



# SIZWE BANZI IS DEAD

By Athol Fugard, John Kani, and Winston Ntshona

Directed by Ron OJ Parson

May 13 – June 13, 2010

at Court Theatre

**-STUDY GUIDE-**

# ABOUT THE PLAY

## CHARACTERS

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- **Styles**, the owner of a photography shop in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth, South Africa
- **Sizwe Banzi**, a young man who comes to Port Elizabeth to look for work
- **Buntu**, Sizwe Banzi's friend, who helps him find a way to stay in Port Elizabeth without a valid passbook of his own

## STORY

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*Sizwe Banzi Is Dead* opens in Styles's photography studio in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth, South Africa. After reading a newspaper article on an automobile plant, Styles tells the audience a story about an incident that occurred when he worked at Ford Motor Company, but his musings are interrupted when a customer, Sizwe Banzi, arrives. Sizwe asks to have his picture taken so that he may send it to his wife, whom he left in King William's Town in order to search for a new job and a better life for his family. He then dictates the letter that will accompany the photo, telling his wife that his employment search was unsuccessful; as a result, he was told by the authorities to leave within three days, at which point he went to stay with a friend, Buntu. At this point, the scene shifts to Buntu's house, where Sizwe explains his unfortunate predicament. Buntu is sympathetic to the problem and suggests he work in the mines in King William's Town. Sizwe rejects the idea as too dangerous. Buntu decides to take Sizwe out for a treat at Sky's place, a local bar, after which the two men make a discovery that offers a unique solution to Sizwe's passbook problem.



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## KEY TERMINOLOGY OF APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA

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**Apartheid:** Afrikaner for separateness, apartness; a system of legal racial segregation enforced by the National Party government in South Africa between 1948 and 1994.

**Afrikaans:** Germanic language originating from the Dutch spoken by settlers in Africa in the seventeenth century, mainly spoken in South Africa and Namibia, with smaller populations of speakers living in Australia, Botswana, Canada, Lesotho, Malawi, New Zealand, Swaziland, the United States, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

**Afrikaners:** Including distinct 'Boer' subgroup, Afrikaans-speaking ethnic group in South Africa, mainly of northwestern European descent.

**Petty Apartheid:** Everyday racial discrimination such as marriage restrictions, segregated facilities (including park benches and beaches), jobs, elevators, cinemas, restaurants, housing, and education.

**Grand Apartheid:** Political and racial discrimination.

**Four Major Points of Apartheid:** "Separate development" of South Africa's four racial groups; total white control; the overruling of black interests for white interests; the categorization of whites (Dutch/Afrikaner/English/European).

**Four Racial Groups:** The Africans/Blacks, comprised of nine distinct nations (Zulu, Xhosa, Venda, Tsonga, Pedi, Tswana, Swazi, Ndebele, and Sotho); The Coloureds, mixed black, Malayan, and white descent; The Asians, Indian in ancestry; The Whites, Dutch (Afrikaner/Boer) and British Isles (Anglo) descent.

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## HISTORY OF APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA

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In 1948 the new race policy, Apartheid, institutionalized and enforced the already racially segregated South Africa. By the end of apartheid in 1994, hundreds of thousands of South Africans would be detained, tortured, or murdered in the name of white domination.

Arriving in South Africa in 1652, the Dutch settlers established the Cape of Good Hope and utilized the Dutch East India Company to import slaves from Malaysia, Madagascar, India, Indonesia, Mozambique, and East Africa. In 1795 when gold was discovered on tribal lands, British forces seized control of the Cape colony. Soon, many citizens of the English Isles were immigrating to South Africa, leaving the Dutch settlers, now renamed Afrikaners, struggling to retain and regain power over their territories, resulting in the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). Through a peace treaty, the Boers (an Afrikaner subgroup) lost their independence, Britain retained domination, and the British abolished slavery. The British, who had negotiated with the Boer generals, created the South African Native Affairs Commission, proposing racial segregation in the areas of land, labor, education, and politics.

In 1910, South Africa gained dominion status within the British Empire and over the next ten years the Union government passed proposals in to law which instituted several Acts that would keep South Africa's blacks away from its whites. One Act in particular, the Native Areas Act (passed in both 1913 and 1936), forced native Africans (non-white) to live on less than fourteen percent of the land, even though they made-up roughly eighty-five percent of the country's population. By the 1930s the increasingly strong National Party (an all-white party) segregated African natives and used them as a means of cheap labor. Their efforts proved fruitful as the 1940s brought World War II and a boom in urban industrial companies. With the Second World War in full effect, and South Africa joining the Allied forces, jobs, wages, and trade unions were on the rise for both whites and blacks. Consequently, with all South Africans moving toward the cities for work, the rural areas became impoverished; farms and farmers suffered.

To retain their income, Afrikaner farmers unified as the Afrikaner Nationalist Alliance, demanding more political control over black South Africans. In 1948, the Afrikaner farmers would get what they wanted. When the National Party and Daniel F. Malan won the 1948 election (ousting predecessor General Jan Smuts who "undermined" racial segregation), Apartheid's "total segregation" was enacted. This first period of apartheid, known as *baaskap*, Afrikaner for mastery and white supremacy, resulted in an all-white South Africa where blacks, coloreds, and Asians were sent out of major cities to ethnic "homelands" and lost all citizenship rights in the "white" areas of South Africa. Once the non-whites were far removed, white miners, farmers, and industries realized that their cheap labor came from those whom they had recently exiled.

Greedy for their businesses to continue operations, the white businesses “allowed” the non-white South Africans to return to the “white” areas to work. To keep tabs on the non-whites in white territory, four significant Acts were passed into law: **the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages** (an amendment to the Immorality Act (1949)), **the Population Registration Act** (1950), **the Group Areas Act** (1950) which would forcibly relocate 3.5 million by the late 1980s, and **the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act** (1953).

When Hendrick Verwoerd, Apartheid’s chief architect, became South Africa’s Prime minister in 1958, Verwoerd rephrased Apartheid from the crass baaskap to the more sophisticated “**separate development**”. Through “separate development” non-whites could lead socially, economically, and politically free lives within their assigned “homeland,” but this systemized segregation also made every part of a South African’s life determinable by race. Africans, Coloreds, and Asians still could not vote, own land, move freely from one country to another, or choose their employment. Those who were able to live on “white” land as a result of work had to do so with a permit and without their family, thus breaking down the “races” strength in numbers. **Passbooks or “Books of Life” were mandatory for all non-whites to carry, and consisted of marriage and driver’s licenses, birth certificates, and work permits.** To be caught without one’s passbook was punishable by imprisonment and in extreme cases torture and beatings.

The 1950s also saw anti-Apartheid growth. **The African National Congress (ANC), an organization whose members included Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo, and 1961 Nobel Peace Prize recipient Albert Luthuli, focused on the political and social conditions of South Africa’s black community and staged the peaceful Defiance Campaign of Unjust Laws.** During this campaign, the ANC adopted the Congress of the People’s Freedom Charter (notable for its opening phrase “The People Shall Govern!”) which demanded full civil rights and equality for all South Africans. In December 1956, after several protests in addition to the Defiance Campaign, more than one hundred activists were arrested and charged with high treason in the “Treason Trial” of 1961; all of the accused were acquitted. The newly formed Pan Africanist Congress (PAC; known for its African nationalism, socialism, and continental unity) soon began its anti-Pass Laws campaign against Apartheid. Their first attack resulted in March 1960’s Sharpeville Massacre, where sixty-nine people were shot after responding to a PAC call to turn in passes and submit to arrest.

**By 1963, the African National Congress had formed its military, Umkhonto We Sizwe or “Spear of the Nation,” Nelson Mandela and other leading activists had been imprisoned or exiled and anti-Apartheid resistance was outlawed under the Unlawful Organizations Act.** South Africans in defiance of Apartheid’s laws were now kept in custody without trial or assassinated. As protests grew, so did the world’s interest in Apartheid. In response to South Africa’s call for emergency help to the rest of the world, many countries began challenging South Africa’s regime. As a result, Prime Minister Balthazar Johannes Verwoerd withdrew South Africa from the United Nations in 1961, left the British Commonwealth, and South Africa was banned from the Olympic Games. In 1966, Verwoerd was assassinated and succeeded by John Vorster who relaxed some of Apartheid’s petty laws; this did not stop protest, violence or brutality during the 1970s.



A woman being photographed for her passbook in Bophuthatswana, one of the South African independent homelands

With Peiter Willem Botha's 1978 election to prime minister, Apartheid laws relaxed even more, granting Asians and Coloureds limited political rights and abolishing the long-standing pass system. While these restrictions were lessened, Botha continued to condemn any opposition to the government and wanted white power to remain dominant in South Africa. By 1983, six hundred South African organizations had come together to create the United Democratic Front, an alliance of trade unions and organizations endorsing the Freedom Charter and eliminate "homelands." As anti-Apartheid activities increased, in 1986 Botha declared a state of emergency and deployed five thousand soldiers to ban, arrest, and detain tens of thousands of South Africans, many of whom were tortured and murdered. Foreign countries began pulling their business transactions, trades, and investments with South Africa by the end of the 1980s, leaving the country in a state of economic depression.

In 1989, National Party leader Frederik Willem de Klerk became prime minister and released many of Apartheid's black political prisoners. He declared to Parliament that Apartheid had failed and all bans on political parties would be immediately lifted. But race relations continued to retain tension until 1993, and more than ten thousand South Africans were killed due to political violence. Criminal activity like murders, beatings, and explosions were on the rise. In February 1990, anti-Apartheid organizations were un-banned, political prisoners were freed (including Nelson Mandela), and resolution was in the air. **Apartheid officially ended in 1994 with the democratic election, abolition of "homelands," and new interim (1994) and final constitutions (1996).** All Apartheid laws were repealed and South Africa laid its foundations for a multiracial and multiparty transitional government, and Nelson Mandela became the first freely elected, majority president, setting into action equality for all South Africans and the reclamation of native lands by its once native inhabitants.

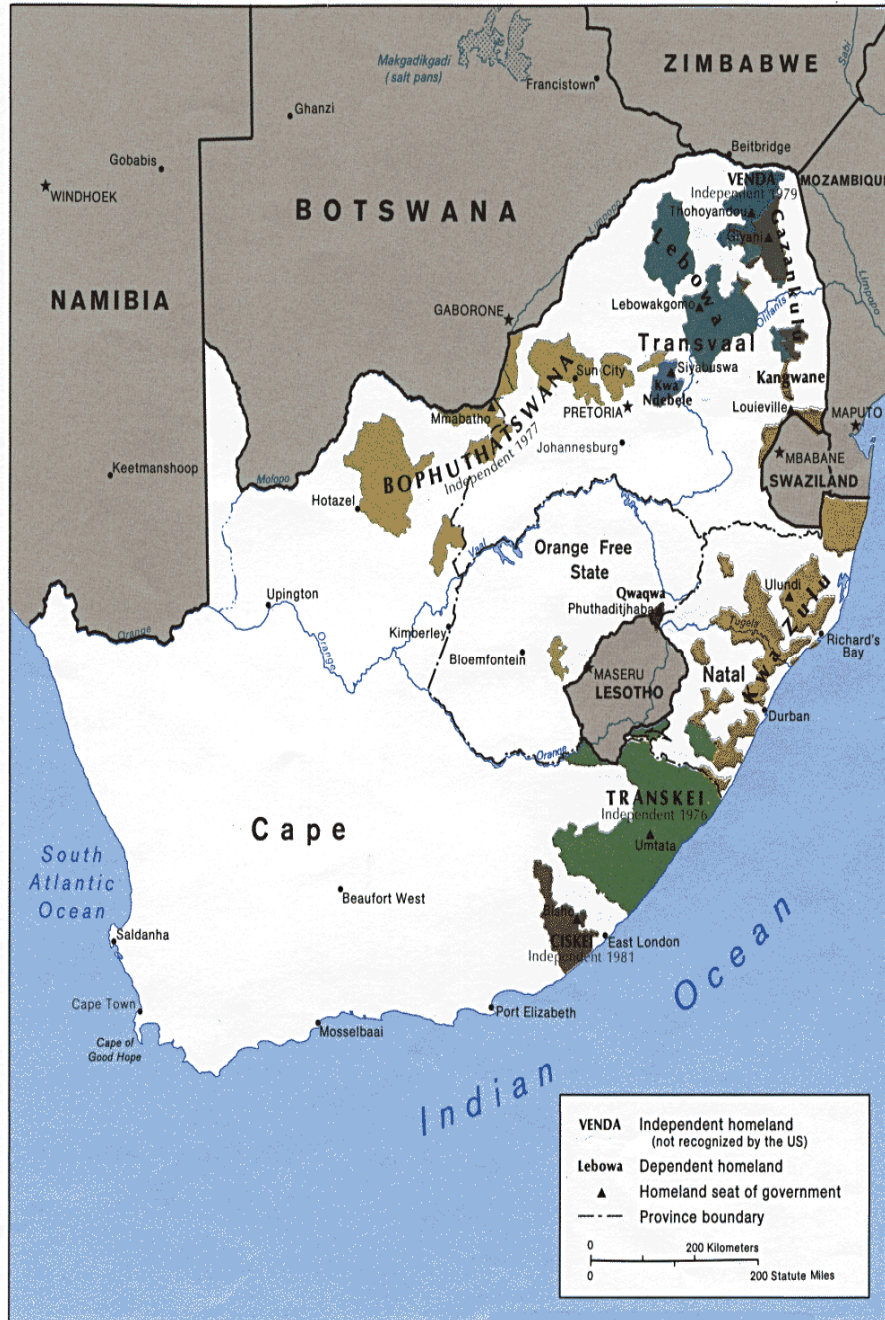
- From Sizwe Banzi is Dead Actor's Guide by Kelli Marino, Production Dramaturg, Court Theatre 2010

## TIMELINE OF APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA

- **1651** Dutch settlers arrive in South Africa.
- **1652** The Dutch East India Company establishes a trading station at the Cape of Good Hope.
- **1700s** Dutch farmers (Boers) migrate across land inhabited by the Bantu and Khoi, seizing land used by the tribes for cattle and sheep (the basis of their economy).
- **1702** The first major clash between Afrikaner trekboers and the Xhosa (speakers of the Bantu language) takes place near the Fish River.
- **1756** Slaves are imported from West Africa, Malaysia and India, establishing white dominance over non-whites.
- **1795** The British occupation begins in the Cape.
- **1810s** British missionaries arrive and criticize the racist practices of the Boers, who believe they are superior to Africans. They urge the Boers to treat Africans more fairly.
- **1828** Ordinance 50 abolishes discriminatory practices against free blacks; the Cape Colony repeals "pass laws."
- **1830s-40s** The Great Trek: the Dutch/Afrikaner/Boers make the eastward and northeastward migration away from British control in the Cape Colony. Slaves are emancipated.
- **1845-75** The system of segregation brought from India is introduced throughout the Natal region, under British colonial rule.
- **1867** Diamond mining begins in South Africa. Africans are given the most dangerous jobs, paid far less than white workers and housed in fenced, patrolled barracks. Oppressive conditions and constant surveillance keep Africans from organizing for better wages and working conditions.
- **1886** Gold is discovered in the Witwatersrand region. (This gold rush leads to the establishment of the city of Johannesburg.)
- **1899-1902** The Anglo-Boer War is fought between the British Empire (English Colonialists) and the independent Boer (Dutch Afrikaners) republics of the South African Republic (Transvaal Republic) and the Orange Free State. After three years, the British initiate the first concentration camps. A peace treaty is reached, and the Boers lose their independence to the British.
- **1906** The suppression of the Bambata Rebellion marks the end of the first phase of armed resistance to colonial conquest.
- **1908** A constitutional convention is held to establish South African independence from Britain. The all-white government decides that non-whites may vote but not hold office. Some people in the new government object, believing that South Africa would be more stable if Africans were treated better.



## South Africa: Black Homelands



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- **1910** The South Africa Act takes away all political rights of Africans in three of the country's four states. This creates the Union of South Africa and transfers power to the white minority.
- **1912** The South African Native National Congress organizes Africans in the struggle for civil rights.
- **1913** The Black (or Natives) Land Act gives 7.3 percent of the country's land to Africans, who make up 80 percent of the population. Africans are prohibited from owning land outside their "homeland." Africans are allowed to be on "white" land only if they are working for whites.
- **1914** The (Afrikaner) National Party is formed. The Afrikaner Rebellion takes place, involving Afrikaners who were against South African participation in WWI.
- **1920s** Blacks are fired from jobs which are now given to whites who are demanding that they make an income after returning from WWI.
- **1923** The South African Native National Congress changes its name to African National Congress. The Native (Black) Urban Areas Act introduces residential segregation in South Africa.
- **1936** The Representation of Blacks Act weakens the political rights for Africans and allows them to vote only for white representatives. The Native Trust and Land Act increases the land set aside for Africans to 13 percent of the country's total area. Fewer than 30% of Africans are receiving any formal education, and whites are earning over five times as much as Africans.
- **1940** J.B.M. Hertzog (Prime Minister from 1924-39) and Daniel François Malan (prime minister from 1948-54) form the Herenigde Nasionale Party (Reunited National Party). This party initiates the policy of apartheid.
- **1946** Jan Smuts (Prime Minister from 1939-48) sets up the Fagan Commission to investigate changes to the segregation system. More than 75,000 Africans go on strike in support of higher wages: African mine workers are paid 12 times less than their white counterparts and forced to do the most dangerous jobs. Police use violence to force the unarmed workers back to their jobs; more than 1,000 are injured and at least 12 are killed.
- **1948** The Sauer Commission, created in opposition to the Fagan Commission, recommends that apartheid be implemented. The Herenigde Nasionale Party, with an apartheid platform, wins the general election by a majority of parliamentary seats but not overall votes.
- **1949** Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act outlaws interracial marriages. The African National Congress adopts the Programme of Action, ushering in a period of mass campaigns against non-white civil disobedience, boycotts and strikes.
- **1950** The Population Registration Act classifies people into three racial groups: white, coloured (mixed race or Asian), and native (African/black). The Immorality Act forbids all sexual relations between whites and non-whites. The Suppression of Communism Act prohibits any acts or strategies that might promote political, social or economic changes. The law also allows the minister of justice to ban any person posing a threat to the state's control.

- **1950 June 26** The date is known as Freedom Day. Demonstrations and strikes are held in opposition to the Suppression of Communism Act. The bill becomes law, outlawing the Communist Party of South Africa, which was founded in 1921, along with many forms of opposition to apartheid.
- **1951** Separate Representation of Voters Act enforces racial segregation, and the deliberate process to remove all non-white people from the voters' roll. The Group Areas Act sets aside specific communities for each of the races (white, coloured (mixed race or Indian), and native (African/black). The best areas and the majority of the land are reserved for whites. Non-whites are relocated into "reserves" or "homelands." Mixed-race families are forced to live separately. The Bantu Homelands Act allows the white government to declare that the lands reserved for black Africans are independent nations. Millions of blacks are stripped of their South African citizenship and forced to become residents of their new "homelands." Blacks are now considered foreigners in white-controlled South Africa, and need passports to enter. Legislation introduced to remove coloured people in the Cape Province from the Parliamentary Voters Roll.
- **1952** Abolition of Passes and Coordination of Documents Act requires all Africans to carry identification booklets with their names, addresses, fingerprints, and other information. Between 1948-1973, over ten million Africans are arrested because their passes are "not in order." Burning pass books becomes a common form of protest.
- **1953** The Preservation of Separate Amenities Act establishes "separate but not necessarily equal" parks, beaches, post offices, and other public places for whites and non-whites. Bantu Education Act: Through this law, the white government supervises the education of all blacks. Schools condition blacks to accept white domination. Nonwhites cannot attend white universities. Segregation of trade unions made a condition of registration. The Public Safety Act authorizes the government's use of brute force to coerce non-whites to adhere to many legislative acts passed under apartheid.
- **1955 June 26** Freedom Charter adopted by the Congress of the People, jointly organized by the members of the Congress Alliance. Formation of South African Congress of Trade Unions, the first non-racial trade union center, and a subsequent member of the Congress Alliance.
- **1956** Treason Trial begins. 156 people (105 Blacks, 21 Indians, 23 Whites and 7 coloureds), including Nelson Mandela, arrested in a raid and accused of treason (conspiracy to overthrow the present government and replace it with a communist state through violence). Trial lasts until 1961.
- **1960** A large group of blacks in the town of Sharpeville refuse to carry their passes. The government declares a state of emergency and responds with fines, imprisonment, and whippings. 22,000 people are detained, 69 people die and 187 people are wounded. The African political organizations, the African National Congress and the Pan African Congress, are banned through The Unlawful Organisations Act. Foundation of the Apartheid Republic, with a military mobilization to prevent protests and demonstrations. 8,000-10,000 people arrested and detained under the "12-day law," the first law allowing detention without trial. By the end of the year, armed resistance had been initiated.
- **1960 December 16** First operation of Umkhonto We Sizwe ('Spear of the Nation') formed by leaders of the ANC and allied organizations to undertake armed resistance.



A typical apartheid-era sign, in English and Afrikaans

- **1962** The United Nations establishes the Special Committee Against Apartheid to support a political process of peaceful change. Nelson Mandela secretly visits several countries to seek facilities for military training and returns to South Africa to continue working underground.
- **1963** Nelson Mandela, head of the African National Congress, is incarcerated.
- **1968** Separate Representation of Voters Amendment Act introduces the Coloured Persons Representative Council which could make laws on finance, local government, education, community welfare and pensions, rural settlements and agriculture which affect coloured people. South African Student Organization (SASO) established by Steve Biko.
- **1970s** Resistance to apartheid increases. Organizing by churches and workers increases. Whites join blacks in the demonstrations. The all-black South African Students Organization (SASO), under the leadership of Steven Biko, helps unify students through the Black Consciousness movement.
- **1974** Rally in Durban organized by SASO to celebrate independence of Mozambique under leadership of FRELIMO (Liberation Front of Mozambique) Several organizers of rally arrested and imprisoned.
- **1975** Trials indicate increasing numbers of people leaving the country for military training.
- **1976** The Soweto Uprising: People in Soweto riot and demonstrate against discrimination and instruction in Afrikaans. The police react with gunfire. 575 people are killed and thousands are injured and arrested. Steven Biko is beaten and left in jail. Protesters against apartheid link arms in a show of resistance.
- **1976 June 16** Soweto massacre as police shoot at school children protesting against apartheid education. Internal Security Act introduces even harsher repressive measures than already exist.
- **1977 September 12** Death by murder of Steve Biko.
- **1980 March 21** Launching of campaign for the release of Nelson Mandela by the Sunday Post newspaper (successor to the banned Weekend World). Countrywide boycotts against apartheid education, a wave of industrial militancy, protests against rent increases and bus boycotts combine in a period of sustained popular resistance. Over 900 people detained during the year.
- **1980s** People and governments around the world launch an international campaign to boycott South Africa. Some countries ban the import of South African products, and citizens of many countries pressure major companies to pull out of South Africa. Hundreds of thousands of Africans who are banned from white-controlled areas ignore the laws and pour into forbidden regions in search of work. Civil disobedience, demonstrations, and other acts of protest increase.
- **1981 May 31** The apartheid regime celebrates the 20th Anniversary of the founding of the apartheid republic, in the face of a countrywide campaign of protest and boycott of the celebrations.
- **1981 November 4** A massive boycott of the elections to the South African Indian Council shows that the Indian community rejects segregated political structures.
- **1982** During the year the regime streamlines and strengthens its 'security' laws and amends the Defence Act in order to greatly expand its armed forces. Two more people die in detention and several are admitted to psychiatric wards.
- **1983** United Democratic Front formed to endorse the Freedom Charter and eliminate "homelands."
- **1984** Township revolts begin in Sharpeville. P.W. Botha (South African prime minister 1978-84) becomes state president and the first tricameral parliament for Coloureds, Whites, and Indians is opened.
- **1986** State of Emergency declared by Prime Minister Pieter Willem Botha. 5,000 soldiers deployed to ban, arrest, and detain tens of thousands of South Africans.
- **1989** F.W. de Klerk replaces Botha as National Party leader, then becomes state president.
- **1990** Nelson Mandela released from jail. de Klerk legalizes ANC, PAC, SACP, and other opposition parties.
- **1991** There are new protests against apartheid education in the first part of the year, the number of strikes continues to grow, guerilla actions occur in several areas of the country and a campaign begins to resist and boycott new apartheid political structures.
- **1993** A multiracial, multiparty transitional government is approved. Mandela and de Klerk receive the Nobel Peace Prize "for their work for the peaceful termination of the apartheid regime, and for laying the foundations for a new democratic South Africa."
- **1994** Elections are held. The United Nations sends 2,120 international observers to ensure the fairness of the elections. 17 million citizens cast their vote in the first multiethnic election. Nelson Mandela, the African resistance leader who had been jailed for 27 years, is elected President. Reconstruction and Development Plan is set into action, asking for political equality for every South African, the unification of South African provinces, higher property taxes and utility costs for whites to in turn provide shantytowns with basic utilities and public services. Millions of South African blacks reclaim ownership of their native lands.

- From Sizwe Banzi is Dead Actor's Guide by Kelli Marino, Production Dramaturg, Court Theatre 2010



## PASS BOOKS

Pass laws in South Africa were designed to segregate the population and were one of the dominant features of the country's apartheid system.

The Native Urban Areas Act 1923 deemed urban areas in South Africa as "white" and forced all black African men in cities and towns to carry permits called "passes" at all times. Anyone found without a pass would be arrested immediately and sent to a rural area.

The Pass Laws Act 1952 made it compulsory for all black South Africans over the age of 16 to carry a "pass book" at all times. The law stipulated where, when, and for how long a person could remain. This pass was also known as a *dompas*. The term Blacks is often used in the West to denote race for persons whose progenitors, usually in predominant part, were indigenous to Sub-Saharan Africa.

The document was similar to a passport, containing details on the bearer such as their fingerprints, photograph, the name of his/her employer, his/her address, how long the bearer had been employed, as well as other identification information. Employers often entered a behavioral evaluation, on the conduct of the pass holder.

An employer was defined under the law and could be only a white person. The pass also documented permission requested and denied or granted to be in a certain region and the reason for seeking such permission. Under the terms of the law any governmental employee could strike out such entries, basically canceling the permission to remain in the area.

A pass book without a valid entry then allowed officials to arrest and imprison the bearer of the pass. These passes became the most despised symbols of apartheid. The resistance to the Pass Law led to many thousands of arrests and was the spark that ignited the Sharpeville massacre on 21 March 1960, and led to the arrest of Robert Sobukwe on that same date.

<http://www.statemaster.com/encyclopedia/Pass-Law>

## Other Terms and Concepts to Know

- Ø **Sizwe Banzi:** Sizwe means 'the nation', and banz(s)i means 'large' or 'broad'.
- Ø **New Brighton, Port Elizabeth:** the oldest existing township, located outside Port Elizabeth
- Ø **Natal:** A province of South Africa
- Ø During the 1970s, Ford, Toyota, Chrysler, and General Motors were the car plants in South Africa, providing many job opportunities to both white and non-white workers.
- Ø **IsCOR:** South Africa's largest steel producer.
- Ø **King William's Town:** a town in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa along the banks of the Buffalo River.
- Ø **Kabega Park:** a township southwest of Port Elizabeth.
- Ø **Bantu Affairs Commissioner:** assigned to promote and facilitate government-to-government relations with South African people.
- Ø **Native Commissioner:** A position within the South African Native Affairs Commission charged with solving the "native problem" in South Africa. A 1905 report from this office proposed territorial separation of black and white landownership, systematic urban segregation by the creation of black "locations," and the removal of black "squatters" from white farms.
- Ø **Pretoria:** a city located in the northern part of Gauteng Province, South Africa; one of the country's three capital cities, serving as the executive (administrative) and de facto national capital. Located in the northeast part of South Africa.
- Ø **Ciskeian Independence:** Ciskei is a region of South Africa. Under apartheid it was made a home-land, a sort of self-governing area for Xhosa blacks, but in practice it was an impoverished area and "self-government" had no meaning. Later Ciskei was given pseudo-independence in an attempt to present apartheid as fair. It meant the inhabitants lost their rights and South African nationality.
- Ø **Tsotsis:** Young black men in urban townships who participate in criminal activity and gangs.
- Ø **Flying Squad:** An emergency response unit.
- Ø **N.I. #:** Native Identification Number
- Ø **Kaffir:** A derogatory term for a black person, commonly a South African slur.
- Ø **Blourokkie next time:** *bluorokkie* means blue clothing; phrase means "next time it's prison, with blue prison clothes".

## ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHTS

### Athol Fugard

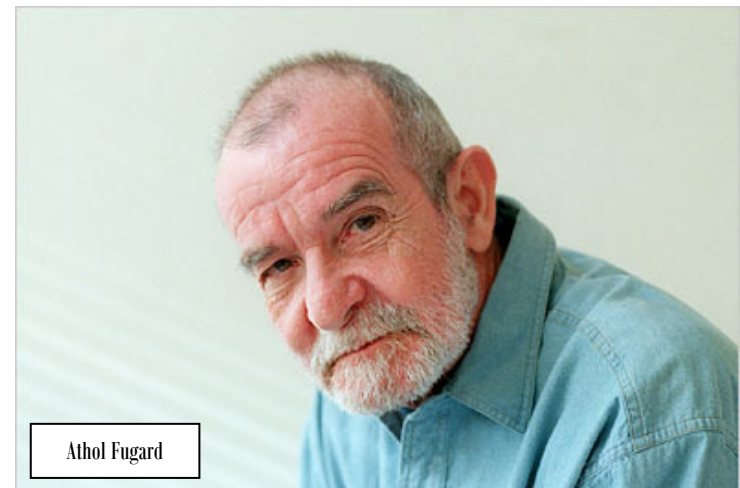
Harold Athol Lanigan Fugard was born June 11, 1932, in the Karoo village of Middleburg, Cape Province, South Africa. Raised in Port Elizabeth from the age of three, Fugard deems himself the mongrel son of an English-speaking father of Polish/Irish descent, Harold David Lanigan Fugard, and an Afrikaner mother, Elizabeth Magdalena (née Potgieter). Fugard also had a brother, Royal, and sister, Glenda. His father, a jazz pianist, was disabled and couldn't support the family, so his mother ran the family's Jubilee Residential Hotel and the Saint George's Park Tea Room. In an act of rebellion, trying to separate himself from his father's name, "Hally" Fugard bullied, blackmailed and bribed everyone into calling him Athol.

Fugard attended the University of Cape Town for two years, studying philosophy before dropping out to travel across Africa. He then served on the merchant ship the SS Graigaur, and sailed the trade routes of Southeast Asia. Upon returning to Port Elizabeth, he worked as a freelance journalist for the *Evening Post*. In 1956, he married actress Sheila Meiring (now a novelist and poet), with whom he founded Cape Town's Circle Players, a theater workshop where his first play, *Klaas and The Devil*, premiered. In 1958, Fugard was a clerk in the Native Commissioner's Court in Fordsburg, the "pass law" court (where black Africans were taken when they violated pass laws), where he learned of the injustices of apartheid. Due to the political persecution in Apartheid South Africa, he and his wife moved to London to experience theater free from racial segregation and discrimination. While in London, Fugard penned *The Blood Knot* (1961). Upon returning to South Africa later that year, Fugard found that *The Blood Knot*, because of its interracial content, would not be permitted to play after its first performance at the Dorkay House in Johannesburg. In late 1961, he took the production to un-segregated London.

Fugard and his family later returned to South Africa in 1967. When the English television network BBC broadcast *The Blood Knot* that year, the government seized his passport for four years and kept him and his family under state surveillance, which included opening their mail and tapping the phone line. It would not be until 1971 that Fugard was permitted to leave the country. During the 1950s and 1960s in South Africa, when interracial mixing was illegal, Fugard worked as an actor, director and playwright with Cape Town's interracial theater group, The Serpent Players. It was here he met Zakes Mokae, a black musician and actor with whom he would collaborate throughout his career. Through the company, Fugard also met John Kani and Winston Ntshona, actors who helped create some of Fugard's most well-known plays and characters.

There are six play categories to which Fugard's work can be ascribed: the Port Elizabeth plays, the Township plays, Exile plays, Statements, My Africa plays, and Sorrows. The plays set in Port Elizabeth (roughly 1961-1982) depict the familial and personal struggles caused by apartheid. Fugard's Statement plays (1972) directly attack apartheid. These collaborative efforts created through the improvisations of John Kani and Winston Ntshona on inspired events have brought much acclaim to Fugard's works and an awareness of apartheid's effects to the rest of the world. As apartheid was ending in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Fugard's *My Africa* plays (1989-1996) confront the new challenges that face Postapartheid South Africa. Because of the strong hold apartheid had on South Africa's people and culture, Fugard's works weren't produced in the country until 1994, after the end of apartheid. Therefore, many premiered in London and at Yale Repertory Theatre in New Haven, Conn. Fugard's American debut was *The Blood Knot*, produced Off-Broadway in 1964 by Lucille Lortel at the Cricket Theatre. Four of his plays have been produced on Broadway: *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1974), *The Island* (1974), *Lesson from Aloe* (1980), "Master Harold" ... and the Boys (1982 and the 2003 revival).

Fugard and his works have received numerous nominations and awards, including the Tony, Obie, Lucille Lortel, Evening Standard, Drama Desk and Audie. In 2005, he was honored by the government of South Africa with the Order of Ikhamanga in Silver for his "excellent contribution and achievements in the theater." He has five honorary degrees and is an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. He is a professor of acting, directing and playwrighting at the University of California, San Diego.



Athol Fugard

## ATHOL FUGARD'S PLAYS

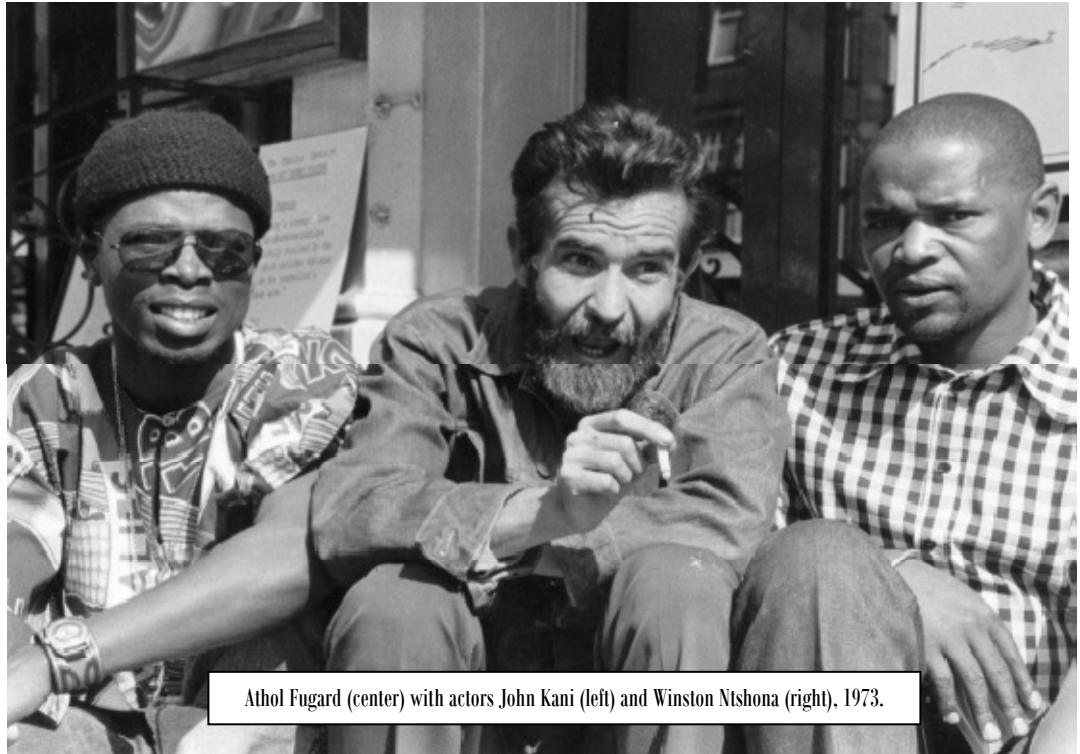
- Ø *No-Good Friday*, produced in Cape Town, South Africa, 1956, then Bantu Men's Social Center, Johannesburg, South Africa, 1958.
- Ø *Nongogo*, produced in Cape Town, 1957, then in Sheffield, England, 1974, later in New York City, 1978.
- Ø *The Cell*, produced in Cape Town, 1957.
- Ø *Klaas and The Devil*, written in 1956, produced in Cape Town, 1957.
- Ø *The Blood Knot*, produced in Johannesburg, later London, 1961, then off-Broadway, 1964. Later revised and entitled *Blood Knot* (1987).
- Ø *The Cure*, produced in South Africa, 1962-1963.
- Ø *Hello and Goodbye*, produced in Johannesburg, 1965, then Sheridan Square Playhouse, New York City, 1969.
- Ø *The Coat* (1966)
- Ø *The Occupation: A Script for Camera*, published in Ten One-Act Plays.
- Ø *Boesman and Lena*, produced in Grahamstown, South Africa, 1969, then Circle in the Square Theatre, New York City, 1970.
- Ø *The Last Bus* (1969)
- Ø *People Are Living There*, written in 1968, produced at Hofmeyer Theatre, Cape Town, 1969, then Forum Theatre, Lincoln Center, New York City, 1971.
- Ø *Friday's Bread on Monday*, produced 1970.
- Ø *People Arriving There*, produced at Forum, New York, 1971.
- Ø *The Coat*, published with Third Degree, 1971.
- Ø *Orestes*, produced in Cape Town, 1971.
- Ø *Sizwe Banzi Is Dead* (written with John Kani and Winston Ntshona), produced in Cape Town, 1972, then New York City, 1974.
- Ø *The Island* (written with Kani and Ntshona), produced in South Africa, 1972, then Royal Court Theatre, London, 1973, later Edison Theatre, New York City, 1974.
- Ø *Statements after an Arrest under the Immorality Act*, produced in Cape Town, 1972, then Royal Court Theatre, London, 1974.
- Ø *Dimetos*, produced in Edinburgh, 1975, Comedy Theatre, London, 1976 and New York City, 1980.
- Ø *The Guest: An Episode in the Life of Eugene Marais* (written with Ross Devenish), 1977.
- Ø *A Lesson from Aloes*, produced in Johannesburg, 1978, then Yale Repertory Theatre, New Haven, CT, 1979-1980, later in New York City, 1980.
- Ø *The Drummer*, produced in Louisville, 1980
- Ø *"Master Harold" ... and the Boys*, produced in New Haven, CT, 1982, then Lyceum Theatre, New York City, 1982.
- Ø *The Road to Mecca*, produced at Yale Repertory Theatre, New Haven, 1984, then Lyttelton Theatre, New York City, 1988.
- Ø *A Place with the Pigs: A Personal Parable*, produced at Yale Repertory Theatre. 1987.
- Ø *My Children! My Africa!*, produced by New York Theatre Workshop, Perry Street Theatre, New York City, 1989-1990.
- Ø *My Life*, 1992.
- Ø *Playland*, produced at Donmar Warehouse, London, 1993.
- Ø *Valley Song*, produced at Market Theatre, then McCarter Theatre, Princeton, NJ, 1995.
- Ø *The Captain's Tiger: A Memoir for the Stage*, produced at McCarter Theatre, 1998, then Manhattan Theatre Club Stage II, New York City.
- Ø *Sorrows and Rejoicings*, produced at Second Stage Theater, New York City, 2002.
- Ø *Exits and Entrances* (2004)
- Ø *Bootjie and the Oubaas* (2006)
- Ø *Victory* (2007)
- Ø *Coming Home* (2009)
- Ø *Have you Seen us?* (2009)
- Ø *The Train Driver* (2010)

## John Kani and Winston Ntshona

**John Bonisile Kani** was born on August 30, 1943 in Port Elizabeth and raised with nine siblings. Kani served as a janitor and an engine assembly line worker at the Ford car plant in South Africa, and a welfare assistant with the Bantu Administration in New Brighton. Kani joined Athol Fugard and the Serpent Players in 1965. He originated roles in the productions of *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*, *The Island*, “*Master Harold*” ... *and the Boys*, and *My Children! My Africa!*, for which he received an Olivier nomination. Kani has also received the Avanti Hall of Fame Award from the South African film, television and advertising industries, the 2000 Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation Award, a special Obie award in 2003 for his extraordinary contribution to theatre in the United States, he was voted 51st in the Top 100 Great South Africans in 2004, the Olive Schreiner Prize in 2005, and in 2006 he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Cape Town. Kani is now the executive trustee of the Market Theatre Foundation, founder and director of the Market Theatre Laboratory, and chairman of the National Arts Council of South Africa.

**Winston Zola Ntshona** was born on October 6, 1941 in King William's Town and then moved with his uncle to a Johannesburg township with his mother and siblings. Later he moved to a larger township house in New Brighton. Ntshona was brought into the Serpent Players in 1971 by John Kani. He originated roles in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and *The Island*. Ntshona has notably performed in the 1989 film *A Dry White Season*, the London theatre run of Edward Albee's *The Death of Bessie Smith* and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. Ntshona continues to live in South Africa and works as an actor and chairman of the Eastern Cape Cultural Units Arts Agency. He was honored with a Living Treasures Award from South Africa's National Arts Council. He is the recipient of an honorary doctorate from the University of Port Elizabeth, South Africa.

Kani and Ntshona both received the 1975 Tony Award for Best Actor in a Play for *The Island* and *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*.



Athol Fugard (center) with actors John Kani (left) and Winston Ntshona (right), 1973.

*What I do know is that art can give meaning, can render meaningful areas of experience, and most certainly also enhances. But, teach? Contradict? State the opposite to what you believe and then lead you to accept it? In other words, can art change a man or woman? No. That is what life does. Art is no substitute for life. It operates on top of life — rendering experience meaningful, enhancing experience. Art — meaningfully ordered. Life — chaotic.*

*If there is any argument which makes sense to me it is that the plays must be done and the actors seen (even on a segregated basis) not for the sake of the bigoted and prejudiced —but for the sake of those who do believe in human dignity. Let us not desert them. For those who do believe, Art can impart faith.*

*June 1962 - Fugard, Athol. Notebooks: 1960-1977.*



## *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* Production History

John Kani brought Winston Ntshona to Athol Fugard and the Serpent Players in 1971 and when the two men performed together in Camus' *The Just*, re-titled *The Terrorists*, at Cape Town's Space Theatre, their onstage camaraderie was undeniable. Both men resigned from their jobs to become full time actors, meaning that in a country where black actors were never fully recognized, Kani and Ntshona became "domestic servants" for Fugard (Kani a gardener, Ntshona a chauffeur) so they could work solely as actors. The three men then began collaborating on a devised piece called *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*, which premiered in 1972 at the Space Theatre in Cape Town, South Africa. This South African production was followed the next year by a production at London's Royal Court Theatre where it won the London Theatre Critics award. The production moved to Broadway in November 1974 and was presented in repertory with Fugard's *The Island*, an adaptation of *Antigone* about life on Robben Island, inspired by two former Serpent Players who had been imprisoned there.

In the 1970s Ntshona and Kani toured *Sizwe Banzi* and *The Island* to African schools, community halls, student groups, churches, and any venue they could find in the black townships. The production's performance in Umtata in 1976 resulted in the arrests of Ntshona and Kani by the Bantustan regime for vulgar language in the play. The play moved back to London in 1977. *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* later ran in 1978 at The Market Theatre in Johannesburg. When the play was to be re-opened at The Space Theatre in 1979, the police stopped the event before it began because of the turmoil the play had been causing. In 2006, Kani and Ntshona starred in a revival of *Sizwe Banzi* at the Baxter Theatre Centre at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown, South Africa, directed by Aubrey Sekhabi, who worked from a BBC recording of the production made in the late 1970s. The production also toured the State Theatre in Pretoria, The Market Theatre in Johannesburg and the Hilton Festival in South Africa.

The Sekhabi revival moved in March 2007 to the Royal National Theatre's Lyttelton Theatre. In the same year, *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* was translated into French by Marie-Hélène Estienne for a version staged by Peter Brook at the Barbican Centre and to tour around the world. In its final re-incarnation with the two collaborators, Kani and Ntshona returned to Broadway in April 2008 for a limited engagement presented by the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

## "Township Plays" and Statement Theatre

[Fugard's collaborative ventures] found the voice of the voiceless, challenging the "white complacency and its conspiracy of silence" (*Notebooks* 142). The "township plays" have their common inspiration in the everyday life of urban black people, and were created and performed in increasingly close partnership with their black amateur casts [...] Set out in the order of their initial production, these plays fall naturally into two groups, representing two distinct phases in Fugard's involvement across racial boundaries: the "Sophiatown" plays, *No Good Friday* (1958) and *Nogogo* (1959), first performed in the Bantu Men's Social Centre, Johannesburg, by member of the so-called African Theatre Workshop that Athol and Sheila Fugard had organized in the vast, multiracial ghetto; and the "New Brighton" plays, including *The Coat*, *The Last Bus* (1969) and *Friday's Bread on Monday*, improvised by the Serpent Players of New Brighton, followed by *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* (1972) and its companion piece, *The Island* (1973), both first performed by their co-creators and well-known Serpent Players, John Kani and Winston Ntshona, in Brian Astbury's Space Theatre, Cape Town... there is an important sense in which all these plays belong less to Fugard than to the black performers whose lives they draw on, and who first helped create them, in rough or makeshift, often appalling, conditions.

Walder, Dennis. "Crossing Boundaries: The Genesis of Township Plays". *Township Plays*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000. 412.

Fugard's growing interest in communicating the lives and sufferings of black South Africans coincided with the development of his interest in the theatre; and he was soon proclaiming that the "most stimulating and promising field for a young playwright in South Africa" lay in the world of the black townships, where there were untrained performers capable of "achieving an authenticity and vitality never before seen on the South African stage" (Anon. "Athol Plans") — a prophetic view greeted with skepticism then and later. Yet, as the impact of the township plays and their black casts at home and abroad has shown, Fugard was right. Their impact has varied, according to the abilities of those involved, the nature and extent of their collaboration, and its shifting relationship with the changing history of the country. In the two Sophiatown plays, the brash but vital inner-city mix of jazz and booze, humor, poverty, and religion which characterized the multi-tribal, pre-apartheid township can be felt even within these early plays' limited, naturalistic scope...but by [1974], the narrower, more sterile experience of the postwar "model" apartheid township New Brighton, set up on the outskirts of the Port Elizabeth industrial complex for which its labor was required, and inhabited by a single tribe, the Xhosa, had — paradoxically — provided the setting for the freer, more urgent and creative kind of collaborative theatre represented by *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* and *The Island*... for John Kani and Winston Ntshona [this development] had...to do with the surviving influence of indigenous African traditions of storytelling and response. [...] The resulting synthesis of indigenous and Western traditions had a radical impact upon prevailing assumptions about the nature of theatre in South Africa, and its role in the situation of oppression.

Walder 413-414.

## Discussion and Follow-Up Questions

1. Athol Fugard was quoted as saying, “I have been asked many times [...]: ‘How could you as a white presume to write about the black experience?’ The answer to both is the same: there is one truly winged aspect of our natures that allows us to escape the confines and limits of our own personal experience and penetrate others that we never have—the human imagination. My own personal interpretation of the Prometheus legend is that imagination is the real fire he stole for us from the gods.” What do you think this means?
2. What do you think makes a piece of art ‘authentic’? Does a play need to be authentic in order to make a statement? Why or why not?
3. Is this play ultimately optimistic or pessimistic? Why?
4. Names play a huge role in the action of the play. What statement does Fugard make about names and existence? Does one necessitate the other?
5. Discuss the importance of gender roles in the play. Do men and women represent different things? If so, what?
6. Discuss the role of family in the play. Is it important? Why or why not?
7. What does the use of photography as a symbol convey about the themes of the play?
8. Actors address the audience directly at various points during the production. What statement does this action make about the relationship between art and audience?