded and inserted in post-production, was not possible because the budget did not allow it, so the crew had to do the best they could in the given time frame.

With KykNET's inaugural Silwerskermfees [Silver Screen Festival] in 2012, Boucher seized the opportunity to showcase *Rooiland* at an event that is designed to support and encourage filmmaking in Afrikaans. Boucher (2012) was not particularly satisfied with the copy of the film submitted to the festival after experiencing frustrating negotiations with the company responsible for the post-production process. However, despite his concerns, he received very encouraging feedback from those who had seen the film at the festival screening. Given the upsetting and brutal nature of the content, it is highly unlikely that KykNET will broadcast the film to its regular viewing audience.

According to Boucher (2012), there is, however, an off chance that *Rooiland* might be seen on one of M-Net's movie channels in the near future. After the positive test at the Silwerskermfees, Boucher decided to submit his film to international film festivals in Rotterdam and Berlin to see if he could reach a European audience.

3.5.2 Analysis of *Rooiland* on screen

The opening sequence of *Rooiland* establishes that the action is not about to take place in a realistic space. It is a stage and not a real prison cell, and the cell is suggested by a large white block or podium on an otherwise bare, black stage, while the prisoners not dressed in the recognizable orange prison uniform but in civilian clothes. Even if one has no prior knowledge of the play, it is clear that the characters are trapped in some form of prison. Boucher (2012) notes, "*I don't want to be cool in doing this cool set design. Dit was vir my*

meer 'n ding van, *I wish it can just disappear* en dan is dit hierdie idee van 'n monument. Hierdie monument wat skoon is en dit word vuil” [I don't want to be cool in doing this cool set design; for me it was a case of, I wish it could just disappear, and then it becomes this idea of a monument. A clean monument that becomes filthy].

As the action progresses one gets the sense that the setting becomes a kind of purgatory, especially for Frans and Pastoor, who do not belong to The Number but are not a part of regular society. The podium is lit by a large, square-shaped, florescent light directly above it, with the only other object on stage being the cell's small television set on which the inmates watch late-night pornography. It is possible that the television set is the inmates' only contact with the outside world, although this is never really established. The space becomes very intimate and it is clear that the inmates live a very cramped existence. The coverage enhances a feeling of entrapment, with the camera incredibly close most of the time, creating the sense that the subject being framed is having his space invaded.

Braam du Toit's sound score intensifies the setting's hostile atmosphere and creates a strong sense of impending doom, with audible restlessness and disputes among the other inmates in the prison, along with the prison alarm bell sounding from time to time. This is highly effective and perhaps a device to create a sense of ongoing “oorlog” [war], to which Pastoor and Adidas refer throughout the play, later revealed as a war between the old and new orders as they dispute the laws and customs of The Number. Pastoor later reveals that this age-old war has been going on for years and will find no resolution in the near future.

The setting and realities of the environment are so grim that one feels one is experiencing a kind of hell on earth where nothing is able to prosper, until a particular sequence, where a rare piece of humanity surfaces. Pastoor tries to hang himself in the cell while the rest of his cellmates are asleep. His struggle awakens Frans, who rescues him in time, and when Pastoor asks him for the reasoning behind this heroic act, he responds: “Jy's my vriend. Ek het jou nodig” [You're my friend. I need you]. Appearing to be baffled by the idea of friendship, Pastoor then asks Frans what he and his friends do for fun, and Frans explains that they do the ordinary things like 'braai', play sports, and go to the cinema and the beach. This seems to fascinate Pastoor, who is eager to hear more and quite movingly asks Frans: “En as ek uitkom...dan...kan ek saam met julle gaan ... beach toe?” [And if get out of here ... then ... can I go with you guys ... to the beach?].

A taken-aback Frans assures Pastoor that he will be welcome to accompany them, but he is doubtful of whether his own friends will still want anything to do with him once he returns to society. He then asks what Pastoor had experienced when he left prison for the first time, after which we learn that Pastoor has never really had any friends and that his conduct certainly never helped him make any. It becomes clear that you belong to The Number for life, and it is evident that the play is driven by the life-defining decision Frans has to make before sunrise: acquire protection from the horrors of prison by becoming a slave to The Number, or serve out his sentence in dangerous isolation.

By filming the action in a hand-held style, the camera is never quite steady, with the image always moving slightly. This is highly effective because it creates a very unsettling atmosphere for the spectator. There is satisfactory angle variation, but Boucher seemed to prefer close-up shots, possibly to underline the claustrophobic atmosphere of the play, and as an audience member one feels one is in the cell with the inmates. It is possible to argue that this would prove to be a difficult sensation to experience if one were to see the play in a large theatre or school hall, where it would not be possible to get so close to the action.

Another advantage of having the camera so close is that actors are able to explore a more subtle and intimate approach especially to monologues, where an internal experience is made manifest. An example of where *Rooiland* uses this advantage to great effect is in a sequence where reborn Christian Chris (Leon Kruger) tells a story about his father crashing his BMX bicycle into the family Christmas tree. He performs the monologue with great sensitivity and subtlety and the result is incredibly moving, with the close-up camera able to capture his internal experience while telling the story.

It is not only the unsteady, close-up camera that proves effective, but also Boucher's angle choices that enhance the themes in the play. It is possible to argue that one of the main themes of the play is the power struggle in the prison and more specifically in the cell, with Adidas as the dominant figure. What works incredibly well is that Adidas is often shot from a lower angle, putting him in a powerful position visually, because he towers over the other characters in the frame, while a character in a vulnerable position is shot from a higher angle, making him appear defenceless. Boucher also makes use of aerial shots to give the audience the point of view of the supposed surveillance cameras and one is also given the opportunity to view the setting from a higher position to better understand its restrictive quality.

After discovering inconsistent sound quality in post-production, Boucher decided to insert a subtle buzz track to even out the inconsistency. It is possible that this helped to improve the quality, but the sound remains problematic. The content redeems the sound and one soon adjusts to the quality. Although the performance styles move between stage and screen, the performances remain incredibly gripping and rooted in a truthfulness and reality that absorb one completely. The staging might not be realistic, but one believes every word the characters utter. Boucher's hybrid form is essentially an experiment, but is also a fascinating example of a theatre production that is filmed on stage while appearing to be a film.

3.6 *Proesstraat*

Television audiences would have been familiar with the format of *Proesstraat* when it aired on KykNET on 22 January 2011. Despite labelling itself as an improvisation sitcom, the series is very much grounded in theatrical principles. The show resembles theatre sports, a popular form of theatre that has been done on television before and something that would be recognizable to the South African television audience, because e-TV screened the well-known American version of the theatre sports television show *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* for several years. A presenter gives instructions to actors to improvise certain unscripted scenarios, which usually produces hysterical results.

When producer Harald Richter saw the hit series *Schillerstrasse* in Germany, he felt that there was great potential for something similar on Afrikaans television. Richter Medien and Blixem produksies secured the rights to duplicate the format of *Schillerstrasse* and adjust it to a South African context in Afrikaans (Mailovich 2010). After successful negotiations with KykNET, the first season of *Proesstraat* began filming in January 2010 at the University of Johannesburg's theatre.

3.6.1 Intention and process of making *Proesstraat*

According to Schultz (2012) the German creators were fairly adamant that Richter and his team stick closely to the format of *Schillerstrasse*. The KykNET set clearly resembles the original, although on a smaller scale, given the limited budget. For example, the German set consists of an apartment with a street next to it, across which is a fully furnished pub with adjoining pool hall, while the South African set only has an apartment and a small balcony. The German producers were also in the privileged position of being able to buy the theatre

they filmed in, which meant that they were able to customize the stage and auditorium to suit their particular needs.

According to Schultz (2012), the Schillerstrasse auditorium is able to rotate toward the direction the action takes place in when it shifts between the various locations on set. A larger budget also means a lengthier production process, a luxury that South African producers never enjoy. Schultz (2012) notes that the German team shoots an episode a week, while Richter and his team shoot two episodes a day. Schultz (2012) believes that this should not come as a surprise, because *Proesstraat*'s entire budget is the equivalent to what the German producers spend on two episodes of Schillerstrasse. Richter invited the German creators to South Africa to see *Proesstraat*, and according to Schultz (2012) they were incredibly impressed and encouraged the South African creators to keep up the good work.

Waldemar Schultz, who plays the central character, Waldi, admits that he was not very keen on the show when he was first asked to audition. Being an English mother-tongue speaker, the prospect of improvising in Afrikaans seemed a daunting task. When the producers asked him to audition a third time, Schultz decided to look at an episode of Schillerstrasse on the internet. After seeing the episode he felt that he had gained a better understanding of what would be expected of him and agreed to audition, whereupon he landed the role. Apart from having to improvise in Afrikaans, Schultz was also nervous about performing with comedians. According to Schultz (2012), the Schillerstrasse cast consists mainly of professional comedians and they refer to the cast members as “comedians” and not “actors”, while the *Proesstraat* cast is more balanced, consisting of comedians and actors.

Although required to work without a script, the actors/comedians are given a theme for each episode that initiates the action on stage. The action is then steered by what are called “plot pushers”, which consist of instructions given to the cast by the “regisseur” [director] through earpieces. The director is, however, not the actual director of the show and functions as a kind of presenter. Nina Swart fulfils the role of the director in *Proesstraat* and Schultz feels that she makes an invaluable contribution to the show. She has to use her own discretion as to when to introduce a new plot pusher. According to Schultz (2012), the first season of *Proesstraat* consisted of 15 – 20 plot pushers per episode, while the second season made use of an increased 20 – 30 plot pushers per episode. He feels that the increased pace of the show works for the medium and argues that South African audiences enjoy a laugh-a-minute situation.

Despite having a structure in the form of a theme with related plot pushers, the outcome of each episode remains largely unpredictable. It is arguably the element of the show that most resembles theatre. Even when performing a well-written and well-rehearsed play, the performance of a theatre production is never the same. Anything can go wrong at any time. In *Proesstraat*, mistakes are frequent and unavoidable, but definitely part of the show's appeal. Schultz (2012) notes, "If a corpse starts to come, we don't even try to suppress it. In *Proesstraat*, failing is as funny as succeeding well. In fact it's probably funnier. It's great when things go wrong".

Apart from resembling an unpredictability that is similar to that of the theatre, *Proesstraat* is performed in front of a live audience in an auditorium. According to Schultz (2012), the show is covered by up to five cameras: two on opposite sides of the audience, one at the back of the auditorium covering the wide shot, one devoted to coverage of Nina Swart, and a hand-held camera on stage. What is interesting is that the operator of the hand-held camera is visible to the live audience. Schultz (2012) argues that this is not a problem because the members of the audience are aware that they are a part of the filming process and no fourth wall needs to be kept intact.

The *Proesstraat* team had very little rehearsal before they began filming the first season. Schultz (2012) recalls that the cast was called to the set a few days prior to filming, where they familiarized themselves with the setup. There were, however, no formal rehearsals or practice runs. The cast do a five to ten minute theatre sports warm-up to prepare themselves for the recording of an episode, something that Schultz believes to be very effective. The camera crew also had very little preparation before taking on the project. Schultz (2012) notes that the camera operators initially tended to focus on following the action, which meant that they missed many of the reactions. However, as filming progressed the crew managed to cope better and later became very efficient.

When asked what he felt needed improvement in the second season, Schultz (2012) notes that from an actor's point-of-view, being open to anything at any time can be quite a challenge. He uses the example of a fellow cast member approaching him with a glass filled with raw egg and Tabasco sauce and he realized that it had to go down his throat, but he refused. The second season saw the cast come to the agreement that they would play along no matter what. They realized that it was not funny to reject or refuse a request from a fellow performer.

Schultz (2012) notes, “the rule of thumb is you never say never. If somebody offers something, you take it and see what you can do with it. You never reject it”.

Proesstraat proved immensely popular with the KykNET audience. Since the show had been received so well and since it is possible to argue that it is very similar to a theatre piece, Richter thought it a good idea to take the show’s setup and do a live show on the Afrikaans festival circuit as a theatre production, where it did fairly well, having established the concept and setup on television. The next logical step seemed to be a third television season, to which KykNET agreed, and after negotiations the third season is to be filmed in 2013.

3.6.2 Analysis of *Proesstraat* (Season 1 episode 1)

Nina Swart’s opening speech declares *Proesstraat*’s format:

Niks word vooraf vir die akteurs gegee nie en alles is geïmproviseer. Ek is die spelleier en elke akteur het ‘n gehoorstuk waardeur ek vir hulle regie notas gee waarop hulle onmiddelik moet reageer. Die ander akteurs weet nie wat aangaan nie en dinge kan nogal vinnig hand uitruk. So, wat gaan gebeur? Ek het geen idee nie. Geniet dit.

[The actors are not prepared in any way and everything is improvised. I am the acting coach and through an ear piece I give each actor instructions that they have to respond to immediately. The other actors are unaware of these instructions and things get out of hand fairly quickly. So, what’s going to happen? I have no idea. Enjoy the show].

The opening establishing shot reveals that the set is on a stage in front of a live auditorium audience. The broken-down fourth wall is literally suggested by a red brick wall with a large opening in the middle. Waldi is busy unpacking boxes in his new apartment when his first instruction is given: “Waldi, praat liefderik met elke dingetjie wat jy uitpak” [Waldi, address every item you unpack in a loving fashion]. Waldi has received the instruction through an earpiece while the live audience sees the instruction on a screen directly above the proscenium arch. The television audience is informed by an imposed frame of Nina Swart giving the plot pusher from the control box while the instruction is displayed on screen.

Martelize Kolver is the first guest to arrive at Waldi’s apartment and they discuss how he is coping after his recent divorce. The other actors/characters all arrive with the intention of helping Waldi settle into his new apartment and offering their support in his time of need. The plot pushers help to create the conflict on stage and are almost never directly related. They range from actors having to suddenly develop a phobia for boxes to their having to suddenly hear biological clocks ticking. It is possible to argue that the episode builds up to

the eventual climax, which is the introduction of the guest actor, in this case June van Merch, who plays a real estate agent through whom Waldi rents the apartment.

One of the plot pushers instructs her to go on a rant of how filthy and disorganized the apartment is and how she is disappointed by the new tenant, while the other actors support their friend by following their own instructions. By this time the action has become incredibly frantic and absurd, and one cannot help but feel that the performance has become nonsensical hysteria. It is ironic that a structured improvisational show becomes even more chaotic and unpredictable.

Throughout the episode the actors appear anxious and uncertain, and they tend to speak over each other in an attempt to make something comical of sometimes-bizarre instructions. This is an understandable anxiety if one acknowledges that the format and environment in which their performances have to function are far from easy. To improvise in front of a live theatre audience, with instructions being delivered through an earpiece while five cameras watch your every move, is a challenge most actors would dread.

The coverage of the action on stage is satisfactory, although it becomes problematic each time a new actor is introduced. Toward the end of the episode there are five actors on stage who are frantically trying to enhance the comic possibilities of a ridiculous situation. The decision of when to cut from one camera to another becomes a very delicate balancing act. One needs to keep the focus on the actor who has been given the plot pusher, while at the same time requiring reaction shots of other characters whom the plot pushers affect. In the first episode of *Proesstraat* it is apparent that this balancing act is a work in progress and one misses some comical moments because the cameras tend to arrive a fraction too late. This is a process that is refined through rehearsal and trial and error, and it does improve vastly in the episodes that follow.

Despite the inability of the visuals to keep up with the action at all times, the picture and sound quality are crystal clear, and even though certain moments are lost, the overall coverage of the action on stage is satisfactory. Having five cameras on the action means that one is able to provide the audience with a variety of angles. The *Proesstraat* setup even has a hand-held operator who is able to move on stage to give the audience a sense of being in the apartment with the actors.

The first episode falls flat, however, and one cannot help but feel that one is missing something, because the live audience seems to be enjoying the action tremendously, but the whole experience seems to be increasingly contrived. It might have something to do with the editor's choices, but somehow the action feels too chaotic and disjointed, and as an audience member one loses interest. The show does improve vastly and towards the end of the series the creators seem to improve their execution of the difficult format. The show is a first for Afrikaans television, and possibly an indication that live performance can be recorded satisfactorily and, given *Proesstraat's* popularity that audiences will respond to it.

3.7 Conclusion

It would appear that the mode of operation for the translation of theatre to screen depends on the intention of the creators. *Die Francois Toerien Show* attempted to use existing theatre work and adjust to television's needs and thus create a new work. The production team adopted a kind of studio approach and filmed the series like a television show. It would appear that if one is to pursue a television adaptation of a play, certain adjustments are crucial. Binge's (2012) argument that television is a 'faster' medium proves to have been accurate, because the shorter sketches are much more effective on screen. When working in comedy, wider coverage of the action is important, because many comic moments lie in the reaction of several actors. Toerien also underestimated the importance of capturing enough reaction shots, but only discovered this in post-production.

In the case of *Wyk en die meisies* and *Elders aan diens*, Albert Maritz attempted to capture the raw immediacy of live theatre on screen. In the case of *Wyk en die meisies*, there are major sound concerns and as an audience member one feels removed from the action because of too little angle variation. In *Elders aan diens* Maritz refines his approach and improves the shortcomings of *Wyk en die meisies* with more satisfying visuals and consistent clarity in the sound. The improvement is commendable, since Maritz had no budget and had to personally cover the production costs.

Jaco Boucher views his approach as a hybrid form of film and theatre. He filmed an unaltered theatre text on stage, but shot *Rooiland* like a film. The screen version of *Rooiland* certainly does not feel like a conventional film, but it is not a cold recording of a play either. Despite major sound concerns, the screen version of *Rooiland* is as gripping as the stage version. Like Maritz, Boucher had to cover all the costs, with the actors agreeing to take part in the project free of charge.

Proesstraat is perhaps the more problematic example the study has identified because it is very difficult to compare it to other examples, since it is primarily a television show.

Although *Proesstraat* is not an example of an existing stage production translated to screen, it is a very important example of live performance recorded successfully on stage for television. It would be possible to adopt a similar technical approach to recording theatre. Although the show's content is not always very effective, the technical aspects are of a high order. Each episode is covered by five cameras that provide a variety of angles for the screen audience. Having the luxury of a television programme's budget, the producers were able to have more control over the filming process, since they had the budget to acquire the services of skilled and experienced technicians. It is also encouraging that the format has tested positive with the KykNET audience. This could possibly be an indication of a willingness to watch live performance on television.

It is interesting to note that most creators of the analysed examples cite budget constraints as the most inhibiting factor in translating their theatre productions to screen. It would appear that it is not only beneficial, but essential that the process must be executed as economically as possible. It is also interesting to note that most of the producers attributed the sound difficulties to the budget constraints they faced. It is therefore possible to argue that when one undertakes the process of distributing the production budget, a large sum should go to obtaining highly skilled technicians and equipment.

A lack of rehearsal time also appears to be a major concern for artists eager to apply their work to a camera medium. Despite the fact that most practitioners felt that they had too little rehearsal time, the practitioners whose primary aim was to retain the theatrical essence of the production – in other words, those whose approach leaned more towards a recording of a stage production – argued that although more rehearsal time would have been welcome, there were great advantages in using the original cast. The rehearsal process for the stage productions did most of the groundwork. The chemistry among cast members had already been established and the character development had already taken place and could be further developed once filming started.

It is, however, the technical rehearsals that need more attention. Most of the artists whose productions were studied are primarily 'theatre' practitioners and have very little experience in television and film. A collaboration between a theatre director and technical

advisor/director appears to be worth exploring. Albert Maritz, for example, felt that his collaborative effort with his editor increased the quality of his final product.

The studied examples also revealed that there are indeed local practitioners who record their productions for documentation purposes. These recordings are not easily accessible and the study had to contact the practitioners directly to acquire these recordings. It is, therefore, perhaps useful to investigate the current state of archival institutions in South Africa to determine whether there are depositories for these kind of recordings so that they can be made available for research.

CHAPTER FOUR

TRANSLATING THEATRE TO SCREEN FOR THE PURPOSE OF DOCUMENTATION

4.1 Introduction

In the process of identifying South African examples of theatre productions that have made the transition to screen, the difficulty of obtaining sufficient, easily accessible information on examples has made it apparent that there is an overall lack of theatre documentation and archiving in South Africa. However, some believe that this is not necessarily a problem, given the fleeting nature of the art form, which lives on in the minds of those who experienced it in the flesh. Reason (2003: 82) illustrates this line of thinking by referring to Eugenio Barba, who declared theatre to be “the art of the present” and described its creators as producing “ephemeral works”. Brook (in Reason 2003: 85) shares these sentiments by arguing that live performance is “an event for that moment in time for that [audience] in that place – and it’s gone ... the only witnesses were the people present; the only record is what they retained, which is what it should be in the theatre”.

In contrast to the beliefs of these two well-renowned practitioners is the view of academics and educators who believe that the documentation and archiving of theatre to be vital for theatre research and cultural identity. Brown and Davis-Brown (in Freshwater 2003: 733) argue that an archive helps to “cement social stability and solidarity; illuminating (or creating) collective national memories and consequently a sense of national identity”. In assessing the educational value of archives in teaching theatre, Keuris and Krüger (2013a: 2) refer to Melzer, who asks: “How else can one teach the work of directors and theatre companies whose productions the students have not seen? How else can one teach different styles of work (whether period or personal) without seeing them?”

On a very basic level, an archive is necessary to authenticate the existence of a live performance. Freshwater (2003: 732) argues that despite the fact that our existence has become so electronic (because of the widespread use of, the internet, emails, information technology (IT), etc.), when we are required to provide proof of our identity or credentials, we “revert to the passport, the driving license, and the birth certificate. The archive performs a similar authentication function in the academic realm”.

In the case of South African theatre, there is a growing concern that the tradition of documenting and archiving theatre has been declining over the last two decades. Keuris and

Krüger (2013a: 1) argue that local theatre, and especially Afrikaans theatre, is very difficult to document and archive, since so much of it is created for the arts festivals on an ad-hoc basis, and these festivals do not have “the continuity and availability of staff and infrastructure” to properly document and archive the productions showcased on the Afrikaans festival circuit.

In a 2012 article published by the *Mail & Guardian*, Shula Marks voices great concern over the current state of our national archives and notes that “a serious lack of storage space for new documents or a clear strategy for capturing and maintaining digital records, as well as a dearth of trained archivists, have begun to take their toll”. According to Marks (2012), there is also no clear evidence that government intends to improve the situation: the 2012 budget debate in Parliament did not even mention the national archives.

By translating Afrikaans theatre to screen one can certainly make a contribution to the lack of archiving in South Africa. To better understand the kind of contribution it can make and assess the value of making audio-visual records of plays, it is perhaps important to investigate the current deterioration of our archives and look at what is being done or attempted locally and abroad. This chapter will attempt to analyse international archives to determine a standard and then look at what local archives are doing to try and achieve this standard. In doing so, the study may be able to gain a better understanding of what role theatre on screen can play in theatre archiving in South Africa.

4.2 The global digitization of performing arts archives and libraries

Over the last two decades performing arts archives have undergone significant change and development. Kratitzky (in Keuris and Krüger 2013b: 2) argues that despite theatre being an audio-visual medium, its study has been dominated by a literary perspective, and notes that “it is only very recently that the interpretation of visual material has been more generally considered an important and central skill”. The rapid development of technology in the past 20 years has made it possible for academics, educators and practitioners to engage with performance documentation electronically. There is an increasing number of institutions that have begun the process of digitization, through which archival content is made more easily accessible to researchers and educators. Institutions have also begun to offer online catalogues and databases to researchers to give them a better idea of what their archival collections consist of. One such is example is the well-known National Theatre in London, which provides an online NT Archive Catalogue that “contains entries for the items held in

the Archive Collection” (National Theatre, n.d.a). The National Theatre recognises that theatre is an ephemeral art, but believes that “the material collected in a theatre archive can help one to reimagine a production and gain an insight into the working methods of the performers and the production team” (National Theatre, n.d.b).

Its archive is devoted to preserving all documentation on the institution’s productions from its inception in 1963 to the present. The material found in the archive ranges from programmes, posters and designs to video and sound recordings of productions and their creative teams. The archive is open to the public by appointment and, like most archives, researchers may only view the documentation on the premises in a designated viewing room equipped with monitors and headphones to study material (National Theatre, n.d.c). Each department in the National Theatre is responsible for organizing its documentation, while the head archivist arranges the transfer of material from each department to the archive.

It is also interesting to note that many institutions and organisations that have embraced the digital era in their archiving efforts have also begun to see the value of collaboration. One such example is the Routledge Performance Archive, launched in 2012, which is a collaborative effort between Routledge and Digital Theatre UK. The archive is still in its infancy and subscriptions are currently reserved for educational institutions, but the archive is unique in that it provides “access to an unprecedented range of audio-visual material from past and present practitioners” (Routledge Performance Archive, n.d).

As briefly mentioned in Chapter Two, Digital Theatre UK is an online initiative that works in partnership with London’s foremost theatres to record live theatre and offer it online in downloadable format. According to Wade (2011: 56), the production team works in partnership with theatre staff and uses up to 13 cameras to record two performances of a play, which are then edited into one version to be placed online for purchase or rental.

Similar to that of the NT Live project, one of Digital Theatre’s primary aims is to take theatre to the segment of the theatre-going public that is unable to travel to London’s most prestigious theatres to see productions. According to Delamere (in Wade 2011: 57), the “Digital Theatre venture has reached the global marketplace, used in over 106 countries”. Apart from expanding its potential audience and revenue, Digital Theatre realizes that its work is valuable for research and serves an important educational purpose. It is perhaps due to this very reason that Digital Theatre and Routledge have joined forces in developing a rich resource of audio-visual material in the Routledge Performance Archive.

In Europe, initiatives such as the European Collected Library of Artistic Performance (ECLAP) (launched in 2010) have begun to embrace digital technology to promote and preserve the performing arts. Many performing arts institutions publish their collections online, but in a sense remain dislocated. ECLAP is unique in that it functions as a kind of middleman or link between performing arts archive collections and libraries throughout Europe:

The richness and value of the European performing arts heritage is unquestionable. Even though these collections are now being digitized and published online, they remain scattered, and coordination is lacking between digital libraries and the performing arts field; however, there is a high demand for access to this content. ECLAP fills this gap by creating a considerable, and hitherto missing, online archive for all the performing arts in Europe, and providing solutions and tools to help performing arts institutions to enter the digital Europe by building a network of important European performing arts institutions and archives and publishing content collections on Europeana, the European Digital Library (ECLAP, n.d).

Essentially, ECLAP is an e-library that houses resources from leading European performing arts institutions or provides portals to access their collections. ECLAP chair Paolo Nesi (2012: xi) notes:

By creating a seamless and centralised online database, ECLAP is providing access to the Performing-Arts collections and archives of its project partners, amongst which are many of the leading institutions in the field. An ever-growing part of these resources is becoming accessible through a common, multilingual, easy-to-use ECLAP e-Library for the Performing Arts.

ECLAP shows how collaboration among various institutions can make a significant contribution to preserving performing arts documentation in a continent with a rich cultural history. However, using the latest digital technology to do so comes with challenges. ECLAP networking coordinator Rafaella Santucci argues that an interdisciplinary approach to the ECLAP project is needed, but finding a team that is knowledgeable in both IT and performing arts fields is difficult. Santucci (2012: xii) notes:

On the one hand, the risk is that humanities scholars ignore, overlook or oversimplify technical issues; on the other hand, IT people are not necessarily aware of the problems and of the needs that are specific of (*sic*) the Performing Arts.

4.3 Theatre-video archives in the US: TOFT and WAPAVA

It is evident that performing arts archives are beginning to embrace the digital era: many are becoming increasingly electronic, while seeking partners in other industries to make their content more easily accessible via the internet. Before the internet had an impact on the preservation of the performing arts, institutions devoted to archiving theatre looked to other alternatives. An interesting trend to come out of the US is the establishment of theatre-video archives.

In 1970, Betty Corwin, founded the Theatre on Film and Tape (TOFT) archive, an initiative devoted to making video recordings of live theatre productions on Broadway, Off-Broadway and regional theatres that will be stored in the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at the Lincoln Centre. The archive is very clear in its intent, which is to capture live performance on video for the purpose of preserving it for posterity and research. In a 2010 article published in the *New York Post*, the TOFT director, Patrick Hoffman, made clear what the archive aimed to achieve: “We’re not trying to create an artistic work. We’re trying to create an archival document”.

The TOFT archive is the first of its kind and has recorded roughly 60 productions a year since its inception in 1970. According to Krieger (2013), the archive is also the largest of its kind, housing 7,400 titles. The recordings are primarily reserved for academics, students and theatre practitioners who are given access to the productions only by appointment and can only view the recordings in designated viewing rooms equipped with monitors and headphones. Apart from full-length productions, the archive also houses other theatre-related recordings. According to Ney (1999: 48), visitors also have access to film and television programming related to theatre, as well as interviews with renowned theatre practitioners.

The TOFT archive had humble beginnings and recorded a production with one camera on a 200 dollar budget consisting of funds raised by Betty Corwin herself. According to Corwin (in Gerard 1987), the library agreed to her TOFT archive proposal because the idea of making video recordings of stage plays on a small scale seemed financially feasible. By the early 1970s institutions such as the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council started to make contributions, and later private foundations followed suit (Gerard 1987). The archive, however, remains largely dependent on donations made to the New York Public Library for the Arts.

Once Corwin had the library on board, she went through very lengthy negotiations with the theatre unions. Ney (1999: 48) elaborates on the basic agreement the TOFT archive has made with the Actors Equity Association and six other unions:

Tapes of all performances must be viewed on-site, under the supervision of a staff member; other than the master copy (for preservation) and a viewing copy, no other copies may be made; tapes can be viewed only by those who have a valid reason to do so; written permissions must be obtained by all Equity [i.e. Actors Equity Association] members involved in the production.

Once Corwin had managed to secure the rights, a mode of production had to be established to record the productions. According to Corwin (in Gerard 1987), the Actors Equity Association initially proved to be very adamant that productions be recorded by a single camera only, but its stance soon changed when the stage directors convinced the association that the archive needed at least two cameras to make a satisfactory recording.

Today, a recording by the TOFT archive costs around 16,000 dollars. The production team, led by director and curator of the archive Patrick Hoffman, aim to record 50 – 60 productions each year. Once a show has been identified for recording, Hoffman (who acts as producer) sees the show live at least once and then spends several weeks making all the necessary arrangements. According to Krieger (2013), the director of a recording will attend a production at least three times and then acquire the script to mark key moments in the action.

Productions are recorded in real time and there is almost no editing in post-production. Hoffman (in Krieger 2013) notes: “We want to feel the crackle and spark of a live event”. The director of the recording is accompanied by an assistant director who follows the script, while the director has to focus on the three cameras and give the operators the necessary instructions. According to Krieger (2013), it is up to the director to react to the action on stage and he/she is responsible for instructing the camera operators when to zoom in, pull back, or capture a reaction or follow a certain character.

It is interesting to note that the archive has become very popular among practitioners, who often consult the recordings when preparing for a specific project. Hoffman (in Olshan 2010) refers to actor Liev Schreiber as one of the more notable examples of a practitioner who used the archive while preparing for a Broadway revival of David Mamet’s acclaimed play *Glengarry Glen Ross*. Schreiber later won a Tony Award for his performance and now regularly uses the archive as part of his preparation process (Hoffman in Olshan 2010).

The archive appears to have proved itself as a very useful research resource and makes no claim to be offering quality entertainment.

In 1993 the theatre-video archive initiative spread to Washington DC, where former urban planner Jim Taylor decided to give up his work and devote himself to the local theatre industry. Taylor established the Washington Area Performing Arts Video Archive (WAPAVA), which describes itself as a “non-profit organization dedicated to documenting theatre and performing arts in the DC-region” (University of Maryland, n.d).

According to LaPorte (2010), apart from the TOFT archive, WAPAVA is the only other organization that has secured permission from Actors Equity Association to record and archive copies of live professional performances. Like the TOFT archive, WAPAVA is responsible for raising its own funds, being largely dependent on donations from both the private and public sectors. The archive’s advisory board is responsible for identifying the productions that are to be recorded each season. The board consists of theatre enthusiasts, critics and academics who discuss the candidates electronically, after which suggestions are forwarded to an executive committee that makes the final selection, which is determined by the productions’ “historical and educational value” (University of Maryland, n.d).

Once the productions have been identified, a professional videographer will attend a production at least three times. LaPorte (2010) notes that the first visit is “to become familiar with the show, the second to rehearse through the lens and the third to shoot the performance”. Productions are usually recorded in one take with a single camera with little post-production editing due to financial constraints. Similar to those of the TOFT archive, the WAPAVA recordings are only accessible by appointment and can only be viewed in one of two holding locations: the Michelle Smith Performing Arts Library at the University of Maryland and, the Martin Luther King Jnr. Memorial Library. The president of the advisory board, Stephen Jarrett, believes that the archive is valuable for research and primarily aimed at scholars and practitioners. Jarret (in LaPorte 2010) notes that “it takes a fair amount of sophistication to watch a videotape of a play to have an idea of what the play was. It’s something for informed people”.

4.4 The deterioration of theatre archiving in South Africa

In their 2013 article “South African Drama and Theatre Heritage”, Keuris and Krüger argue that there are three major concerns regarding theatre archiving in South Africa:

Firstly, The Centre for Information on The Arts (SACIA) collection, which functioned as a clearing house for the performing arts from 1971 to the late 1980's, might become inaccessible in the National Archives, where it is now held. Secondly, there is no easily accessible documentation on South African theatre between the late 1980's and the recent present and, thirdly, we do not have a system in place to document theatre currently performed (Keuris & Krüger 2013a: 1).

The three most notable collections of documentation on Afrikaans theatre are the South African Centre for Information on the Arts's (SACIA) collection, the collection held by the Nasionale Afrikaanse Letterkundige Museum en Navorsingsentrum (NALN), and the National Drama Library's collection in Bloemfontein. The last two decades have seen these institutions go through significant structural changes in the New South Africa, and there is growing concern over their ability to properly collect and preserve theatre documentation.

The SACIA's collection derives from a collection that was built up by the former National Documentation Centre for the Performing Arts (NDCPA) established by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in 1971 under the leadership of P.J. Nienaber and P.P.B. Breytenbach. The NDCPA devoted itself to collecting and archiving documents related to South African theatre and performance (ESAT, n.d.c).

The NDCPA proved to be the first formal archiving system for South African theatre, which Keuris and Krüger (2013a: 5) argue is very curious, since the Provincial Arts Councils that were active from 1961 to 1994 had the financial resources and infrastructure to develop their own archiving systems. In 1973 Nienaber left his position at the HSRC to establish NALN in Bloemfontein, while Rinie Stead replaced him at the HSRC. After a six-year spell at the HSRC, Stead retired, while newly appointed Temple Hauptfleisch re-focussed the centre and renamed it the Centre for South African Theatre Research (CESAT). The new centre still fulfilled the role of collecting and archiving theatre documentation, but assumed a more active research role and launched a series of research projects in the following years (ESAT, n.d.a).

1989 marked a major turning point for theatre archiving in South Africa as the HSRC decided to dismantle the individual research centres such as CESAT and the Centre for South African Literature Research and established one centre for all of the performing arts in South Africa. The newly established South African Centre for Information on the Arts (SACIA) consolidated all the content of the previous centres and moved it to a new archival space (ESAT, n.d.e).

By 1991 great controversy ensued when the HSRC decided to move the SACIA collection to the National Film, Video and Sound Archives (NFVSA) in Pretoria. Among other things, the HSRC cited low frequency of use as one of the main reasons for moving the SACIA collection, and also argued that the collection would prove more accessible in the NFVSA (ESAT, n.d.e). In a 1991 article in *Beeld* HSRC marketing and media manager Robert van der Kooy assured concerned parties that the new location had better storage space, a more sophisticated fire extinguisher system, and a more-than-capable staff to make the collection as accessible as possible.

Former employees of the HSRC were outraged. Astrid Schwenke, a former manager of the SACIA databases, found the low frequency of use claims to be very curious, since the archive had frequent enquiries from researchers. Schwenke (1991) notes, “Die aantal navorsers, studente, academici asook buitelandse uitgewers wat van die inligting en visuele materiaal gebruik gemaak het, is ontsaglik” [The number of researchers, students, academics and foreign publishers that made use of the information and visual material is vast].

Another aspect that caused great controversy surrounding the move to the NFVSA was that the donors of the documents were not consulted or informed in any way. This caused great embarrassment for someone like Nienaber, who had assured those who donated documents that their material would be properly preserved and made accessible to the public. Nienaber was, however, no longer affiliated to the HSRC and the move was out of his hands. Nienaber (1991) notes, “Ek wil graag hê die skenkers aan wie ek destydes beloftes gemaak het moet weet dat ek is nie in die jongste besluite geken nie. Ek weet nie wat hulle nou van my dink nie, maar dit is buite my beheer. Ek wou hulle nie mislei het nie” [I would like all the donors to whom I made a promise to know that I was not informed about the latest decisions. I do not know what they think of me now, but it is beyond my control. I did not intend to mislead them].

The move also brought with it a significant change in the makeup of the SACIA-staff. According to Erasmus (1991), some of the 11 permanent SACIA staff members were moved to different departments in the HSRC and it was decisions such as these that distressed Rinie Stead the most. Stead (1991) argues that the HSRC had developed a specialised research team of 11 to manage the SACIA and she has trouble believing that a new, reduced number of staff members could emulate the same level of work at the NFVSA. Unfortunately, that which all had feared became reality. The SACIA collection gradually become stagnant at its

new location. According to Marais (2009: 91), the newly restructured HSRC aimed to only undertake research projects that were financed by an external sponsor, and funding for research on the arts and especially theatre went into rapid decline.

The other major institution that has devoted itself to preserving Afrikaans theatre documentation is NALN. Today it is the only existing museum and research facility for Afrikaans theatre in the country (ESAT, n.d.d). NALN differed from the former NDCPA in that it devoted itself solely to Afrikaans literature and drama, and had the facilities to preserve and display not only documentation, but also larger objects, furniture and memorabilia (Keuris & Krüger 2013a: 6).

In recent years NALN has received a fair amount of media attention following its ongoing policy changes and seeming mismanagement. Van Bart (2010) believes the controversy started when the Free State government gained control of the museum and initiated a process of transformation in which the new NALN would include a Sotho cultural history museum. Steyn (2007) argues that the initiative is noble in its intent, but its execution has been problematic, with staff members being transferred to work in the new Sotho section while being ill equipped to do so. Staff members who have been vital to the functionality of the Afrikaans section were transferred and no attempt was made to replace them (Steyn 2007). The future of NALN became a growing concern and by 2010 the Suid Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns approached the Erfenisstigting (Heritage Foundation) to intervene, after which a project was launched to upgrade and restructure NALN.

Another institution that has made a major contribution to preservation of documentation on Afrikaans drama is the National Drama Library, formed in 1970, when the board of the Bloemfontein Public Library decided that drama section was to be separated and moved to a new location (ESAT, n.d.d). The library houses the largest selection of plays in the southern hemisphere and its initial policy dictated that it purchase copies of all published South African plays. As industry changes started to affect the number of new works being published, the library decided to adjust its policy and collect unpublished South African plays, after meetings with partnering Afrikaans archival institutions (ESAT, n.d.d).

The library also houses information on the plays and playwrights, as well as on the productions of the plays. In 2005 the library also launched an online catalogue of its collection holdings. However, despite the noble efforts of the library to preserve Afrikaans

drama, its collection consists mainly of written documents, and Keuris and Krüger (2013a: 8) argue that this collection is not comprehensive.

Apart from the deterioration of these notable archival institutions, it is also evident that an emphasis is placed on the preservation of literary documentation, perhaps with the exception of NALN. Very little mention is made of an attempt to acquire and preserve audio-visual material on theatre. It is also alarming that Afrikaans arts festivals do not attempt more in terms of archiving, since almost all Afrikaans theatre occurs at these annual events. This is apparent when using the two largest Afrikaans festivals as examples: the Absa KKNK and Clover Aardklop festivals. According to Keuris and Krüger (2013a: 8), the KKNK maintains a form of archive, but its collection is only accessible on “special request”. Its content is also fairly limited in that it mainly preserves hard copies of the applications and texts of the productions performed at the festival, while Aardklop only keeps a copy of festival newspapers and programmes (Keuris & Krüger 2013a: 8).

4.5 The way forward: NALN and the South African Drama and Theatre Heritage project

In 2010 two projects were launched to better the deteriorating situation at NALN. The first was a project concerned with the digitization of NALN documentation conducted by the University of the Free State. According to Senekal (2011), the project is funded by the private sector and aims to digitize an estimated 300,000 documents consisting mostly of newspaper clippings and magazine and journal articles. Senekal (2011) notes that the project’s primary aim is to “enhance NALN’s preservation function” and to enable “more efficient distribution of information to researchers overseas”.

After its first year, the project realized that the process of digitization is a lengthy one and comes with its own challenges. Senekal (2011) argues that one of the main lessons the project has learnt is that it must strive to remain adaptable. Electronic infrastructure is constantly developing and changing, and it is important for the project to establish a sustainable system that will be flexible enough to keep up with international technological developments and trends.

The other major project launched to improve the deteriorating situation at NALN is the “korttermyn-ingrypingsplan” (KTIP) [short-term intervention plan] conducted by the Erfenisstigting. The Erfenisstigting is a non-profit organization that protects institutions,

buildings and monuments that are of cultural and historical value to the Afrikaans language and its speakers (Erfenisstiging, n.d.b).

The main objective of the organization was to remove NALN from the regional control of the Free State provincial government and re-establish the centre at national level. While this remained the long-term goal, the organization raised R3, 000 000 in private sector funds to launch the KTIP at NALN to achieve certain short-term goals. According to the Erfenisstiging CEO Gert Opperman (in Bruwer 2010), the organization and provincial government reached an agreement in which the government would contract the organization as a service provider in terms of which its main task would be to reorganize the documentation and clean and restore the physical NALN building.

The responsibility of the digitization project was also transferred from the university to the organization, and Opperman (in Bruwer 2010) estimates that the process would take at least two years. The KTIP also started the process of training staff members to be better equipped to perform their tasks after R120, 000 was spent on upgrading the centre's IT equipment. Significant progress was made at NALN, but unfortunately the Free State government did not extend the contract with the organization after the first year (Erfenisstiging, n.d.a). As a result the relationship between the provincial government and the organization has turned sour. In a 2012 article in *Volksblad*, Mike van Rooyen argues that there is, however, still hope for future collaboration, because the situation improved when the two parties finally managed to arrange a meeting, after which future meetings were scheduled. The situation is yet to be resolved.

Another promising theatre archive initiative recently launched is the South African Theatre Heritage Project under the leadership of Marisa Keuris and Lida Krüger in association with the University of South Africa (UNISA). The project aims:

To establish and mobilise a network of partners across the country who will assist in preserving and developing our country's drama and theatre heritage. We are firstly trying to establish a database of current collections and secondly, to establish a safe repository of any drama or theatre material in the UNISA Library Archive (UNISA, n.d).

Keuris and Krüger (2013b: 3) argue that it unnecessary to have one "memory site" for all theatre documentation and one only needs a virtual repository that can serve as a link between the repositories of all the various institutions. Along with the UNISA Library Archive, Keuris and Krüger will attempt to establish such a repository.

The project is still in its infancy, having been launched very recently, and Keuris and Krüger (2013b: 7) note that two main steps have to be taken before the archive is formally established. Firstly, the project has to identify where information on South African theatre and drama is preserved, what these collections consist of, and how accessible and active these repositories are. Secondly, the project has to adopt an active heritage role by inviting practitioners to donate material. Naturally, the archive will not have the capacity to accommodate all possible formats of documentation, but it will consider all material and after consultation with UNISA's archivists, a decision will be made as to what is the appropriate and most relevant documentation to be preserved.

Although still in its elementary phase, the project seems to have made a good start when considering that it has managed to secure important documentation on Afrikaans works. The UNISA Library Archive currently houses documentation from the Sunnyside Teaterhuisie (1995 – 2002) formerly run by veteran actor couple Carel Trichardt and Petru Wessels; festival programmes and selected production programmes and posters from the Clover Aardklop festival from 2000 to 2012; and scripts and photos from well-known and award-winning practitioner Nicola Hanekom's site-specific trilogy, *Betesda*, *Lot* and *Babbel* (UNISA, n.d).

4.6 Conclusion

After examining international trends in the field of performing arts archives and libraries, it is evident that South Africa is not on a par with international standards. This should not come as a surprise, because our performing arts institutions do not enjoy the same financial resources available to similar institutions in America and Europe. It is also alarming that very little attempt is made to collect and preserve audio-visual documentation on South African theatre and performance. It appears that NALN is one of the few institutions that preserve such material. Among the valuable documentation in its collection is two of the most recent television documentaries that are concerned with South African theatre history, the one being Herman Binge's *Die tweede lewe* (1999) covering the history of Afrikaans theatre and the future of the industry in the new South Africa, and the other Albert Maritz and Neil Sandilands' *Impressario* (2009), a documentary honouring veteran practitioners in the South African theatre and film industry (ESAT, n.d.b).

It would be possible to emulate the theatre-video archives in America, because they are less time consuming, more cost-effective and more easily sustainable than television programmes.

Such an initiative would require small production crews, very few rehearsals and the minimum of equipment.

Video recordings are a valuable research resource, but are not suitable for commercial use and have little entertainment value. However, it is possible to argue that a combination of a commercial approach and an archival one can be achieved. The broadcaster would enjoy commercial rights on the productions, but after they have been aired they could be stored in an archival space for research purposes. The archives of a broadcaster such as KykNET are under enormous pressure, and going into a partnership with an institution such as NALN, which is better equipped for preserving documentation, could be mutually beneficial to both parties. A broadcaster's archives can also prove quite difficult to access and one usually needs financial resources to acquire footage or full-length programmes.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONSTRUCTING A PROPOSED MODE OF OPERATION FOR A SEASON OF AFRIKAANS THEATRE ON TELEVISION

5.1 Introduction

Before any form of translation of theatre to screen can occur, the producers must be clear in their intent. The study set out to investigate the possibility of translating Afrikaans theatre to television for the purpose of promoting and documenting theatre in Afrikaans. The idea is to expose audiences to the work showcased at the various arts festivals and, it is hoped, generate an interest in attending and supporting Afrikaans theatre. Television adaptations of stage plays are common practise and have been done locally and abroad, but are usually more expensive and time consuming than live recordings.

Initiatives such as NT Live have shown that live performance recorded on stage can be highly entertaining and have been received with great enthusiasm by critics and the general public. In South Africa, audience response to a television series such as *Proesstraat* has shown that there is potential for live performance on South African television. In this chapter the study will therefore propose a mode of operation for a translation of Afrikaans theatre to television recorded on stage. In constructing such a proposal the study has consulted the NT Live initiative's mode of production as case study for a South African model. The study has also approached local television producer Herman Binge (Lion's Head Productions), who has over 30 years of television production experience, to assist in constructing a proposed mode of operation and help the study gain a better understanding of how a model such as the National Theatre's can be adjusted for television in a South African context.

5.2 Series content and format

Before a production team can begin the process of translating Afrikaans theatre productions to television, the creators first have to identify the particular productions that will be part of the series. If such a series is to be produced, it would be impossible to include all of the productions at the Afrikaans arts festivals, as there are simply too many. Elements such as style, genre, scale and commercial appeal all have to be taken into consideration before a final decision can be made. The ideal would be to offer a series of productions that vary in these elements to give the television audience an idea of the diversity of work presented at the arts festivals.

If one takes the NT Live pilot season, for example, it is evident that an attempt has been made to offer a variety of productions. The inaugural season of NT Live consisted of *Phèdre* (Jean Racine), *All's Well Ends Well* (William Shakespeare), *The Habit of Art* (Allan Bennett), *Nation* (Terry Pratchett; stage adaptation by Mark Ravenhill) and *London Assurance* (Dion Boucicault) (NESTA 2011: 13). The line-up is diverse in that it consists of texts of different genre's and styles that are both contemporary and classical.

It would be ideal to emulate this kind of diverse line-up in Afrikaans, including Afrikaans translations of classical works and original Afrikaans works. However, it is important to understand that television is essentially a commercial medium. Binge (2013) notes:

Elke projek wat die televisiekanaal aanpak is 'n finansiële belegging as gevolg van die hoë vervaardigingskoste en die uitsaaier moet soveel as moontlik van sy kostes by die uitsending verhaal om vir sy aandeelhouers 'n wins te verseker. So'n mens kan verwag dat die uitsaaier toeganklike, maklik verteerbare, kommersiële stukke sal verkies wat binne die smaak van die grootste moontlike segment van die beskikbare gehoor sal val.

[Every project that a television channel undertakes is a financial investment because of the high production cost. The broadcaster has to cover as much of the costs by broadcasting to ensure its shareholders of a profit. So, one can assume that the broadcaster would prefer accessible, easily digestible, commercial pieces that will fall within the tastes of the largest possible segment of the available audience].

It is, however, possible that a compromise could be reached and the correct balance achieved. Binge (2013) argues that productions that are newsworthy and create media attention during festivals will also ensure a potential market for the broadcaster. It is often more unconventional and controversial productions that do so, and some controversy can also make for good television. The reality is that the final decision of the content to be included would rest with the broadcaster and will have to be negotiated between the production team, broadcaster and the festival. Elements such as recording and copy rights will also have to be taken into consideration and will have an influence on what productions are chosen for the series.

Binge (2013) argues that the standard procedure of obtaining copy right for television is the same as with theatre, and, therefore, suggests that an agreement be built into the contract between the theatre producers and the festival. Binge (2013) notes, "Ek sou voorstel dat daai klousule gewoon uitgebrei word om 'n televisieuitsending in te sluit" [I would suggest that that particular clause (concerning copy right) merely be elaborated on to include a television

broadcast]. The contract would have to state that the copy right holder of a particular text has agreed to the possibility of being included in a season of Afrikaans theatre productions to be broadcast on television.

Binge (2013) suggests that the theatre production be compensated for by paying it an amount equivalent to two sold-out performances, because the television production team would possibly have to record two full performances of a single production before broadcast. In other words, the theatre production will be assured of two full houses before the festival has started. An alternative is to pay the practitioners in call fees (daily rate), but Binge (2013) argues that it is very likely that it will prove to be less beneficial to the theatre ensemble. The copy right holders receive royalties each time a particular text is performed and in the case of the television performances, they will receive royalties on the amount (two sold-out performances) paid to the practitioners.

Once the recordings have been made the rights on the recording will belong to the broadcaster. According to Binge (2013), the standard contract with KykNET, for example, states that the broadcaster has rights on the recording “in perpetuity”. Like most pay-television channels, KykNET is very dependent on income generated by rebroadcasts. Binge (2013) argues that it is because KykNET is unable to reach an audience on the scale that a free-to-air channel such as the SABC is, and therefore has to rebroadcast a particular programme at various times during the day to reach the largest possible segment of its available audience. The producers, production team and cast members do not however receive repeat fees for these broadcasts.

According to Binge (2013), there is an ongoing dispute between actor unions and pay-television channels such as KykNET about this particular issue. The reality is, that if the broadcaster had to compensate for each repeated broadcast it would be unable to sustain a financially viable existence. Binge (2013) notes that it is not a South African phenomena, but that it is the case with most pay-television channels around the world. It is very likely that certain practitioners and copy right holders will be unwilling to agree to such an arrangement, but Binge (2013) argues that it has become standard procedure, and that it is unlikely that an alternative could be negotiated with the broadcaster.

The television series is an established format and the duration of the theatre productions will also have an influence on which productions are chosen for the series. If one takes the drama series produced by KykNET, for example, the standard appears to be 13 60-minute episodes

per drama series. According to Binge (2013), a television channel usually divides its yearly schedule into four terms, with each term consisting of three months or 13 weeks. It is therefore fitting that a series would consist of 13 episodes to fill a term in the schedule. Binge (2013) notes that the universally adopted norm is that television channels divide their daily schedule into 30-minute segments. For each segment the channel will allocate two advertisement breaks of approximately two minutes each. In other words, a 30-minute programme will usually consist of 24 (with a maximum of 26) minutes of screen time to leave at least four minutes for advertisements. Binge (2013) notes that in South Africa, 60-minute programmes usually consist of 48 minutes of screen time, while 90-minute programmes are allocated 72 minutes. In the case of pay-television channels such as KykNET, the broadcaster will schedule advertisements at the beginning and end of the film, while free-to-air channels such as the SABC channels and e-TV tend to schedule advertisements during a film.

Due to scheduling difficulties caused by the number of productions that have to play during a short space of time at an arts festival, most theatre makers have conformed to a trend of keeping productions as short as possible. If one takes the 2013 Clover Aardklop festival, for example, of the 35 productions listed in the festival's programme under "Toneel" [Theatre], 29 were under 90 minutes in length, of which 13 (the majority) ran for between 70 and 80 minutes (Clover Aardklop, 2013). It is therefore evident that practitioners aim not to exceed the 90-minute mark when producing works for festivals.

Prior to the broadcast of each NT Live production there is a short behind-the-scenes documentary insert consisting of rehearsal footage and interviews with the author, director and cast members. This is effective in that it places the production in context for the cinema audience, giving them a kind of 'backstage pass'. Unlike Britain and the US, South Africa no longer has a strong theatre-going culture, and it is possible to argue that the general public is not particularly theatre literate. Including a short documentary insert on the origins of a particular production might be very insightful and will, it is hoped, give the spectator at home the sense of being given 'inside information'.

Binge (2013) suggests identifying four festivals (for example, ABSA KKNK, Clover Aardklop, Woordfees and Vryfees) and selecting three productions per festival (one will have four) to be translated as part of the series: possibly one large-scale production, one smaller production ('one man shows' and 'two handers') and a 'wildcard' production. The wildcard

slot could be reserved for a production that surprised audiences at the festival and generated unexpected interest, and could be allocated as an award for innovative work at the festival's prize-giving event. The study is aware of the fact that certain productions perform at more than one festival. It is possible to argue that if recordings of productions are aired on television before a particular production has completed its run on the festival circuit it could have a negative influence on audience attendance. The broadcaster and the festival will have to come to an agreement as to how long after the festival these productions are aired on television.

The study suggests that the proposed series work within a 90-minute framework for television. Most of the productions at festivals work within this time frame, which will allow a few minutes for behind-the-scenes footage to be included. It might prove challenging to adjust certain productions to a 90-minute framework, but Binge (2013) argues that the format is fairly negotiable when working with a pay-television or satellite channel such as KykNET. A satellite channel usually intends to create as much airtime as possible at the lowest possible cost, and unlike KykNET (a DSTV channel), the SABC has a social responsibility to educate, inform and entertain, which it has to do in various languages. It is therefore understandable that its schedule is a lot fuller than that of a commercial satellite channel, and it would be highly unlikely that the SABC would accommodate a series of 13, 90-minute episodes of Afrikaans theatre.

5.3 Constructing a mode of operation: production possibilities

The National Theatre prioritizes its cinema audience when recording productions. With NT Live's pilot season, Nicholas Hytner "insisted on flexible camera positions that could offer screen audiences the best seats in the house" (NESTA 2011: 18). The theatre audience pay a reduced fee for tickets as compensation for the fact that their view of the stage may be affected by the camera positions and movement. It would be possible to adopt the same philosophy with a television production. However, it is possible to argue that the National Theatre's production process is made easier by the fact it enjoys the luxury of being able to record in large, state-of-the-art theatres.

In most cases, perhaps with the exception of the Vryfees in Bloemfontein, arts festival venues consist of school halls, church halls and lecture halls which are not ideal to perform or record performance in. The Vryfees is privileged because it is one of the few festivals that is able to offer fully functional theatres as performance venues to the practitioners.

Since most festival venues were not designed for theatre performances, their acoustics usually prove to be problematic and they are mostly ill-equipped in terms of technical facilities. In most cases, the festival has to hire additional equipment to compensate for the venues' technical shortcomings. If a production commissioned by KKNK, for example, is to have a run at the Vryfees it could be possible to arrange that the production rather be recorded in Bloemfontein, given the Vryfees's superior infrastructure, but the production would still be broadcast and advertised as a 'KKNK production'.

Depending on whether the productions are recorded during or after the festival (which will be discussed later in the chapter), it could be possible to approach the local community to attend these recordings at a discount price. The communities of festival towns such as Oudtshoorn (KKNK) and Potchefstroom (Aardklop) often do not get the opportunity to see theatre during festival week because they rent their homes out as accommodation to artists and people attending the festival.

The NT Live initiative believes collaboration between the camera crew and theatre staff to be essential to the success of its transmissions. It is interesting to note that most of the examples discussed in Chapter Three, were translations directed by stage directors who had little or no experience in television or film production, and it is perhaps one of the reasons these translations experienced so many technical difficulties. Binge (2013) suggests appointing an experienced television director, preferably one from a theatrical background, because the project would essentially be a television production and, therefore, more suitable for a television director with the necessary technical expertise. A collaborative effort between screen and stage director would be the ideal, with the television director responsible for all technical elements and the stage director acting as an advisor in translating interpretation and performance.

As referred to in Chapter Two, NESTA (2011: 18) notes that the NT Live integrates "the broadcast elements into the theatre production process, establishing a close collaboration between the camera director and the stage director, as well as the wider theatre creative team". It could perhaps also be beneficial for the core group of the production team (possibly the director, director of photography and sound technician) to attend a rehearsal of the stage production before it is to be performed at the festival. This could possibly enable these core members to discuss the recording possibilities of the production. It would also be essential for

these core members to attend the festival to see how the productions are staged and do the necessary technical planning.

The National Theatre's production team uses up to eight cameras when recording a production. It would, however, prove difficult to emulate this kind of scale on South African television. Binge (2013) argues that five cameras would be ideal, one covering the wide angle, one camera on a "dollie" (a camera that moves from side to side in front of the proscenium), two cameras on opposite sides of the proscenium and a single camera for capturing audience reactions. This would be similar to the camera setup of a series such as *Proesstraat* and one that is perhaps not unfamiliar to KykNET.

As previously stated, most of the studied examples in Chapter Three experienced major technical difficulties, with the sound proving to be the greatest concern. Most of the practitioners referred to in Chapter Three attributed the sound difficulties to budget constraints. Binge (2013) argues that radio microphones provide the best sound quality, but can become problematic when used in live performances. They are incredibly sensitive and the slightest physical contact can cause great noise in the speakers. One also needs the services of an experienced sound mixer who can mix between the various microphones to ensure that none of the speeches is lost and that perspectives between characters are maintained in relation to their positions on stage. Binge (2013) suggests that one should not attempt to 'hide' the microphones, but should use them so that there is as little physical contact as possible (for example, the microphone could be taped to the actor's cheek, with the broadcast unit attached securely around the actor's waist or to his/her back).

A cheaper and perhaps more practical alternative to sound production could be the use of a network of 'omni-directional' microphones that could be hung from the lighting grid on stage. Binge (2013) notes that this approach is often adopted when recording symphony orchestras and choirs, where many performers have to be accommodated on stage.

Many of the examples discussed in Chapter Three also cited a lack of rehearsals as an obstacle in their translations. According to NESTA (2011: 24), the NT Live production team has two full camera rehearsals before each live broadcast. After each rehearsal the production team views the recording, after which notes are given and the necessary adjustments made to the camera script. However, the National Theatre's budget allows for the production team to plan months in advance and spend weeks on preparations for the live broadcast of a single production.

In the case of recording plays at the arts festivals, Binge (2013) argues that it would be most cost-effective to limit production to two or three days, depending on the scale and length of the chosen theatre productions. Binge (2013) suggests that one devote one day to a technical rehearsal and ‘walk-through’ and have a dress rehearsal and final recording on the second day.

5.4 Three possible production models

It is perhaps important to distinguish between two main approaches when making a live recording of a theatre production on stage: recording and broadcasting live, or recording a production ‘as live’ and broadcasting a delayed, edited version. Both possibilities have their advantages and challenges, yet both could adopt the production possibilities discussed in the previous section. After examining how the National Theatre’s production elements can be adjusted in the context of South African television, and with the help of a local television producer, the study has constructed three possible approaches to recording live theatre productions for Afrikaans television at annual arts festivals.

5.4.1 Single venue model (after the festival; delayed broadcast)

After the productions to be recorded have been identified, a single venue is chosen to record each of them. Once each production has concluded its run at the festival, its set is moved to the designated venue. The first day is reserved for a technical rehearsal and ‘stagger-through’ in which technical elements such as lighting, sound, and camera options are tested and a camera script developed. The following day the production team has a final dress rehearsal that is recorded, after which the ‘final’ recording is made in front of the live auditorium audience. Once the recording has been done, the audience leaves the auditorium and the production team do pick-ups of sections of the production that proved problematic.

One of the advantages of using a single venue is that the television crew will have more time for their work and more control over the technical aspects of the venue. Binge (2013) argues that this will enable the television crew to adjust the lighting, hang microphones and install platforms for the cameras to operate from. The use of a single venue will also be of benefit to the festival organizers, because only one venue’s infrastructure will have to remain operational after the festival has ended. The disadvantage of using a single venue is that it will prove quite an adjustment for the theatre practitioners. Theatre practitioners are usually aware of their assigned venue months prior to the festival, which gives them adequate time to make the necessary adjustments. In other words, many of the shows are created with a

specific venue in mind, and moving the productions to a different venue in such a short space of time could prove quite a challenge. A possible solution would be for the festival organisers to schedule these productions to perform in the designated venue during the festival, but this would be subject to negotiation.

Binge (2013) notes that another advantage of this model is that it allows the television producers to have more control over the ‘final’ product, since they are able to edit the recording in post-production to ensure that the best possible coverage of the production is included in the broadcast. However, post-production is a lengthy and costly process and the producers would acquire the services of a highly skilled editor who has experience in live recordings.

5.4.2 Travelling model (after the festival; delayed broadcast)

Each production is recorded in the venue it was performed in during the festival, with the television crew moving from one venue to the next. The same rehearsal process is followed as in the single venue model, with a recording of the dress rehearsal and a ‘final’ recording in front of a live auditorium audience with the option of pick-ups after the audience has left.

Binge (2013) argues that moving between venues will be beneficial to the theatre practitioners, who will work in a space that they have settled into and feel comfortable with. A possible disadvantage is that it will restrict the television crew’s control over the technical workings of the venue and give them less time to make the necessary adjustments. Festivals rarely have proper theatres, and practitioners usually have to put on their productions in venues such as school halls, lecture rooms and church halls, which are far from ideal for the theatre practitioners and the camera crew.

It is likely that it will prove to be more practical to make these recordings with an “outside broadcast unit” (essentially a portable studio) (Binge 2013). This is a more expensive way of working, but Binge (2013) notes that a broadcaster such as KykNET usually sends such a unit to festivals. The advantage of using such a unit is that it eliminates editing and post-production, because the footage can be packaged live in the unit.

5.4.3 Live broadcast model (during the festival; live broadcast)

Each production is recorded and broadcast live after or during the festival in front of a live auditorium audience. This model could follow the same rehearsal principle as the single

venue and travelling models, but it is likely that this approach would need more technical rehearsals.

It is arguably the most exciting model because it will come the closest to emulating the live theatrical experience. Viewers at home will enjoy the thrill of knowing that the production on their television screens is simultaneously taking place on stage at an arts festival. It is possible that this will generate a sense of sharing in the live experience. Live broadcasts leave little margin for error, and there is no post-production in which the recording can be altered. Binge (2013) notes that broadcasting live also comes with additional crew members and costs:

Hierdie soort produksie is ongelukkig duur aangesien dit 'n groot tegniese span nodig het wat met behulp van 'n *outside broadcast unit* uitsaai en natuurlik moet die lugtyd en uitsendings infrastruktuur gehuur word vir die lewendige uitsending.

[Unfortunately, this kind of production is expensive, because it requires a large technical team and an outside broadcast unit, as well as airtime and broadcasting infrastructure that have to be hired for the live transmission].

Apart from its in-house staff, the National Theatre broadcast team consists of 40 external crew members who are broadcast specialists (NESTA 2011: 27). It is evident that in order for a live broadcast to be effective, one needs a large, skilled group of experts and a large budget to acquire the necessary infrastructure. This is not impossible, but it is unlikely that this kind of production scale could be successfully emulated in the context of South African television, mainly due to the costs attached to doing it properly.

5.5 Preserving the translations as research resources

NT Live initiative describes its intent and aims as follows:

From the beginning, we saw cinema broadcasts as an alternative experience, aware that you can never replace the unique experience of being in the actual theatre. However we felt that we could potentially offer a top quality 'second class' experience that would greatly increase the opportunity for people to see a National Theatre production, especially those outside London (NESTA 2011: 8).

It is possible to argue that recording theatre for commercial purposes and recording theatre as visual documents for research are two different things. Reason (in Krüger 2013: 4) notes:

For the less ‘faithful’ a film/video representation of a live performance, the less ‘useful’ it is as a document of that performance. With video documents intention and attitude is crucial: the ambition being to capture and archive the live performance, rather than create any kind of alternative performance experience.

An initiative such as NT Live, and the one that the study suggests, offers what Reason refers to as “an alternative performance experience”. Krüger (2013: 5) argues that although NT Live is successful in achieving its aims, the recordings are not necessarily a satisfactory documentation resource, because they prioritize the cinema audience by adjusting the aesthetics of the original production to attend to the needs of this audience. In other words, certain elements of the original production are in a sense ‘cut out’ due to the use of camera angles such as close-ups that isolate certain key moments while leaving others out of frame. Researchers would therefore be unable to study the performance in its entirety, since not all of the performance elements are visible at any given point.

To better determine if the study could make a genuine contribution to theatre documentation, NALN and UNISA were contacted to enquire whether these institutions would be interested in preserving such recordings. Both responded positively to the initiative and indicated a willingness to be involved in such a project if it were to materialize. The curator of NALN, Otto Liebenberg, responded as follows:

Ongetwyfeld sou NALN baie graag sulke dokumente en rekords vir permanente bewaring in sy versameling opneem. Ek is eerlik dat die huidige kapasiteit uiters beperk is, maar hierdie werk kan deel word van ’n groter inisiatief waarvoor daar heel moontlik befondsing gevind kan word. Dit gaan ’n unieke en kosbare hulpbron vir die toekoms skep (Liebenberg 2013).

[NALN would undoubtedly be interested in preserving such documentation in its permanent collection. I have to be honest, our current capacity is extremely limited. However, this kind of work can form part of a greater initiative for which it is likely that funding could be found. It is going to create a unique and precious resource for the future]

Lida Krüger, who along with Marisa Keuris has launched the South African Drama and Theatre Heritage Project, also indicated an interest in being involved in the preservation of these recordings should such an undertaking be pursued. Krüger was kind enough to share a document she has compiled entitled, *Motivering om digitale oudio-visuele opnames van toneelopvoerings in Suid-Afrika te maak* [Motivation for making digital, audio-visual recordings of stage performances in South Africa], in which she stipulates certain guidelines

to which stage recordings have to conform to be considered legitimate theatre research resources:

1. it must be clear that the recording is a recording of a stage performance and not a film;
2. the performance must preferably be recorded by more than one camera;
3. the recordings can only be viewed and studied in a controlled environment; and
4. each recording must be accompanied by additional documentation such as photos, programmes and posters (Krüger 2013: 6 – 8).

A possible solution for the study's proposed mode of operation for theatre recordings to qualify as a suitable research resource is that unedited footage of the recordings could be donated to an institution such as UNISA. This would provide unaltered coverage of the entire performance from various angles and the documentary inserts could serve as the 'additional documentation' to the recordings.

An alternative could be to employ an additional camera operator to record these productions with a single camera. This kind of recording would not need any rehearsal and one could employ one of the crew members to fulfil the task. Ultimately, the potential of these recordings as audio-visual research documents would depend on negotiations between the broadcaster and the archival institution, as well as those who own the performance rights of the chosen texts. Because archival institutions serve an educational purpose, royalties on copy right seldom come into the play. Binge (2013) notes that there is a scale on which royalties are determined, and the scale is by far the lowest when a work is used to serve an educational purpose.

5.6 Conclusion

When making live recordings of theatre productions for television, it would appear that a broadcaster has the option to broadcast live or broadcast a delayed, edited version of the recording 'as live'. The study has discovered that the latter option would likely to be more practical and cost-effective. The study would therefore suggest that producers pursue the single venue model. The model is more beneficial to the television crew and would enable the producers of the series to have more control over the final product, since they will be able to edit the recording in post-production.

It has also become clear that recording theatre performances for commercial ends and recording them as audio-visual research documents are two different things. It is possible to

argue that by translating theatre to another medium, it is no longer theatre. Especially when pursuing a translation such as the one the study has suggested, the screen version would never be able to be an accurate reflection of the actual event. By altering the original, the screen audience's experience will be guided by the cameras and audience members will not have the freedom to control their view of the stage. However, a possible solution could be to reserve unedited footage of the recording for research purposes and broadcast the edited recordings.

As NT Live has reiterated, the study is not suggesting that recordings can re-create the theatrical event. It understands that there is no substitute for the experience of live theatre. It can only hope that the translations will give the spectator at home an idea of the kind of work showcased at festivals and, it is hoped, generate an interest in Afrikaans theatre. Most festival productions are unable to travel to the larger urban theatres because of financial constraints. It is, therefore, possible that many people are unaware of the kind of experience they are missing out on, because there is very little Afrikaans theatre in urban settings.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The study set out to investigate the possibility of translating Afrikaans theatre productions to screen. Afrikaans theatre especially has become very dependent on the annual arts festivals. These events, however, only last for a week at a time, and the majority of the productions showcased at festivals are unable (due to financial reasons) to make the move to a larger, more commercial urban venue, which means that many potential audience members are lost. Apart from being lost to future audience members, these works are not documented and in some cases it is very difficult to find any record of a particular production's existence.

Given KykNET's growing popularity and their ongoing support of Afrikaans theatre, the study argued that a translation of Afrikaans theatre productions to television would be a proposition worth investigating. Television has the ability to reach a very large audience and has the ability to make audio-visual records of events. Therefore, the study attempted to construct a proposed mode of operation for a series of Afrikaans theatre productions on television.

In doing so, the study first examined international trends in the practice of translating theatre to screen. It discovered that theatre had been instrumental in forming television drama. In the US, the 1950s is often viewed as the 'Golden Age of Television' and it was during this decade that a television format called the 'single play', 'single drama' or 'teleplay' enjoyed its greatest popularity. In the US, the format was produced in anthologies and thus called 'anthology drama'.

The anthology dramas consisted of both existing stage plays recorded for television, and plays written specifically for television. At first, these plays were recorded and broadcast live from television studios. Since early television producers were usually from a theatrical background, these dramas strived to be theatrical. The development of videotape, however, changed the format forever, because it meant that dramas could be recorded and rebroadcast, as opposed to being transmitted live in a once-off event. It was mutually beneficial to both broadcasters and producers, because rebroadcasts generated more income for all involved parties. It is possible to argue that a lack of competing formats had a significant influence on the single play's popularity, and the later development of continuing-character formats such as series and serials changed this.

The television series proved to be more cost-effective, easier to schedule, and more capable of encouraging viewer loyalty. Audience members had more time to invest in characters that developed over a lengthy period of time. The later development of portable camera equipment also increased production possibilities and enabled producers to film in various locations.

The BBC's *The Shakespeare Plays* is arguably one of the most significant single play undertakings of the twentieth century. The project managed to adapt 36 of Shakespeare's plays for television in a series consisting of six seasons, with each season presenting a total of six plays. Despite proving to be a commercial success, the series was severely criticised by scholars and reviewers. In an attempt to increase the commercial potential of the project, the producers placed great emphasis on the educational value of the series. One of its American co-producers stressed the importance of portraying a 'traditional' interpretation of the texts, with designs having to subscribe to the trends of the text's period, leaving very little room for directors to be inventive and experimental. Wells (1982: 263) criticises the series for falling into "routineness", with its tight schedule and rigid format making it very difficult for directors to engage with the material creatively.

After viewing the BBC project's version of *Hamlet*, it became clear why the series is often so severely criticized. Rothwell (1999: 113) accuses their version of *Hamlet* of failing to decide "whether to be theatrical or telegenic, and succeeding in neither". This particular translation appears to be lost somewhere between theatre and television. Some of the performances are too bold for camera, with actors projecting their voices too much, while other actors do very little and disappear into the background. There are also major technical issues with this particular translation with an inconsistent sound quality and lighting choices proving to be a great source of distraction.

Another means of translating theatre to screen is by adapting it to film. An interesting trend to come out of America is the well-known American Film Theatre. The American Film Theatre consisted of 14 film adaptations of modern stage classics from Britain, the US and Europe. Among them is Peter Hall's film version of Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming*. Although essentially a film adaptation, Hall's approach is a kind of hybrid form of film and theatre. Hall (in Scott 2004) notes, "I believe and think, and I tried to make it, a play which uses certain techniques of film in order to express the play". Hall also used the original cast from his stage version in the film adaptation, which meant that he worked with actors that already

made a thorough study of the text and their characters and had established a chemistry among themselves. This seemed to work to his advantage because it is evident that the performances have great depth and gravitas on screen. Although the American Film Theatre proved to be a critical and artistic success, commercially it left much to be desired, and the initiative only lasted for two years. These kinds of films proved to appeal to a niche market and the project simply did not attract a large enough audience to sustain itself.

In 2003, the live high-definition transmission of a David Bowie concert to cinemas across the world, sparked a revolution in the translation of live performance to screen in the digital era. In 2009, the National Theatre in London adopted this approach of recording live performance while simultaneously transmitting it live to cinemas across the world. The first season of NT Live appeared to enthuse both critics and the general public. The use of the latest digital technology has enabled the National Theatre to provide what it believes is a “top quality ‘second class’ experience” (NESTA 2011: 8).

Guardian critic Michael Billington believes that the initiative’s greatest achievement is that it has proved that it is possible to translate theatre to a mass audience without a loss of quality. In 2010 NESTA conducted a research survey to determine the public’s reaction to the initiative during which they discovered that people were even more eager to see the live performances on the stages of the National Theatre. In other words, the initiative had generated an even higher demand for the live theatrical event.

After examining international trends in the translation of theatre to screen, it became apparent that the critical success and artistic achievements of translations are not necessarily reflected by ticket sales and commercial success. The National Theatre’s NT Live is not an exception to the rule, but it has proved to be self-sustaining while being a critical success. The examined translations that worked the best on screen, were the ones who were the clearest in their intent, and those that either recorded the original stage production or used the original cast in an adapted version.

The study then shifted its focus to South Africa to better determine what had been attempted and achieved in translating theatre to screen in this country. South Africa’s national broadcaster, the SABC, only adopted the single play format in the late 1970s. Since the first generation of South African producers were either from Britain or received their training in Britain, the South African single play adopted the British studio model as a mode of production.

Despite adopting British practice, the SABC never broadcast television dramas live. It did, however, on occasion record live theatre performances on stage, but these recordings were edited and broadcast at a later stage. The South African single play suffered the same fate as the format did in the US and Britain, being replaced by the preferred series format. By the early 1990s the South African single play format had virtually become extinct. If there have been recent examples, they have not been very well documented, because it has proved to be very difficult to find any trace of single play-projects in the last two decades. Therefore, the study attempted to identify similar projects that had attempted any kind of translation to screen in recent history.

The studied examples varied in their approach and intention and most of the examples made an attempt to translate theatre to screen and managed to produce a product that the study deemed fit for broadcast. KykNET's improvisation sitcom, *Proesstraat*, proved to be the more problematic example, because unlike the other examples it was not a translation of an existing theatre production or text. The study, however, argues that since the show's format is based on the familiar format of theatre sports, and involves the recording of live performance, it was an example worth investigating, and it proved to be a good indication of how live performance could be recorded for local television. What made some of the other examples problematic, was that they were done with little or no budget, which meant that the practitioners had very little time and restricted resources at their disposal.

Once again, the translations that were clearest in their intent proved to be more successful. The example that stood out most was Jaco Boucher's *Rooiland*. It is interesting that Boucher's approach was very similar to that of Peter Hall's in *The Homecoming*. Boucher (2012) describes this approach as a kind of "hybrid form, which walks in between two media". The film version of *Rooiland* used the original stage cast and set, and was shot on stage in Stellenbosch. It appears that Boucher, like Hall, attempted to translate a play to screen by using cinematic devices in order to express something of the play. The film version has its technical issues, and the performances have moments where they are too bold for camera, but the screen production retains something of the essence and intensity of the live stage drama.

It would be interesting to see what the result is if *Rooiland* were to be recorded in front of a live audience. Albert Maritz's translations of his two stage plays, *Wyk en die meisies* and *Elders aan diens*, were interesting examples, because one could clearly see the progression and refinement in his approach when comparing the two recordings. Maritz attributes the

improved approach to a collaborative effort between himself and his editor who also acted as a kind of director of photography, which enabled Maritz to focus on performance and interpretation.

Die Francois Toerien Show was an example of a television show that made use of the original cast members of an existing series of sketch comedies performed on stage. Executive producer Herman Binge (2012), argues that maintaining the essence of the stage sketches while adapting them to the reality of the locations was a difficult balancing act. Toerien (2012) believes some of the sketches proved to be too long for television and also found that he did not capture enough reaction shots.

After analysing an episode of *Die Francois Toerien Show*, it became apparent that the television series did not have the same effect as the stage productions. It is as if the sketches did not achieve the same satisfactory rhythm they had on stage. Toerien (2012) also revealed that his actors found it to be a great adjustment to perform the material without being in the presence of a live audience. A live audience has a significant influence on the rhythm of a performance, and it would be interesting to see what the result would be if the *Die Francois Toerien Show* were to be shot in the presence of a live studio audience, instead of being shot on location.

Both Maritz and Bouwer revealed that part of the reasoning behind their recordings, was that they could serve as documentation, and both practitioners believe in keeping record of their work. The study then shifted its focus to the state of performing arts archives in South Africa, to better determine how these recordings could be preserved and made available for research. It did so by comparing our local archives to that of international performing arts libraries and archives. It became apparent that South Africa is not on a par with the latest international developments and trends. International institutions have been in the process of digitizing archival content for some years and initiatives such as ECLAP have gone even further by establishing an online network between various performing arts institutions in an attempt to make archival content more accessible. ECLAP is essentially an e-library that houses resources from leading European performing arts institutions or provides portals to access their collections.

Another interesting international development the study encountered is the Routledge Performance Archive that works in partnership with Digital Theatre UK. Digital Theatre UK is an online initiative that works in partnership with London's foremost theatres to record live

theatre and offer it online in downloadable format. It has also realised that it can make a major contribution to the preservation of audio-visual documentation on theatre, and in partnership with Routledge it has worked to establish a rich resource of audio-visual material in the Routledge Performance Archive.

The struggle to obtain easily accessible information on South African theatre productions that have made a transition to screen, has made it clear that there is an overall absence of theatre documentation and archiving in this country. Keuris and Krüger (2013a: 1) note: “There is no easily accessible documentation on South African theatre between the late 1980’s and the recent past”. The study discovered that the three most notable collections of documentation on Afrikaans theatre, is the SACIA’s collection that has become fairly inaccessible at the NFVSA (where it is now held), the collection compiled by NALN, and the National Drama Library’s collection. Of the three institutions, NALN seems to be only one that preserves audio-visual material. NALN has undergone significant structural changes over the last couple of years and there has been great concern over the institution’s ability to remain functional.

A recently launched initiative that has shown promise is the South African Drama and Theatre Heritage Project. It has based itself on the principles of ECLAP and also intends to preserve theatre documentation (both literary and audio-visual) in UNISA’s Library Archive. The project is still in its infancy but it appears to have the potential to make a contribution to the preservation of audio-visual documentation of theatre productions. The study discovered that if a proposed series of Afrikaans theatre on television were to be produced, it would be worth investigating whether NALN and UNISA would be able to preserve these translations. A notable institution that also does valuable work in collecting and preserving theatre documentation, is NELM (National English Literary Museum). The institution’s collection mainly consists of documentation on South African theatre in the English language, and since the study focussed on Afrikaans theatre, it decided not to discuss NELM in great depth.

The study then approach television producer, Herman Binge, to assist in constructing a proposed mode of operation for a season of Afrikaans theatre on television. The study decided to pursue an approach of recording theatre live on stage, and used the NT Live initiative as study case for a South African model for television. Given that most Afrikaans theatre is commissioned by or created for the annual arts festivals, the study argued that it would prove both practical and cost-effective to make these recordings at the festivals

themselves. After discussing three possible production models for doing so, the study concluded that the single-venue model would probably prove to be the most cost-effective and practical.

The live broadcast model (which is closest to the NT Live) would prove to be an expensive means of translating these productions to screen. This model requires a larger production crew and broadcast specialists that generate too many additional costs, bearing in mind that television remains a commercial medium. A standard South African television budget such as the one that KykNET offers would struggle to meet the requirements of such an undertaking. The National Theatre is in the privileged position of having both public and private sector funding, and the project needs only to remain sustainable. From the very beginning, the initiative never had any commercial ambitions.

The study is ultimately exploratory in nature and not conclusive. It focussed its attention on investigating the possibilities of translating theatre to screen, and specifically, television. Although examples that resembled film adaptations were used, the study feels that there is value in doing further research in this area, but due to the focus on television it chose not to do so. One of the major aspects that the study did not explore in great depth, is the potential collaboration and partnership between the arts festivals and television production companies. In future, it could be possible for television production companies to share in the development costs attached to producing festival productions. The 'theatre production' would become the common interest of both the television producers and theatre practitioners and it is possible to argue that both parties would want the product to be of the highest quality.

Finally, the study concludes that there is indeed a future in translating theatre to screen and that future will entail digital theatre. The latest technological developments in especially Britain and the US, has made it clear that it is very possible that an increasing number of theatre productions and documentation will be able to be accessed electronically. To what extent South Africa will be able to keep up with the modern international trends is a completely new study field worth pursuing. For the moment, however, the study feels that that a translation of theatre to television is the most likely and sustainable means of applying theatre in another medium.

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