

THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA

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DEPARTMENT OF LITERATURE AND LANGUAGES

TITLE: ZAMBIAN THEATRE AND THE DIRECTION IT  
HAS TAKEN SINCE INDEPENDENCE

BY

VICTORIA FINDLAY

THIS WORK IS DEDICATED TO  
MY HUSBAND, MY DAUGHTER AND TO  
MY MOTHER

THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA  
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
DEPARTMENT OF LITERATURE AND LANGUAGES

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1938

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## PREFACE

This study sets out to examine critically the direction that Zambian theatre has taken since independence and to draw attention to the problems and contradictions in its development. Particular divisions that exist within Zambian theatre, such as that between the Theatre Association of Zambia (TAZ), and the Zambia National Theatre Arts Association (ZANTAA), are taken as a pointer to the deeper cultural issues in a post-colonial context, the aim being to highlight ideological divisions over the question as to which direction theatre in Zambia should be taking.

The methodological approach used is both historical and interpretive. It outlines historical events along the development of Zambian theatre and also attempts to analyse the way Zambian theatre is developing within the context of Zambian Society. To this end, it is a survey, rather than a study and does not seek to prove any hypothesis. In the final chapter, however, the study offers some conclusions and perspectives on the future direction of Zambian Theatre.

The material gathered is based on interviews and correspondence with prominent dramatic figures on the Zambian theatrical scene. Printed material such as journals, periodicals, reviews, newspapers and papers written or presented by persons with a keen interest in theatre are often referred to. In addition to these, books on theatre and drama, seminar papers, theses and unpublished papers, and minutes and other materials available from theatre groups and theatre houses have also been examined.

The main objective is to discover the reasons for the relatively slow development of theatre in Zambia with regard to the production of a distinctly and authentic Zambian theatre, and an internationally recognized body of written drama, or any playwright of stature. Special attention is paid to the accurate mapping of Zambian theatre-history, and the development of a theatrical ideology, and the growth of indigenous theatre groups and articulate spokesmen for Zambian theatre. Hence in the final analysis, the undeclared aim of this study has been to promote Zambian theatre by offering a critical historical evaluation, complemented by some recommendations and suggestions in the light of the problems and contradictions examined.

The first chapter very briefly examines the development of theatre in Zambia from colonial times to the post-colonial period, and shows the extent to which foreign influences became divisive factors. Here focus is on different theatre forms including for example indigenous para-dramatic forms in pre-colonial and colonial Zambia, where dance and drama were fused together, and also on how far indigenous traditions were transformed with the coming of colonialism. The chapter also covers the pre-independence period and the period immediately after independence in an attempt to show albeit very briefly, the pre-independence theatre developments as well as the trends that emerged consequent to independence.

The second chapter looks at early or "other" national oriented theatre experiments, Zambia Arts Trust (ZAT), Popular Theatre experiments such as that undertaken by

Chikwakwa, the Zambia Cultural Services and the role played by Edwin Manda, Zambia Dance Company (ZADACO) and Pat Maddy, Bazamai and Masautso Phiri, Theatre Association of Zambia (TAZ) and Kabwe Kasoma, and Chikwakwa and the University Dramatic Society (UNZADRAMS) and Michael Etherton.

The second part of the chapter examines the origins of the wrangle between the expatriate dominated theatre, TAZ, and the Zambians fighting for the establishment of "indigenous" Zambian theatre. It studies the events that led to the establishment of Zambia National Theatre Association (ZANTAA) and studies the attempts to break away from the "little theatre" hegemony. The TAZ-ZANTAA "split" is seen as a kind of symptom or "flashpoint" that crystallized the issue of cultural imperialism versus the development of a "truly" "authentic" national theatre. Behind the TAZ-ZANTAA split are deeper issues that are brought to light.

Chapter three examines the influence and expansion of Popular Theatre experiments such as that of Chikwakwa Travelling Theatre and Theatre for Development (TD), and the Chalimbana and NRDC (National Resources Development College) events. A comparison is made with the Kamiirithu event which took place in Kenya, in order to highlight the inadequacies of the Chikwakwa movement and TD in Zambia.

Furthermore the chapter examines indigenous non-institutionalized theatre clubs, such as Tikwiza and mentions the emergence of other groups, such as the Zambia National Service Theatre Group, (ZANASE), Kanyama

Production Unit and others. It also makes note of the moves undertaken by the little theatre as a direct response to the movement towards "Zambianization" in theatre. The chapter ends by examining the role played by the Department of Cultural Services and the Party and its Government in theatre, where a very brief comparison is made with Ethiopia specifically to show the great need for the authorities to make conscious deliberate policies concerning the performing arts so that this area may be regarded with equal seriousness as say politics or even economics.

Chapter four is centred around the year 1984, critically studying the views held by TAZ, ZANTAA and the Party, (UNIP), concerning the decision to merge the two major theatre bodies. The emergence of new indigenous theatre clubs that were only mentioned in chapter three such as The Fringe Theatre, Kanyama, ZANASE and others, and Zambian playwrights and their works are generally evaluated here.

Finally the chapter ends by giving a personal overview of the whole theatrical movement in Zambia.

## CHAPTER ONE

### ZAMBIAN THEATRE: THE SITUATION PRIOR TO AND IMMEDIATELY AFTER INDEPENDENCE

To understand the development of theatre in Zambia, it is important to examine the indigenous, paradramatic and present dramatic trends in Zambian drama as well as the essentially Western-oriented dramatic activities in the country. Before mapping and plotting the overall history of Zambian theatre, however, it is necessary to define the terms drama and theatre.

The term "drama" is derived from the Greek word which means "to do", "to act", hence "action." Aristotle referred to it as "imitated human action". This characterisation even today remains serviceable,<sup>1</sup> essentially as the representation or imitation of an imaginary action or actions, performed by an actor or actors before an audience. Theatre, on the other hand, refers to the presentation rather than re-presentation before an audience, and therefore, seen by, an audience. Thus, whereas drama is concerned with imitation and all activities which involve the concept of pretending, with the focus on doing, theatre is concerned with presentation, acting out. An audience is a necessary part of any theatrical event. Hence an essential part of theatre is its public performance.

Against this conceptual background, therefore, any claim that Africa, in this case Zambia, has no tradition of theatre, is to ignore the performance nature of the various traditional ceremonies, rituals and festivals. Story-telling, when this involves the use of gesture, mimicry and song, and spoken poetry, when combined with music and dance, are veritable forms of theatre. Similarly mime and improvisation, which have their own principles and techniques of presentation, their own methods of performance and staging, their own concepts of theatre, and their own specific relationships between stage and

audience,<sup>2</sup> are no lesser theatre. Thus, it can be said that in Africa, unlike in the western world, theatre is not limited to the traditions of the curtained proscenium stage and the silent audience. The theatrical event is often performed in an open space and the audience feels free to shout, sing and participate with the performers. This is traditional to Zambia and, therefore, one may pose a question as to what kind of theatre will evolve and be adopted if Zambia is to develop a "truly authentic" Zambian theatre.<sup>3</sup>

In rudimentary forms of theatre, ceremonies,<sup>4</sup> rituals,<sup>5</sup> and dances were performed to supplicate the gods, for recreation and self-expression, so that every act and every dance became in itself an act of worship. There is little doubt that all drama is ultimately derived from ritual and ritual drama. In Makishi, a form of ritual drama from North-Western Province of Zambia, there is often personification. The actor makes a dramatic pretence of being someone else, and pretends to do what that someone is supposed to have done or might do. The chief actor in the ritual pretends to be a god or hero in order that he may be able to exercise the power which that god or hero is believed to have exercised. Such drama is thus of the highest religious importance. Its features are seen in the context that the performance was conducted for the benefit of, and in the presence of a body of worshippers who took part actively or passively, in it. Ritual performed in this way is described as ritual drama. Ritual in itself need not be dramatic, it may consist merely of pronouncing a spell. It becomes dramatic presentation when persons other than the principals are present, in other words, an audience.

In Zambia, performing arts comprise of many activities, including the age-old traditional rituals, masquerades,<sup>7</sup> oral narratives,<sup>8</sup> delivery practices and entertainment dances. The pre-colonial arts were therefore, a form of theatre for which relevance to the concerns of society was fundamental. In this way the performing arts, fulfilled virtually all the necessary functions of education, namely social control, skills in training as well as the intellectual, sexual and moral socialisation of the young. Overall instruction focused on

practical skills and the perpetuation of culturally self-validating myths.<sup>9</sup> Traditional dances played a reinforcing role. They were often concerned with cultural values embodied in traditional behaviour. Manifestly employing a fixed pattern of rituals these dances were usually carried out for religious purposes. Has present day Zambia therefore broken away, and evolved something different from this traditional outlook? What direction in other words is theatre in Zambia taking? What kind of theatre is emerging from among its people?

To answer these questions we must take a closer look at the traditional performing arts in Zambia. We begin with the Nyau dance from Eastern Province of Zambia. "Vinyau" is the name given to the masquerade characters in a traditional ceremony<sup>10</sup> performed by the Chewa. In the drama of "Gule Wamkulu", the dancers or Vinyau, dress up as ancestors and gods and act out ceremonies in which these super-natural beings are worshipped. The dance, performed year after year, eventually took on a set form, like a play performed repeatedly in a place set aside for it. For Gule Wamkulu the set which has now become a type of open air theatre is known as the bwalo (open space). The drama, staged in the open air, where performer and spectator interact, involves acts that are imagined, constructed or represented.<sup>11</sup> Here masked figures, Vinyau perform in a large circle. There is always room given for audience participation. But Gule Wamkulu does also take place in a different setting. This is the msito, a forest or sacred grave. Here the private dances are performed, but the place also serves both as a rehearsal area and as a stage for private dramatic enactments, such as the initiation ceremony and other rituals. This setting provides a natural backdrop for dramas that evoke awe, mystery and wonder among the people.

As far as the dramatic action is concerned, the Nyau performers present short scenarios in which imitation, impersonation and presentation are all involved. Man imitates man, animals and other beings, both spiritual and super natural.

There is also impersonation, as in the case of men dressing up as women. The whole action is accompanied by dance, music, mime and gesture.

The characters involved can be classified into two main groups, animal and human. Some of these characters can also be divided into the conventional roles of tragic and comic. Kasiyu maliro, the antelope, is known for its good meat and is associated with danger. Fulu, (the tortoise) and Kalulu, (the hare) are known as tricksters. Nsato (the python) is a god and is considered as tragic.<sup>12</sup> The baboon, mkhwere, is another comic character intended to amuse. The animal figures are important features of the Nyau dance.

The human figures are divided into strangers and non-strangers. A person not familiar with the Chewa view of life is able, within the drama, to violate certain taboos, and is despised for this deviant behaviour. Good deeds, on the other hand, are publicly praised in masks depicting the non-stranger. These are all used as agents of social control. Satirical scenarios are also presented. Natolu, the thief, Kamkwanya, the disrespectful one, Kavisabwe, the one who has lice on his body and Tsempho, who is ridden with venereal disease, exemplify some of the satirical and comic characters.<sup>13</sup>

The disabled are also presented, such as Chimutu (Big Head), Chigunundu (the Hunchback), and Chajundu (the Deaf Man). These can be explained in metaphorical and moral terms with the basic instruction that the community must be considerate towards the disabled.

The "participating audience" of drummers and musicians who lead the songs and refrains, and the groups of people who participate, running onto the performing area to offer tokens, all show their appreciation of the performance.



Music and dance are the common media in Nyau drama. Miming and gestures, often combined with music and dance, communicate a palpable message to the spectators.

The present Gule Wamkulu, like most traditional ceremonies, has been affected by social change.<sup>14</sup> The coming of the whites to Zambia resulted in a demystification of its sacred rituals, and new adaptations of certain dances. M'tonga's reaction to this infiltration of foreign elements into traditional dramas is that:

it must be considered as a blessing in disguise because with the increasing socio-economic changes, these traditional forms of theatre will gradually change and be no longer confined to homogenous social groups; instead, they will provide a new form of entertainment for the fast growing urban communities as well as give vent to a new theatre idiom for Africa. 15

M'tonga argues that Nyau has passed through two stages already: the pre-colonial stage, where Nyau reflected a state of relative stability and with little change, and symbolised a fraternity between men; and the colonial period, where Nyau as an institution began to lose its prestige. However, he states that it is at this time that Nyau became richer as a theatrical form.<sup>16</sup> The worst side of the colonial era is that these traditional dances became associated with a "decadent civilisation".

The post-independence period brought an awareness of a lost cultural heritage, and a lot of serious thought was given to cultural issues. Forms like Nyau were transplanted from the village space (bwalo) to the modern city and began to be performed by various local dance groups. Rural migrants in the shanty compounds also revived some of their traditional village dances and crafts, thereby perpetuating - but also simplifying and abstracting - traditional forms in the urban environment.

Could there be, as M'tonga foresees, a third stage of Nyau? M'tonga offers some feasible suggestions as to how this could be brought about. It is possible to envisage, for example, the adaptation of themes from Nyau, for the contemporary theatre, themes such as "man's effort to seek a temporary reconciliation with these forces of nature which threaten his continued existence on earth", or the defiance of female authority in a matrilineal society, showing the supremacy of woman's position in such a community. This would offer some stimulating thought for all the women desiring emancipation in modern contemporary Zambia. M'tonga insists, however, upon intellectually and philosophically less complicated ideas in productions, because he claims that African audiences favour popular plays since high philosophical plays are hardly appreciated.

Nyau songs could be used in productions, as has already been done, for example in Andrey Masiye's Kazembe and the Portuguese. Nyau figures can also be taken advantage of. In 1976, Tikwiza Theatre applied this technique when they introduced Kasinja (a Nyau character) in their experimental production Uhuru wa Ndongo; Kasinja, during a village cleansing ritual, was traditionally used to comment on the various evils of colonialism and the church. M'tonga hopes that a large part of Nyau drama will be further explored and used more effectively. He believes that the various themes of Nyau drama could be used to enrich contemporary theatre practice in Zambia. At present traditional performing arts are only one strand of Zambian Theatre.

All that would be needed is for those trained in modern theatre techniques and the Nyau performers themselves, who know the dances and traditional production skills, to come together. A marriage between traditional and modern art forms could thus be effected.

A very brief look at other examples will show the same kind of changes that have occurred in the traditional performing arts. In the North-Western Province of Zambia,

in the Mukanda circumcision ceremony for boys, the dancers represent teachers who are mentors of the young initiates. Their dances are therefore intended to instil traditional values into the initiates. These sacred rites and rituals were carried out annually for young boys moving into manhood. As with the Nyau ceremonies, the coming of the whites and the creation of a new urban environment, which was culturally mixed, had an influence on the dances. These changes brought a demystification of many sacred rites and rituals. During the colonial period, a different form of the Makishi dance arose which was called Kawali. Kawali became a dance that was performed primarily for entertainment, and unlike Makishi devoid of its original function to teach the young initiates. There were no masks used in the dance. Apart from its entertainment function, the dance also portrayed the moral and immoral behaviour of certain people in a modern community, thus partly preserving its original function: to reinforce in the community a certain moral code.

With the coming of the whites to Zambia and further foreign infiltration, new dances and new versions of dances began to emerge. Soon after the Second World War, for example, arose a new dance named Muganda.<sup>17</sup> This dance imitated the army doing a march past. However, much of the imitations of European behaviour took the form of mockery.

As early as 1950, the Tumbuka people, some of whom had moved to the urban areas, began to perform the Vimbuza dance, a traditional dance of the Tumbuka, to entertain public audiences. During performances, members of the audience would throw money to the dancers as a token of their appreciation. Traditional, often private dances became merely urban entertainment.

By the early sixties, on the Copperbelt, a new Bemba dance had arisen, "Ndekufwemba" (I will seize you by the shirt, a threat to beat). This dance became very popular in the Lundazi area. When the migrant labourers working on the mines returned to their villages in Lundazi, they

introduced a new version of the dance called Fwemba. Fwemba quickly adapted Vimbuza drumming, and the style of dance was adapted from the Muganda dance.

Fwemba came at a time of political struggle and was used to mobilise people to register as UNIP Party militants. At this time political parties began to use traditional dances as a major form of entertainment at rallies. The songs in Fwemba are patriotic and pass social and political commentaries.

With social changes, urbanisation, travel, and the awakening of a political and cultural consciousness, certain developments took place in traditional rituals. "Chisungu" initiation rites, once very private dances, now became public performances. Naturally, the changes in the rural areas were not as significant as those in the urban centres. Dances moved from being purely functional to becoming more for entertainment purposes, often devoid of their traditional function and context. A positive argument in favour of this change is that it has led to the creation of many varieties of the same dance. Individualistic dancing styles came to be encouraged. Gifted artists were able to create new dances, and, as Chifunyise points out, such artists were by no means destroyers of authentic cultural forms, which some still considered as god-given and not to be altered. The Fwemba, for example, developed a unique acrobatic style based on various aspects of military life, such as tough physical exercise, routine and salutes. This dance spread to the urban areas and became the most popular dance in the Zambia National Dance Troupe.

At Independence in 1964, the government's intention was to support and promote performing arts groups and individual dancers. To celebrate independence, a national dance festival was held where groups and individuals were brought together in a competition. Awards were given to

encourage individuals to create their own dance dramas and dance mimes represented social phenomena that were regarded as comic, strange, or culturally alien, such as, miniskirts, straightened hair and prostitution. Local languages, English and even broken English were used to highlight the satiric and comic nature of such performances.

As far as the white settlers and expatriate community were concerned, from 1950, the government of Northern Rhodesia and the mining companies, helped, as Mwansa points out, by the copper boom,<sup>19</sup> invested heavily in sports and other cultural facilities for the whites. Chifunyise maintains that:

these drama clubs grew to become the strongest colonial establishment for the propagation of white culture and the enforcement of racial segregation laws in the colony. 20

Proof of this statement is that even today these clubs still cling to British styles and fashions.

In the late forties a number of amateur drama clubs were formed. These clubs hired British actors, directors, theatre managers and technicians to work full-time and produce plays. The clubs created a form of drama activity that was clearly British-oriented.

After a visit by several drama and opera companies from England and South Africa in 1950, all the European drama clubs decided to come together to form the Northern Rhodesia Drama Association (NRDA), for whites only. It was not until 1953 that this Association held its first festival in May of that year. Kitwe, Lusaka, Chingola, Luanshya, Broken Hill and Livingstone Theatre Clubs all participated in competitive festival held in Lusaka, and adjudicated by a dramatist hired from South Africa. It should be noted that although the Lusaka Theatre Club was established in the early forties, it was not until 1953 that it had its own theatre house. Prior to this the club operated from a

corrugated iron hall installed in the army barracks, called the Garrison Theatre.

By 1954 these clubs strengthened their position when Lusaka and Kitwe clubs registered as cooperative societies. This move enabled them to hold property and raise funds for their own buildings. After this, even the mining companies began to fund the theatres. In 1954, Luanshya Theatre, founded by the mining companies, was opened. By 1958 a professional producer, Adrian Stanley, was brought in on a six-month tour to direct plays and hold theatre workshops and generally improve the acting standards of members. His visit was financed by a government grant.

1958, the Southern Rhodesia Drama Association joined the Northern Rhodesia Drama Association to form one Theatre Association for the two territories, named the Federal Theatre League, which soon became a member of the International Amateur Association (IATA).

In the same year (1958), John Houghton, a reverend of the Anglican Church, founded the Waddington Theatre Club, a multiracial theatre group. Most of the funding for the group came from the Beit Trust, The Dulverton Trust and other organisations in Britain. The group opened officially on 1 May 1959 with Alan Paton's play about David Livingstone called The Last Journey.

From 1956 to 1960 African youth drama clubs began to take part in the Northern Rhodesia Youth Drama and Choir Festival<sup>21</sup> held at Mulungushi. From 1956, Munali, Chipembi, St. Canisius, and many other secondary schools were producing Shakespeare plays annually. There were however no theatre houses for Africans and neither were Africans allowed to patronise any of the theatre houses built for the whites.

In 1958, the Northern Rhodesia Youth Choir and Drama Festival was formally launched to cater for secondary and primary schools seriously involved in drama. It was formed and sponsored by the Department of Welfare and Social Services and the Northern Rhodesia Youth Council. Other projects were drama workshops held by the Council at Mulungushi. These festivals were mainly attended by welfare officers, teachers and many whites.

In 1960 Houghton's multi-racial group, Waddington Theatre Club<sup>22</sup> applied for membership to the all white theatre association. It entered its production Noah at the festival held in Ndola, and won the best production and two other major awards.

The activities of this group were already a challenge to the colonial government and its policies on racial segregation.

Waddington Theatre Clubs activities cut deeply into the core of the colonial government's colour bar policies. 23

At Independence several people, many of whom had once been members of the Northern Rhodesia Youth Council and Northern Rhodesia Youth Choir, came together to form the Zambia Arts Trust<sup>24</sup> in 1964. The group held workshops and helped many club leaders to organize their own drama clubs, play productions and club programmes. The members of this group became the major critic of the wholly expatriate - dominated Theatre Association of Zambia.

With Independence, the question of Zambia's cultural identity sharply came to the fore. The new government insisted on investigating traditional forms. It is at this time that one notices a distinct turning point, a time at which formally staged drama begins to look into traditional forms as a way of expanding its own limited horizons, and perhaps - even primarily - as a way of moving towards what could be called an 'authentic' Zambian theatre. The government, for example, encouraged the emergence of

Zambian groups, promising them sponsorship. Zambia Arts Trust was given at this time a grant by the government. Towards the end of 1965, the government appointed Mutemweno Yeta as head of the Department of Cultural Services, which was officially established in 1966. Its basic aims were to foster the interests of all institutions and organisation whose aims were directed towards the promotion and preservation of Zambian culture. The Department was also to provide and recommend, where appropriate, financial and other assistance which the government approved.<sup>25</sup>

The Cultural Services Department was intended to re-educate the people by making them aware of the richness of their own cultural heritage, and it was hoped to achieve the task of "decolonising the minds of many Zambians who felt that they had no culture that they could call their own".<sup>26</sup>

To sum up therefore, by Independence, Zambia's theatrical history had passed through three stages. During the pre-colonial era, traditional ceremonies and rituals were performed. This period can be considered as the storehouse and creative matrix of all traditional forms of theatre in Zambia. During the colonial era, the colonial administration denigrated local traditions, and practices. Traditional performing arts were regarded as backward and decadent, although as we have seen in the case of Nyau, Makishi, Muganda, Fwemba and dance drama, were clearly able to develop in response to social, political and economic changes. Western practices were at the same time implanted, many of which have sunk their roots and become an integral part of present-day Zambian theatrical culture. Thirdly, independence brought the realisation that Zambia's cultural heritage was being undermined. Many indigenous Zambians were ashamed of their own customs. As a result, the quest for cultural identity began. The Zambia Arts Trust was formed to project a Zambian identity, but soon ceased activity, to be replaced by the Department of Cultural Services in 1966,



which set out to solve the issue of cultural consciousness and instil some kind of cultural - and hence national - pride in the population as a whole.

## CHAPTER ONE

### NOTES

1. Shaw, H., Dictionary of Literary Terms, McGraw - Hill Book Company (1972), p. 123.
2. Shore, H.L., Theatre In A Changing World, University of Dar-es-Salaam, (1969), p. 1.
3. Theatre Third Quarterly April/June (1973). Michael Etherton, Indigenous Performance in Zambia, p. 48.

Etherton's conviction is that in creating theatre in Zambia, existing factors must be used: massive fires, camps (gas, hurricane and paraffin), drums and other instruments, masks and fabulous costumes, an irregularly shaped acting area, and most important a participating audience. The audience must be able to talk to each other, to the actors, and they must be able to move about, to join in the dancing, and to change things if they feel strongly about them.

4. Hornby, A. A., Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, Oxford University Press, (1978), p. 137 Ceremony:

Special acts, religious services, etc., on occasions such as weddings, funerals, etc.

5. Ibid., p. 747 Ritual: "All rites or forms connected with a ceremony: ... any procedure regularly followed .... ceremonial observations.

Etherton, M., The Development of African Drama, Heinemann, London, (1982), p. 16.

Ritual Theatre: In Africa, the term refers to what are seen as the traditional origins of African

Theatre in ritual performances which co-exist today with contemporary drama. (But there is a debate over this, see Etherton, M., The Development of African Drama

6. Etherton, M., The Development of African Drama, Hutchinson University Library for Africa, (1982).

p. 11. Dance: broadly defined as rhythmic bodily movement to music, ranging from the traditional and ethnic dances to contemporary ballet.

7. Ibid., p. 14, Masquerade: closely related in origin to masquerade which now describes a widespread and important African mode of performance and entertainment; the formal presentation of the (sacred) masks to the community, accompanied, variously by music, dance, chants, acrobatic and rituals.

8. Oral Narratives: A spoken account of history, a tale story, recital (of facts etc.), presented in a dramatic way. A common dramatic form in traditional performing arts.

9. Kerr D., "Didactic Theatre in Africa", UNZA., Seminar paper (1980), p. 4.

10. M'tonga, M., The Drama of Gule Wamkulu. (Study of Nyau as a para-dramatic form), M.A. Thesis, Legon, Ghana, (1982), p. 1.

Gule Wamkulu: The Nyau annual masquerade dance festivals of Gule Wamkulu are an example of ritual and ceremonial drama. At one stage its rituals involve a group of the cult who form a Nyau secret society. Later, the ritual is turned into a public performance where the audience participate. At this point it becomes ceremonial drama.

(For details on the Nyau cult see M'tonga, M., M.A. thesis).

11. Ibid., p. 142.

12. Ibid., p. 53. The Chewa Cosmology: The Chewa believe in snake gods which use human beings as mediums. Those snake-like mysterious creatures have the power of giving or withdrawing rain from the people and bringing epidemics and other forms of abomination.

13. Chifunyise, S., An Analysis of the Development of Theatre in Zambia (1950-1975), M.A. Thesis, University of California, (1977), pp. 18-22.

Other Satirical and comic characters: Characters created during the early contact with white men, especially the missionary.

(i) Maliya (Mary): A social caricature of a white woman with exaggerated tip-toed walking, painted lips and a high pitched voice. Characteristic of a strange delicate woman. She danced and satirized the white woman.

(ii) Simoni (Simon). Caricature of a white man. Accompanied Maliya in dance arena - entertained by comic characterization of the jealous husband. He charged violently against any man trying to get near to Maliya - This caused much laughter.

(iii) Sajeni (Sergeant): He imitated the colonial forced-labour recruitment officer or a military sergeant. He was tall, rough and a masked male dancer.

14. Ibid., pp. 18-22. Characters that comment on Social Change:

1. Thamu-thamu: portrayed the detested drunkard, and is considered as anti-social.

2. Mbiya zo dooka (pots with holes). Danced with pots with holes on his head, representing broken marriages. He is a tragic character and commented on the evils of broken marriages.

3. Kacipapa - representing a loving respectable mother as opposed to the broken homes.

15. M'tonga, M., The Drama of Gule Wamkulu, p. 83.

16. Chifunyise, S., M.A. Thesis p. 25: Urbanisation is responsible for the third stage of Nyau development. Emphasis now is on attractive costumes, masks, dances and songs. The dances became highly entertaining and the religious, social and political implications of the characters and Nyau dances ignored. Nyau groups were created in the early 60's, not as secret societies, but as entertainment groups performing in townships. Singers and dancers began to request for money. The dancers were turned into a competitive money earning activity. This period was infact responsible for a lot of changes in styles of dancing, drumming singing and even in the costumes and masks, which became extremely ornamental.

17. Ranger, T.O., Dance and Society in Eastern Africa, 1890-1920: University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, (1975) pp. 5-6.

Muganda: Muganda, Kalela, Malipenga, and the rest - all variant forms of the Beni originating on the coast of East Africa. The Beni is a particular form of popular culture - attempts to reproduce a military brass-band - all have been based on the idea of military drill. Sometimes the dance took the form of a parade, a procession, a march past, sometimes it took the form of a dance in platoon form.

18. Etherton, M., The Development of African Drama, Heinemann London, (1982), p. 11.

Dance-dramas and dance-mimes are closer to drama than "pure" dance, partly because there is a strengthening of the story (plot) and characterization at the expense of a specific dance aesthetic or of ritualistic dances and traditional masquerades.

19. D. Mwansa and Kidd, R., Third World Popular Theatre Newsletter, Issue I, January, (1982). - Dems/UNZA Kitwe - p. 33.

20. Chifunyise, S., An Analysis of the Development of Theatre in Zambia, (1950-1975), M.A. Thesis, University of California, (1977), p. 40.

21. The Northern Rhodesia Youth Choir and Drama Festival was created to bring together African Youth Clubs to compete with each other. Its main emphasis was to coach club leaders and their members in various aspects of acting, directing and overall club management.

22. Waddington Theatre Club (1958), founded by Rev. John Houghton of the Anglican Church. The main idea behind it was to demonstrate that theatre was not the exclusive right of whites only. It also gave non-whites a chance to continue their interest in drama which they had begun at school.  
Members: Martin Kaunda, Cosmo Mlongoti, Stanley Nyahwa, Gwen Konie, Rachael Kalulu, Edward Shamwana, Lazarus Mwansa, Elton Muwowo, George Zaza, Edgah Chellah and others:  
Waddington Players faded out in 1966 - one major reason for this is that most of its members found themselves in top positions in government and other institutions soon after independence.

23. Chifunyise, S., M.A. Thesis, p. 50.

24. Ibid., p. 90. ZAT founded by Zambian artists with the assistance of the Zambian Government, "to promote the development of indigenous culture, drama, dance and music with a Zambian flavour.

Its members were Gideon Lumpa, Kenneth Nkata, Kabwe Kasoma, John Simbotwe and others.

25. Departmental Handbook, Ministry of General Education and Culture, Department of Zambia Cultural Service pp. 5-11.

26. Ibid, p. 5.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE RISE OF A ZAMBIAN THEATRE

Following Independence in 1964, a new kind of theatre developed. First, there were the traditional dances and rituals; second, Western-oriented theatre represented by the Theatre Association of Zambia (TAZ), formerly known as the NRDA (already discussed in chapter 1), and third, a new kind of theatre, born out of the conflict or confrontation between traditional and Western-oriented theatre. It served a new social, political and cultural function, and is referred to as "Popular Theatre". Many theatre activities following independence tended to gravitate towards this kind of theatre.

Popular theatre included performances that were called "popular" because the performances were aimed at the whole community, and not just those who were educated. The performances were often in local languages, which all could understand, and dealt specifically with local problems which everyone could identify with. This theatre form has attracted a lot of attention as a vehicle for non-formal education.<sup>1</sup> Popular theatre has as its philosophy the Paulo Freirean idea of "Conscientization," or developing a social and political awareness in the people, the masses. Theatre is more than mere entertainment; it is used didactically to change people's situations:

It is a new tradition that has been built on a long history of peoples' songs, drama, dance and drumming being used in resistance against colonial and other forms of oppression.<sup>2</sup>

There is little doubt that popular theatre in Zambia is enriched by the African tradition. It often involves singing, dancing, drumming and puppetry, and indigenous languages are



used as the medium of communication in performances. For this reason, popular theatre advocates believed it to be a new theatre form that would serve as a model for Zambian theatre; it thus constituted an important means of cultural expression among the Zambian theatre enthusiasts<sup>3</sup> and helped them in their struggle against cultural alienation. Zambians could, it was felt, be doing something in theatre which was their own, and not borrowed from the Western theatre tradition. Two years after independence (1966), when the University of Zambia opened, the University Dramatic Society (UNZADRAMS) was established, its guiding philosophy being a dedicate itself to the promotion of theatre among the masses. It encouraged locally-written plays, or those adapted to local situations, and presented plays which portrayed a Zambian way of life, both past and present. Its first production Kasoma's The Long Arms of the Law, and Obutunde Ijimire's The Fall, were experiments in the production of African and Zambian plays which reflected local contemporary concerns. The club first produced plays for the consumption of the University and urban community in Lusaka, but soon evolved into a people's theatre in 1970 when chikwakwa discussed later in Chapter three, was born.

It was in 1968 that the club first began to define "genuine Zambian Theatre," as:

A Theatre that is aimed at promoting and encouraging deep understanding and appreciation of theatre and arousing interest in theatre arts among the Zambian masses by presenting among other things plays that portray a Zambian way of life, both past and present and to struggle without flinching for an establishment of a truly Zambian Theatre".<sup>4</sup>

Like its forerunner ZAT (1964-1969), UNZADRAMS, founded in 1966, was primarily concerned with the struggle for the establishment of an authentic African theatre. ZAT was concerned with performing arts, and to project a Zambian identity

It was an association that catered for Africans and was infact a major challenge to the expatriate-dominated theatre. However, it lasted only four years, till 1969, mainly because of lack of skilled dramatists, artists and directors. Relying entirely on Zambian plays, it did not find sufficient material to produce. It also folded up mainly because of lack of financial support. Mwansa remarks that its location in the centre of a Copperbelt town (Kitwe), away from where most African miners lived, in an enclosed place like a theatre, did not augur well with the people who were more accustomed to open-air performances of traditional dances with active audience participation.<sup>5</sup> Its influence however remained significant in that:

it planted an implacable germ from which other associations grew. 6

Despite its limited influence ZAT was part of a growing awareness that African theatre had a place in the cultural development of the country.

Following ZAT's efforts came Chikwakwa. Chikwakwa had as its guiding philosophy Popular Theatre ideals. Its founder members saw themselves as agents of social change who were going "to take theatre to the people."

Chikwakwa was established in 1969 at the same time that a drama course within the English Department at UNZA was begun under Michael Etherton and Andrew Horn.<sup>7</sup> In the same year the students of the drama course under the supervision of Etherton built an open-air theatre named "Chikwakwa," meaning in Chinyanja "grass cutter". This assumed a symbolic meaning for theatre at the grass root level.<sup>8</sup> UNZADRAMS henceforth shifted its emphasis from simply experimenting with Zambian and African productions to an emphasis on "taking theatre to the people." Its slogan "to take theatre to the people," became a challenge to the expatriate-dominated theatre and became infact the model for the travelling theatre movement which began under Chikwakwa theatre from 1970 onwards.

Festival of Arts in London in 1965. Time was short and Zambia was determined to attend the festival. Nevertheless the dancers and musicians got together and formed the National Dance Troupe. This group became the most important project of the Department of Cultural Services. By 1966 the Dance Troupe was ready to represent Zambia in the first World Festival of Black Arts in Dakar, Senegal. In 1969, Edwin Manda, an American-trained Zambian actor joined the Troupe, and became its director. He brought with him some innovations... He introduced a combination of traditional dancing and theatricality. This became, as Chifunyise remarks, the beginning of experimentation with modern dance theatre in Zambia.<sup>13</sup>

The next festival which the group attended was the Pan-African Cultural Festival held in Algiers in 1969. On returning from the festival Manda obtained assistance from Pat Maddy to help him design and produce costumes for the Troupe. Maddy introduced the element of choreography. Innovations in the performance of old traditional dances were introduced. Modern African ballets were incorporated into the performances. Chifunyise points out that Manda:

combined the skills of old musicians and dancers, in creating a very popular dance theatre. 15

Manda improved the traditional performing arts in that instead of passively accepting the old traditional form he acted upon it. Although it could be argued that what he did was to transform and modernise traditional dances. Manda did however succeed in producing unique dance dramas. He used traditional dances to produce a dance based on a traditional tale. This technique was well received by many Zambians. Later, in 1970, Manda also introduced a weekly one-hour show on television called ZAM-ARTS, which he himself presented. This event was significant in that for the first time on television, Zambian languages were used. No Zambian languages had been spoken on television before.

By 1970, both Chikwakwa and Zambia Cultural Services had made a significant breakthrough by using local languages. This soon became a pattern in many school groups and other Zambian theatre clubs, Kabwata Youth Traditional Dance Group being an example of such a group.

The biggest criticism of the ZAM-ARTS programme was that although the dance troupe was intended for the masses, it turned out to be catering for the privileged, those who could afford a television set. The troupe was also used as an organ for government functions and to entertain visitors to the country. Its primary aim, the promotion of a national theatre, was very far from being attained.

With the idea of creating Zambian Theatre at heart, various projects aimed at "Zambianizing" theatre began to bud. Still in 1969, Titus Mukupo<sup>16</sup> with the help of Pat Maddy from Sierra Leone began the Zambia Dance Company (ZADACO). The company was funded by Mukupo. They attempted Wole Soyinka's The Road which did not achieve a big success. Pat Maddy, feeling his talent was being wasted, disillusioned, exclaimed that the theatre audience were ignorant and the cast childish and unmotivated.<sup>17</sup> Maddy had set himself high goals for his company, but having only the support of Mukupo, it did not quite take off the ground. After the production of The Road, nothing more was heard of the group. However, their efforts did inspire other actors such as Jeff Sitali who was to become a founder member of Bazamai.

Bazamai was formed in 1970 after the Chipata Theatre Workshop which was organized by Michael Etherton and attended by Masautso Phiri and others. The Chipata Workshop resolved to create a Zambian Theatre that would produce Zambian plays by Zambian dramatists using rich local materials such as folklore, dance, music etc. It also resolved to create a small independent self-supporting theatre group that would "take theatre to the people". The result was Bazamai, meaning "Let's go!" in Lozi. Bazamai refused to have anything to do with

expatriate theatre, and was given a government grant through the Department of Cultural Services, which enabled them to buy a bus.

Masautso Phiri took almost total control of Bazamai, and was responsible for almost all its major productions. This was probably Bazamai's major downfall. At Phiri's graduation in 1974, Bazamai which depended entirely on his charisma and dynamic personality, collapsed.

In the year of Bazamai's inception (1970), there arose another small group of dramatists: the Mukuba Workshop; its members: Kabwe Kasoma, David Foko, Cosmo Chipulu, Lazarus Chewe, and others, were out-spokenly anti-Chikwakwa and anti-UNZADRAMS. TAZ considered them supporters of European theatre and sent Kabwe Kasoma<sup>18</sup> to Denmark to represent Zambia at the International Theatre Workshop organised by the International Amateur Theatre Association (IATA).

Kabwe Kasoma argued on the TAZ Committee to send Zambians in TAZ to Britain, to be trained in producing and directing plays. TAZ was receptive to these views and sent David Foko, to London for training. His return and subsequent work was pivotal in developing views against TAZ. According to Kasoma, Foko's training was not helpful to Zambians since the ideas he learnt were "alien" to indigenous needs. Foko "started talking like David Wallace"<sup>19</sup> in TAZ committees. Wallace argued that there was no such thing as African Theatre, and that all theatre was one in the world. His views were supported by others in TAZ. Foko even refused to produce plays by Zambians because they did not conform to Western standards. Kasoma was approached on several occasions by Etherton who pointed out that he was retarding the progressive development of indigenous Zambian theatre. Kasoma remained on the TAZ executive, arguing that his association with TAZ was intended to form a bridge between blacks and whites. He believed that his continued work with TAZ would finally bear fruit in supporting the government with its policies of racial harmony.

In 1971, Kasoma was sent to Sweden to attend the tenth IATA Conference where he presented a paper in which he argued directly against Wallace, and talked against expatriate opinion. He advocated development in an 'African' direction.

Let us now recapitulate the wrangle which mounted in the late sixties, and all the major events leading up to 1974, which marked the end of an era and the beginning of another, in the theatrical history of Zambia.

The history of the Theatre Association of Zambia (TAZ), goes back to the colonial era. Not only did colonial administrators look down on African culture, but they also turned many Zambians against their own cultural practices. Zambians began laughing at their own ways as backward:

a feature still dominant in the minds  
of so-called civilized locals. 20

The colonial administrators implanted western cultural practices in the colonies they administered. Fourteen years before independence (1950) another deliberate plan was launched: South African and British theatre and opera companies were constantly invited for performances at church fetes and schools. The forerunner to TAZ, the Northern Rhodesia Drama Association, formed in 1953, began organising festivals for whites only, excluding all non-whites. Seven little theatre houses were built <sup>21</sup> through government mine and municipalities' grants, all exclusively for whites. Festivals for black youths were started in 1958 which by 1962 subsided as the struggle for independence drew closer. These festivals came as a revolt by youths who turned their clubs into UNIP or ANC clubs. In 1964, with independence, the quest for cultural identity began. Zambia Arts Trust (ZAT) was formed to project a Zambian identity but this soon fell through in 1969. In that year, Chikwakwa came into being, its aim "to take theatre to the people". Finally there was the Chipata Manifesto in 1970 which resulted in Bazamai being formed by adherents to the contents of the manifest. This group also died in 1974.

From all these interwoven strands there emerged, in 1974, the Zambia National Theatre and Arts Association (ZANTAA). Since 1974 TAZ and ZANTAA have existed as arch rivals. ZANTAA describes itself as "the champion of indigenous or simply African theatre" and continues to see TAZ as an association which hinders the promotion of genuinely Zambian Theatre. ZANTAA's main concern is to perform ZAMBIAN plays that reflect Zambian life. Since its formation it has incessantly demanded for the abolition of TAZ, which is identified by some, despite frequent all black casts, "as a bastion of neo-colonialism".<sup>22</sup> Its main supporters, the expatriates, turn up to see local versions of "Jesus Christ Superstar" and "West Side Story," white dominated shows that ZANTAA ideologues pronounce, "alien" and "irrelevant" to Zambia's "cultural revolution".

The actual explosion between the two rivals can be traced back to 1969 when UNZADRAMS presented an adaptation by Etherton of Ferdinand Oyono's Houseboy. Steven Moyo was Stage Manager of this production which was entered in the TAZ annual festival of 1969 held at Lowenthal Theatre, Ndola. The set was simple but highly provocative in its presentation of the lifestyle of colonials and their treatment of Africans. They were offended by the play because it exposed their misconceptions and ignorance about black people. The play revealed the superficiality of white colonial culture which it effectively, comically satirized. It showed too the stupidity and ignorance of the white master towards the African.<sup>23</sup>

In 1970 UNZADRAMS again entered the festival with Kabwe Kasoma's The Fools Marry. Like Houseboy, this play caused much controversy. It was a play which was presented with Zambian humour, for example there is a scene where a drunkard urinates on stage. The British adjudicator was offended because he could not understand why the Zambians were laughing. He criticised turning what he considered a tragic play into a comedy by poor staging and poor acting. The play also depended a lot on direct translation of Chibemba idioms

into English, which the foreign adjudicator could not understand. The cast accused the festival of racial segregation and plotting against UNZADRAMS since there were very few Zambians in the audience to appreciate the Zambian sense of humour. Kasoma and Hudwell Mwacalimba were the main spokesmen for UNZADRAMS at the TAZ executive meeting which turned out to be a heated debate. The controversy which began with Houseboy and worsened with The Fools Marry<sup>24</sup> was the beginning of a debate between UNZADRAMS and TAZ. It was clear that things were going to change. However, hardened feelings were created by members of TAZ towards Etherton and UNZADRAMS.

UNZADRAMS representatives attacked the whole idea of the festival, saying that its competitive nature killed innovation and inhibited the growth of theatre. They also attacked the adjudicator, David Pownall, and TAZ itself. They asked for a black actor, dramatist or director who would be capable of adjudicating the festival, to be brought in. Suggestions such as Le Roi Jones (Amiri Baraka) and Wole Soyinka were made. Kasoma and Mwacalimba tried to define Chikwakwa and what it stood for, while in an apparent about-turn Lazarus Chewa and Cosmo Chipulu, representatives of Mukuba Workshop, teamed up with David Wallace to attack UNZADRAMS.

In 1971, in order to demonstrate their convictions, UNZADRAMS entered Kazembe and the Portuguese by Andrea Masiye, on an uncompetitive basis, to be unadjudicated and performed at Chikwakwa which was situated East of Lusaka in Chamba Valley close to the compound, where a majority of the Zambian masses, it was hoped, would turn up to watch the production.

In this year, the adjudicator David Pownall decided to get himself involved in the debate. He called Chikwakwa a "prestigious organisation" that was putting up walls and isolating itself from other organisations. He condemned Chikwakwa for refusing to put up their play before him, so that he could judge it.<sup>25</sup> Pownall after adjudicating at the TAZ annual festival in 1971 reported:



As the festival continued it became depressingly obvious that many things had not changed - that perhaps the dream of a Zambian theatre was impossible and unwanted by the majority of the people. Materialism, political propaganda, the economy, the accident rate, the bread shortage, all became more influential, more meaningful and theatre seemed a dispensable part of the country's future.<sup>26</sup>

Interestingly enough, in that year the students at UNZA had demonstrated against the French government for its role in South Africa military built up. On the day that Kazembe and the Portuguese was presented, the production was disrupted by an arrest of the students and consequently Michael Etherton was expelled from the country.

The late sixties and early seventies marked a significant change in Zambia's political and economic affairs. The falling copper prices, Zambia's continued involvement in the liberation of the South, and her internal problems, such as narrowing the imbalances between the urban and rural areas and training of manpower became an increasing strain on her economy. This was the period that marked an end to the economic exuberance of the sixties, moving towards the difficulties and constraints of the seventies which remain with us today.<sup>27</sup>

With this in mind, there is some truth in Pownall's statement that other matters had taken precedence over art and the theatre. And sure enough students were arrested, Etherton expelled, bringing the death of a promising experiment.

Kazembe and the Portuguese and the production Che Guevara produced in 1970, also by Etherton, were unique theatrical experiments in presentation and utilization of the Chikwakwa open air theatre. In them he experimented on how traditional music and dance could be used to enhance the production. In Kazembe and the Portuguese, the audience sat on the stage and the action took place in the seating arena. In this way, the

producer was able to demonstrate the contrasts between the colonial Beira and Kazembe's autonomous African Kingdom.<sup>28</sup> Masks were used to characterize white people. Traditional music and dances were used to convey the whole story and to dramatize the slavery and inhuman treatment of Africans by Portuguese traders. This was specially intended to benefit sections of the Zambian communities, including the large majority with little or no education.<sup>29</sup>

The final move away from TAZ was based on opposition to the trend theatre was taking. Each year a foreign adjudicator was brought in from England, to judge plays produced by Zambians. The Zambians involved in the plays to be entered were convinced that the standards being used to judge the plays were based on British standards. The Zambians felt that they were being rebuffed and being misunderstood. Thus, resentment to the whole idea of being adjudicated by a foreigner increased.

At the following TAZ executive meeting in 1971, there were further differences between TAZ and UNZADRAMS. The result was that UNZADRAMS withdrew from TAZ in 1971 accusing the association of practising racism. Three years later (1974), the University members of UNZADRAMS, Chikwakwa travelling theatre, and individuals who had just left University converged at Chipata in the Eastern Province of Zambia to discuss the future of performing arts. They came up with what is known as the "Chipata Manifesto". The idea of establishing a performing arts association was on the agenda. In 1974, their efforts were realised when ZANTAA was finally formed at the University of Zambia. ZANTAA was immediately recognized by the government and given an annual grant of K5000.00 per annum. It aimed to develop "an authentic Zambian theatre" and proclaimed "a theatre of the people for the people and by the people".

ZANTAA argued against competition saying that it killed innovation and inhibited growth of theatre. Primary and Secondary Schools, Colleges and Community theatre groups affiliated themselves to ZANTAA. In terms of members of affiliated clubs,

ZANTAA has up to date about 150 groups affiliated to it. Infact TAZ lost a good member of its school affiliates, remaining with the schools run by whites or where whites were in charge, for example Mukuba and Kalonga Secondary schools remained affiliated to TAZ.

## CHAPTER TWO

### NOTES

1. Kidd, R., Popular Theatre and Non-Formal Education in Africa  
Educational Broadcasting International, March, (1979)  
p. 3.  
UNESCO and IPPF have promoted its use as an  
'indigenous' medium in development communication  
projects, particularly in relation to family planning  
This interest is an out-growth of uses of rural  
theatre in the fundamental education campaigns of  
the 40's and 50's (for example India, Ghana, Jamaica,  
Mexico and Indonesia), and search for ways of  
supplementing the mass-media, which are incapable of  
effecting change on their own.
2. Kidd, R., Peoples Theatre, Conscientisation and Struggle,  
Media Development 27 (3) (1980), pp. 10-14.

For example, Ngugi 1972, Masiye 1977.

It also relates to the development of a critical  
consciousness as a key component of struggle. (Refer  
to Freire, Paulo, Pedagogy in Process: Letters from  
Guinea-Bissau, Seabury Press, New York 1977).

Popular Theatre is "people's theatre", and provides  
a means of building this consciousness, mobilising  
people for action, engaging in struggle and re-  
flecting on the struggle. This is Brechtian theatre,  
challenging people to look critically at their  
situation and hence to change it.

Ross Kidd: is co-founder of the popular theatre  
movement in Botswana. He has written a doctoral  
dissertation on theatre and non-formal education  
in the Third World at the University of Toronto.

3. Zambian Theatre Enthusiasts:

The first generation of Zambian theatre artists:

Gideon Lumpa, Kenneth Nkata, Kabwe Kasoma, John Simbotwe and others, all members of ZAT.

Members of UNZADRAMS: Kabwe Kasoma, Dickson Mwansa, Stephen Chifunyise, Mapopa M'tonga, Youngson Simukoko, Masautso Phiri, Steven Moyo, Mumba Kapumpa and others.

4. Constitution of UNZADRAMS (Preamble) 1968).  
Chairman at the time, Hudwell Mwacalimba.

5. Mwansa, D., and Kidd, R., (ed.), Third World Popular Theatre Newsletter, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1982), pp. 33-34.

6. Mwansa D., "Pre-requisite to the Development of Performing Arts", (1981), p. 5.

7. The first generation of University trained theatre artists:

In 1970 a drama course was established within the English Department, after which the first generation of University trained theatre artists emerged. These artists became the pioneers of the Zambian dramatist movement: Kabwe Kasoma, Dickson Mwansa, Stephen Chifunyise, Mapopa M'tonga, Youngson Simukoko, Masautso Phiri, Mumba Kapumpa, Steven Moyo and others.

These graduates from UNZA have been responsible for organising and developing the travelling theatre movement in Zambia, organising popular theatre workshops, and for creating new groups such as Bazamai and Tikwiza. It is largely due to this group that the whole development of Zambian theatre has been a continuous process.

8. Chifunyise, S., An Analysis of the Development of Theatre in Zambia, (1950-1975), M.A. Thesis, University of California, (1977) p. 80.
9. Chikwakwa: evolved into a travelling theatre with the following objectives:
  - i) To be a people's theatre that also embraces the intelligentsia.
  - ii) To perform relevant social plays.
  - iii) To encourage new Zambian drama.
  - iv) To integrate the concept of theatre with ancient arts.
  - v) To take theatre to the people.
10. Makerere Training Theatre Movement: Influenced by Bertolt Brecht's ideas which linked the word "popular" with tradition and revolution, which he defined as ... "taking over the people's own forms of expression and enriching them ... in such a way that it can take over leadership ... linking with tradition and taking it further. (Etherton, M., The Development of African Drama, Hutchison University Library for Africa, (1982), p. 324). Ugandan students involved students, intellectuals and writers in performing for the masses. It meant travelling into rural areas, performing in dirty, dilapidated halls, playfields, village clearing and in urban bars. They attracted large audiences of up to 3000. The idea of performing in such circumstances, turning one's back to the comforts of the "little theatres" was considered as revolutionary" in the 60's.
11. Mwansa, D., "Strategies for Communication, Theatre As A Tool for Communication," UNZA, (1984), p. 3. (A paper presented at the 8th Annual staff Conference at the Centre for Continuing Education 27th March, 1985).
12. Mwansa, D., "Adapting Theatre For Community Animation, Cases from Zambia," December, (1981), p. 3.
13. Chifunyise, S., M.A. Thesis, p. 80.

14. Pat Maddy: Recruited from Sierra Leone. An actor, director and dramatist who was also previously editor of a newspaper in Sierra Leone. He was recruited to Zambia by Titus Mukupo of ZADACO after they met at the OAU PAN-AFRICAN Cultural Festival in Algiers (1969).
15. Chifunyise, M.A. Thesis p. 80.
16. Titus Mukupo: In 1969 owner and publisher of a monthly magazine called OUT LOOK.
17. Chifunyise, M.A. Thesis, p. 103.
18. Kabwe Kasoma:  
Zambian playwright known particularly for his three Black Mamba plays completed in 1971. He remains committed to a "theatre for the people", the masses. In an interview held with him he confessed, "I was an uncle Tom." He went on to say, "It was clear that TAZ had all the wealth and technical expertise, and wealth of facilities. The little playhouses compared favourably with Western Theatre Houses, Broadway of New York and Westend of London. We knew that we had to develop our own theatre aesthetic, and use of well equipped little theatres geared towards the masses. We needed some kind of training in skills, we did not have the skills."  
  
Kasoma had been referred to by Etherton as a "window dressing piece for TAZ."
19. David Wallace: David Wallace played an important role in the development of theatre in Zambia. He was described as a TAZ "defector", who in 1974 formed what was a kind of extension of Mukuba Theatre Workshop (his Kitwe-based group), Theatre Circle in Lusaka, which used the Waddington Centre as its base. Theatre Circle was composed mainly of students. Stewart Crehan's reaction to this group is that "it still carried with it a faint air of the non-controversial and the patronising, with its

"Kalulu" plays and productions such as The Elephant's Beer Drink; hardly the kind of plays that politically and socially - committed groups felt were relevant in the late 70's and 80's. Wallace departed from Zambia in 1975 bringing the group to an end.

Crehan, S., The Significance of Tikwiza, 1984, p. 5.

20. Zambia Daily Mail, 15 August, 1984.

Zantaa. Decade of Reflection, p. 6.

21. Little Theatres: Seven little theatre houses were built in Lusaka, Kitwe, Chingola, Mufulira, Ndola, Broken Hill (now Kabwe) and Livingstone.

22. Crehan, S., A New Mood in Zambian Theatre, (1984), p. 1.

23. Houseboy: for further details on this production see Chifunyise, S., M.A. Thesis, p. 118.

24. Fools Marry: for further details, Chifunyise, M.A. Thesis, p. 139-140.

25. Times of Zambia, 23rd June, 1971, Why The Adjudicator, p.8.

26. Theatre quarterly, 3 April/June (1973).

David Pownall - European and African Influences in Zambian Theatre, p. 50.

27. UNIP YOUTH, March (1985), Africa's Urgent Problems and the Paris Club, p. 7.

A report by experts of the organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) pointed out that the problem of developing countries' indebtedness remains very serious. From 1971 through 1982 their annual payments to redeem the external debts went up from 10 billion to 108 billion dollars.



28. Masiye, A., Kazembe and the Portuguese, NECZAM., (1973), p. vii.
29. Ibid., p. vii.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### POST ZANTAA DEVELOPMENT UP TO 1983

Zantaa's emergence suggested a movement towards "Zambianization" and a greater appreciation of "indigenous" forms in the realm of theatre. Yet Zambian theatre was still in its early stages of development, and because of this, still geared towards experimentation. To restrict Zambian theatre to one umbrella organisation at this stage would have meant limiting these areas of experimentation. Thus various groups, departments and individuals continued to work independently of Zantaa, producing plays and experimenting in various theatrical forms that relate in different ways to the idea of an "African" Theatre. This is the period in which experiments with "Popular Theatre", a form of theatre that had already begun to emerge in Zambia in the late sixties, began to extend its influence. Popular Theatre became to a large extent the most characteristic form of Zambian theatre, and still remains an important guiding force.

After its creation in 1974, Zantaa moved steadily towards the creation of what would be called Zambian theatre. The dance and drama presentations at Maramba, Victoria Falls and elsewhere in Livingstone (1981), demonstrated to the public the practical steps that Zantaa was now taking in establishing its own theatre aesthetic. Zantaa was organised into district, provincial and national committees which, on a voluntary basis, organized regional performing arts activities and an annual

Performing Arts Festival which was regularly attended by over 40 groups comprising over a thousand member-participants. At the annual festival, members met to present to each other the best of their work in poetry, choirs and traditional dances. Apart from the festival itself, Zantaa hoped to offer entertainment and, more importantly, education to the community.

Another group that continued to develop its own theatre aesthetics was Chikwakwa. As already mentioned, from 1970 onwards, Chikwakwa evolved into a Travelling Theatre, the main reason being that very few people from the low income groups came to attend plays produced at Chikwakwa in Kaunda Square. In spite of much effort, such as, publicising productions at market places and bus stops, and providing transport to the open air theatre, few members of the "working class" turned up to watch plays. Chikwakwa remained basically a University theatre until 1970, when the group decided to "take theatre to the people". Following the resolutions of the Chipata Workshop (1969) which had resolved to take theatre to the people, Chikwakwa organised annual tours to the provinces.

The first production, taken to Kasama, was Michael Etherton's production of Houseboy, performed in English. The reception of this production brought the realisation that productions would have to relate closer to the people's own lives and socio-cultural environment. The themes too would have to relate to subjects with which local audiences could identify. Audiences watched plays passively. They raised one or two comments but discussions or contacts did not fire their minds to rise to the occasion of cultural rebirth.

Chikwakwa's efforts were, it seemed, hindered by a lack of co-ordination with the various field workers and a lack of research on the target audiences;<sup>2</sup> instead of discovering from the villagers the problems which they themselves felt to be obstacles, the University group presented themselves as experts who knew and could solve the problems of the people concerned, only when the real problems were discovered, could these be used as relevant themes for the plays presented.

Chikwakwa also intended to introduce open-air theatres in all the provinces. In 1972, during a workshop held in Mongu, the Kamuhelo open-air theatre was constructed. However, due to a lack of basic research on the part of the students and lecturers the site chosen for the theatre was unsuitable: it was a victim of flooding. The idea of an open-air theatre constructed in the province received no follow-up and as a result soon died. Although many local people and school students participated in the building of the theatre, it was never used by them.

The downfall of the whole Chikwakwa movement was its lack of funds, and the poor maintenance of its existing theatre sites. In terms of their positioning (Lusaka and Mongu) they were isolated, and proved a financial burden on the University Students' Union and on the Chikwakwa members themselves, who had to provide buses to and from the sites. The idea of an open-air theatre was also dictated by the seasons, so that everything had to be squeezed into the dry season. Yet the period from July to September was the long vacation. This meant that there was very little time for performances. Added

problems were the lack of publicity (posters were put up on notice boards within the University campus but no advertising was done on radio or television). A downfall of Chikwakwa was its failure to establish an effective fund-raising policy to pursue the work it intended to carry out.

The failure of the Chikwakwa movement spurred members of the University community towards a different genre which they called "Theatre For Development". The idea was inspired by the Laedza Batanani group<sup>3</sup> of Botswana, which since the mid-seventies had successfully brought theatre artists and extension workers together in order to "animate" particular social problems in the context of a democratic mode of social communication and interaction.

In August 1979, a "Theatre For Development" workshop, otherwise known as "Theatre for Community Animation," was held in Chalimbana.<sup>4</sup> Many social workers and performing artists were brought together. With the aim of using drama and puppet theatre as an instrument of informal education. These popular, didactic theatre workshops have often been initiated by University-based adult educators. The two most important figures on the Laedza Batanani movement, Ross Kidd and Martin Byram, adopted the technique of "participatory research," which relies on a "democratic" research methodology in which the researcher tries to "become one of the masses" in order to understand their problems from within, the adult education team learn from the target population. The problems discovered and researched upon were thus used as themes for the plays. Examples

of these were rustling, venereal disease, hygiene and malnutrition. The ideal of this kind of popular theatre is described by Kidd.

In order to avoid being marginal, co-opted, or revolutionary, popular-theatre workers must take a deliberate commitment to reserve the social, economic political and cultural oppression of the poor. 5

Theatre for Development (TD) at Chalimbana was meant to mobilise people around local problems. During the workshop attended by 77 people including delegates from Botswana, Lesotho, Tanzania, Canada and U.S.A., participants shared basic adult education and theatre skills to elicit information from the people. They worked with and involved local villagers in five villages near the workshop venue. The product of this interaction was that participants produced sketches whose themes were based on the local problems of the inhabitants in that particular area. The performances stimulated spontaneous discussions, the idea being to break the silence that characterized most of the plays previously produced for villages in rural areas. It was also hoped that as a result, "action" would take place, and that the villages would be estimated to change their own conditions.

Chikwakwa and TD both focused on the marginal groups. Mwansa suggests that neither were connected with any on-going activity or poor people's movements or festivals; thus both lacked a context.<sup>6</sup> The need for a context was the main reason for linking TD with Primary Health Care in early 1981.

In 1981 a follow-up of the Chalimbana Workshop was carried out at the National Resources Development College (NRDC). After Chalimbana, provincial workshops were initiated in Lusaka, the Copperbelt, and in Southern and Luapula Provinces. Didactic Popular Theatre has also found an increased use in small community - based projects. Thus Oxfam is promoting its use in nutrition, education and public health; the Brothers of All Men (BAM), work in chief Chungu's area in Luwingu District, and the British Volunteer Services Overseas (VSO), also continues to use popular theatre in its education projects.

The 1981 NRDC workshop brought together artists and public health care workers. The workshop focused on the poor of the shanty townships of Lusaka. A report from the workshop stated:

In the past we have been too pre-occupied with theatre spectacle, whereas at NRDC we began to demonstrate that the success of a relevant performance lies in the research and analysis stage. 7

From this brief survey of the Chikwakwa movement, the Chalimbana workshop and its follow-up in 1981, it is clear that popular didactic theatre, or "theatre for development," is a powerful current in Zambian Theatre today. Its strength is in large measure due to the Chikwakwa movement which made the first important attempt to break away from the elitist theatre tradition and embark upon the idea of theatre for the people, or theatre as a vehicle of "conscientization". In the eighties this movement began to look for a context. Hence, the Health Care Workshop in 1981 at NRDC, and in 1982, the World Health

Organization's World Health Week, during which a group of old people presented a play called Koloboi, in which they demonstrated the lack of care for the "aged". The play was followed by a long discussion.

In developing the popular theatre movement, Zambia has been a participant in various workshops held in other countries that continue to advocate this form of theatre. In May 1981, a workshop on Community Animation Theatre (CAT) was held in Thunder Bay, Canada. Eight popular theatre workers from seven Third World countries attended the workshop, namely, Jamaica, St. Vincent, Dominica, Grenada, Nigeria, Tanzania and Zambia. The workshop focused on food; exploitation\* at source and in the market; and conducted community research data, improvising dramas and performing them. This resulted in an International Popular Theatre Alliance between Canada and Third World participants, A Newsletter, and a number of follow-up activities.<sup>8</sup> Representing Zambia was Dickson Mwansa who has stressed the areas in common between Zambia and other Third World countries a commitment to political theatre, and a commitment to the development of indigenous theatre, and all have nationalist goals.

It is claimed by some popular theatre advocates that popular theatre constitutes the logical development of theatre in Zambia from existing cultural roots, as manifest in the traditional performing arts and traditional rituals,<sup>9</sup> or, by others such as Kidd, that its "theatre workers engage



themselves in the struggle of the oppressed, using theatre as an aid in articulating their concerns and demands...<sup>10</sup>

One of the most successful Popular Theatre experiments was that of the Kamiriithu Community Educational and Cultural Centre (KCECC), a peasant and worker controlled organisation in rural Kenya. It voiced protest against injustice and corruption and championed the workers' rights, thus it became a major target for official repression.

The Kamiriithu experience was a "theatre by the people." In this respect it was unique that the peasant and workers were involved in analysing their reality and acting out their understanding of their situation, rather than responding passively to the thinking and analysis of others. Kamiriithu villagers were not just actors or participants but they themselves started the KCECC, they made all the decisions, controlled finances and determined the direction it should go in. The two Ngugis, Ngugi Wa Thiong's and Ngugi Wa Miri were simply ordinary members of the KCECC who deferred completely to the collective structure and consulted the committee on every decision. They were members of the community rather than out-side animateurs sent in to organise the community. They lived in the community, with close long-term contacts with peasant and workers, and a deep commitment to the village and to their villagers.

Kamiriithu was also distinguished for its organisation. In other popular theatre experiments in Africa the problem

has always been an organisational vehicle to take it further, a base for a follow-up action. All interest and momentum stops at the end of the performance or experiment:

Kamiriithu has shown that people come to a critical class consciousness, not in an abstract intellectual exercise but in the process of building an organisation and struggling for their rights. The drama is part of a broader community effort, a struggle by the peasant and workers to transform Kamiriithu....<sup>11</sup>

In this context drama is not the primary mobilising agent for community action, nor the main source of learning: It is "drama - within - a process" one of a number of interconnected activities which serve a broader aim of building a people's organisation and struggling against oppression.<sup>12</sup>

Another strength of Kamiriithu is that it advanced popular interests. For example, Ngaahika Ndeenda (I will marry when I want) talks about the people of Kamiriithu - their *lives, history, struggles, songs, experience, hopes and concerns*. It exposes through satire the manipulation of religion, the greed and corruption of the ruling classes, the treachery of the colonial collaborators, and the exploitation of multinationals.<sup>13</sup> Its central message, reinforced by the Mau Mau songs, is that the only option of the peasants and workers is to work together to transform their country and free it from foreign domination.

Kamiriithu is a concrete example of what a peoples' national theatre should be, accessible to and controlled by the masses, performed in their languages, adopting their forms

of cultural expression and addressing their issues. It provides an alternative version for developing national culture. Instead of elitist and neocolonial institutions of culture in the capital, popular centres of culture could be created in every village, where a type of theatre which correctly reflects the lives, fears, hopes, dreams, and history of struggle of the local people themselves manifest.

The problem with both Laedza Batanani and Chikwakwa is that most of the organisers were expatriates, amateurs from without, who were not in touch with the deepest cultural roots of the people among whom they worked. The success of Ngaahika Ndeenda depended to a large extent on the intimate knowledge of Limuru and its culture by the script organisers (the two Ngugi's), who arranged the script collectively.

What can be said for Chikwakwa and the application of Theatre for Development experiments, is that they took theatre sporadically to the provinces and rural areas. Chikwakwa, for example, created an interest in developing acting and writing talents among its members, and among secondary and college students, but its attempts to develop a theatre for the masses was far from being attained. Chikwakwa and Theatre for Development experiments remain the pioneer and representatives of the Popular Theatre movement in Zambia which today has become popular in community-based projects, (Oxfam, BAM and other organisations).

The events of the seventies were crucial to Zambia's social and political structure. In 1969 the mines were

nationalised, and thus the years to follow marked distinct changes for the country. 1969 to 1971 was the beginning of the armed struggle in the South, which intensified drastically by 1974. 1975 was the time that policies were reviewed, policies that in fact had served to the detriment of the country's economic stability.

In 1975, the President, Dr. Kenneth Kaunda, in his Watershed Speech insisted that,

we must defend ourselves against  
undermining our nationhood through  
cultural conquest. 14

In his speech he expressed his concern over Zambia's cultural heritage. With the nation's interest at heart and as a direct result of the death of Bazamai (1974), another group emerged, "Tikwiza".<sup>15</sup> At its establishment its members agreed to remain independent of both Chikwakwa and ZANTAA. It was to be an independent group of experienced theatre artists unattached to any existing institution. However, although it remained practically independent, ideologically, Stewart Crehan maintains:

In view of its internal organisation  
and "esprit de corps" it was an off-<sup>16</sup>  
spring - of UNZADRAMS and Chikwakwa.

Etherton, at the time of Chikwakwa's creation often stressed its role as a preparation for theatre work after leaving

University; the establishment of groups like Tikwiza, founded by ex-University students and members of Chikwakwa is what Etherton had hoped of his students, to continue theatre work after leaving University. It had basically the same aims as Chikwakwa, and insisted on group work. It had as its head a collective leadership of a board. All work was to be group work, leaving no room for "stars".

At the time of Tikwiza's formation, Mumba Kapumpa, already a member of ZANTAA, tried to win Tikwiza's members over to ZANTAA. At this time very few of them could see any future in ZANTAA, and preferred to remain independent. Kapumpa continued to work towards winning other members over to ZANTAA, but it was not until he became chairman of the club in 1980 that he himself informed the meeting that the club had now joined and was accepted by ZANTAA. Although a member of ZANTAA, its commitment to the organisation remained negligible.

Its first production, "Uhuru Wa Ndongo," was never written down. Its improvised nature clearly showed its members previous experience in UNZADRAMS and Chikwakwa, which relied a lot upon improvisation. Uhuru Wa Ndongo a kind of oral-dramatic epic which attempted to trace

the path from authentic Africa, through a destructive interregnum during which the psyche and some of Africa is transformed to a Euro-African culture. 17

Actors were required to do work on their own as "actors" and

"directors", and it was at this stage that Matsautso Phiri's concept of "each actor reaching his/her own climax,"<sup>18</sup> was formulated.

Between the years 1976-80, Tikwiza continued to produce both social and political dramas. Of all its productions the Soweto plays<sup>19</sup> are those for which Tikwiza is best known. By 1978 the Soweto trilogy, written by Masautso Phiri, was taken to Botswana. One notices at this time an evolution in the ideas of the group as a whole. During the production of Soweto plays, Tikwiza had moved from improvisation and collective authorship to an emphasis on the written text and the role of the director was reasserted, demonstrating to some extent a more conventional division of labour within the group, as well as the continuing seriousness with which members took their work. Soweto went to Botswana and Havana in 1978 and to Zimbabwe in 1980. Crehan points out that:

the influence of Soweto: Flowers Will Grow in Zambia has been such that scores of school drama clubs and other clubs have produced their own version or adapted the elegiac, recitative style to other subjects, such as Africa under colonialism, the liberation struggle in general, Angola and Namibia... 20

The group gained both national and international recognition. It earned itself a place at government banquets and gained some sponsorship both by the government and parastatal organisations. By 1980, Tikwiza became the most reputable theatre group in the country, yet by the end of 1980 it had already begun to move slowly out of the limelight.

By 1979, and into the eighties other independent groups had arisen which were directly inspired by the example of Tikwiza. Tikondane, sponsored by the Community Section of Zambia Railways, was formed in Kabwe in 1979. Other clubs such as Tafika, Taluka, Tapeza, Tabwera, Tithandize and many other groups (discussed briefly in the next chapter), including Bakanda Theatre in Kitwe, which was to become a sister club to Tikwiza in 1982, emerged. The Kanyama Production Unit, Zambia's only professional group, Kafunase, later ZANASE, consisting of Zambia National Service members, and Zaninge later to become a travelling theatre group like Kanyama, were all established in this period.

Tikwiza was accused of producing mainly "foreign" plays at the expense of Zambian ones. Many saw the group as elitist, opportunist and foreign-orientated. Tikwiza on the other hand had set itself certain goals, and therefore did not try hard enough to search for Zambian scripts which it appears they considered inferior material. What is more, it already had a bias against popular-style plays appropriate for a popular mass audience. The club favoured the selection of South, West, East and North African plays and black-American material, rather than home-grown products.

In a presentation at the Conference on Performing Arts in Zambia held at the Ridgeway Campus Lusaka 1984, Mumba Kapumpa defended the club:

We needed the money, and primarily for this reason the club chose to produce plays for a certain audience, with the money. Besides any play which bears relevance to present needs in Zambia, be it Kenya, South Africa or black American, can be used and incorporated as Zambian Theatre. Zambian Theatre need not be Zambian plays written and produced by Zambians. 22

It can be said that Tikwiza came to be the most successful independent adult Zambian Theatre Club in the country. It was the only club to earn itself international recognition, and thus established close links with the Party and its Government. In 1982 Lewis Nkosi, Professor at the University, English Department, raised considerable controversy when he suggested that Tikwiza was the most worthy candidate for a National Theatre Company.<sup>23</sup> The club's major problem lay with finance. Despite many efforts at fund-raising, it could not raise enough money to prevent it from sinking. Another reason is that none of the actors were professional, all had other more stressing obligations.

After eight years of existence, the demise of the old Tikwiza in 1984 marked the end of a chapter in Zambian theatre history. What Tikwiza, which operated independently of TAZ and ZANTAA, seemed to demonstrate was the possibility that a Third Force could be created in Zambian theatre, besides the two major national bodies. One can say that TAZ, Zantaa and Tikwiza represented three different ideologies at play: one, a theatre for the people and the development of "indigenous" theatrical forms (ZANTAA); two, western-oriented theatre (TAZ), and three,



an independent group which at the same time attempted a marriage between the two traditions, performing plays with themes appropriate to contemporary Zambia, but certainly using a theatre aesthetic familiar to the Western Tradition. The plays produced by Tikwiza were highly stylized. In Soweto Flowers Will Grow, the expressionist style was manifested in the idea of a human pile constantly feeding on itself. There was a minimum use of lighting and sound effects, and the stage was set with a raised platform back and centre, with staircases on the left and right and two platforms of different levels in front, the idea being to project an actor-centred production. The language used in most of their productions addressed an urban elite audience. Tikwiza's failure to survive makes one question the possibility of remaining independent. If a club with the prestige and status of Tikwiza could fail, where lies the hope for others?

During the period 1976-1980, with Tikwiza in the limelight, it seemed that for some time ZANTAA had remained in its shadow. Tikwiza remaining small had greater control and manipulation of its members thus was able to produce in abundance, and acquired a name for itself.

Meanwhile, ZANTAA and TAZ remained distinctly apart, but TAZ influenced by the move towards "Zambianization" of theatre also began to change its direction. It performed more plays directed or written by Africans. As Steven Moyo a former Chairman of Tikwiza (1980), pointed out in an interview:

One can say that perhaps the Africans who had worked with TAZ, for example, Kasoma, were instrumental in that the Playhouses, even today, have a much more Zambian character. Perhaps as a long-term ideology their strategy succeeded.

In 1980, the Lusaka Theatre Club opened Theatre Two, which was designed so as to be more suitable for presenting theatre-in-the-round. The present chairman of the Lusaka Playhouse (1984), Michael Fotheringham, claimed that the playhouse's direction has been misunderstood. Although whites had previously outnumbered blacks, the membership for 1984 stood at approximately 40 percent white and 60 percent black, and out of about 10 productions produced annually about 6 would be African. Fotheringham felt strongly that the effort of the playhouses were being undermined by African politics:

Culture here is being used as  
a political weapon!

One cannot deny the African flavour now found in all the playhouses in Zambia. More productions produced and directed by Africans are being welcomed into the little theatre, and black membership is steadily increasing.

The only exception today is, the Venus Theatre in Kabwe, which remains to date (1984), the only "little theatre" which is totally Zambianized. From 1976 - 1978, Dickson Mwansa, then stationed in Kabwe worked enthusiastically at breaking the neo-colonial mentality in the playhouse there. During his stay in Kabwe a crisis broke out at the Venus Theatre; this was basically a racial confrontation of the kind that has,

even until today, characterized the mining town, where racism is not yet completely eradicated among the white settlers and expatriates. Mwansa became the theatre director, yet still continued his connections with ZANTAA. He worked to bring more Zambians and whites into the theatre, and expected the whites to be open-minded, avoiding patronising attitudes. This kind of activity certainly contributed in giving Zambians confidence, and allowing them into the "little theatre". Certain whites, furious at the "interference" of blacks in the Venus Theatre, broke away and formed their own theatre group in the club for old soldiers in Kabwe, which had mainly white participants. This has now begun to happen in Lusaka (1985): The Lusaka Musical Society and ex-playhouse expatriates plan to follow their Importance of Being Earnest with more British plays at the British Council, obviously intended for European audiences. In Mwansa's two years in Kabwe he produced fifteen plays. In 1978-79 he moved to Kitwe and produced eight plays with Bakanda Theatre and two with Kitwe Little Theatre, "Concert on the Grave", and Kenneth Watene's play, Dedan Kimathi.

Through these activities, members of the little theatre in Kitwe expressed their interest to participate in make-up and play writing. Through a number of workshops with the little theatre, Mwansa offered to write The Cell<sup>24</sup> for them. He admitted that it took a lot of courage to stand up to the little theatres:

everything an African did was heavily scrutinized and often torn to pieces. Many blacks had their confidence totally destroyed by this attitude from the whites.

At the Lusaka Playhouse in 1981, a new group was created, The Tuesday Club. The club provided a forum for Zambian playwrights, dramatists, poets and artists in general. Through the activities of this group more Zambians could be seen entering the playhouses.

In spite of the efforts by the little theatres to introduce a Zambian flavour within their structures, the struggle between TAZ and ZANTAA did not cease. In fact by 1983 the tension had increased to such an extent that ZANTAA began to agitate for the banning of TAZ<sup>25</sup> and the nationalisation of the little theatres. ZANTAA insisted that TAZ had not changed. It was still an "elitist, racially segregated association.... Any merger would therefore be a merger of two diametrically opposed approaches to the promotion of culture."<sup>26</sup>

In 1982 President Kaunda called for a merger to create one national theatre association, in the name of national unity. ZANTAA's immediate response was to reject this call. Dickson Mwansa argued for the nationalisation of the little theatres. This row ended with the Minister of Culture, Dr. Henry Matipa being sent to Paris while Kebby Musokotwane, the then Minister of Education, initiated merger talks between TAZ and ZANTAA, later to culminate in the formation of NATAAZ, the National Theatre Arts Association of Zambia, whose first national festival took place in 1987. (The General Secretary of NATAAZ was Dickson Mwansa). In 1983 ZANTAA representatives had argued

against the idea of importing a foreign adjudicator who came from Britain to adjudicate supposedly Zambian plays on Zambian soil. In the same year, ZANTAA banned its affiliates from taking part in TAZ festivals. Despite the ban several clubs accused the association of having an "inferiority complex". This radical action by ZANTAA was perhaps not wisely thought through. It resulted in a public controversy which unveiled a lot of internal difficulties and the disorganisation of its leadership.

In the light of all these activities, the significance of the Zambia Cultural Services should not be underestimated. The department continued to popularize culture through music and dance performed by the Zambia National Dance Troupe. The Troupe was also sent abroad on several occasions to represent Zambia at various festivals. One must mention that the dances performed by the Dance Troupe had become a mere touristic spectacle. What is of greater significance is that the department undertook the responsibility of recording all cultural activities in all the culture institutions set up in Zambia. It coordinated all that was going on in clubs and associations. It also acted as a clearing house for requests and inquiries made to the Party and its Government on cultural matters. When animosity worsened between TAZ and ZANTAA, it was through the department that a paper was sent to the government requesting the abolition of TAZ and the recognition of one umbrella organisation. This was done while Stephen Chifunyise stood as its Director (1979-82).

The Department's greatest problem is its lack of finance.

By 1978, ZANTAA's previous grant of K5000 per annum was reduced to K2500, and to date, ZANTAA gets an annual grant of K1000. Could this not reflect a basic mistrust of ZANTAA's attitude? The department does however stress the need to have a strong arts movement or umbrella organisation in order to maintain high standards in performing arts. The President too voiced concern over the cultural issue when, in 1977, he called on local authorities and the party to encourage more cultural groups and theatre clubs. His expressed worry was the mushrooming of taverns in the local communities, which he felt was a result of poor entertainment and recreation facilities.

It is clear that there is considerable verbal concern to develop the performing arts in Zambia, but that as far as the Party and Government are concerned other matters take precedence over the arts. Lack of financial support has severely exacerbated the situation. The overriding problem of all theatre groups is sponsorship. Whereas a small theatre group requires little in the way of props, costumes and staging and needs no lighting or special effects, any group that seeks to go beyond these narrow constraints is immediately faced with a cash problem. An organisation as large as ZANTAA cannot hope to achieve its stated goals with an annual support grant of K1000. It could thus be argued that little real seriousness is shown over the development of the performing arts in Zambia. It is interesting, therefore to compare what other countries such as Ethiopia have done in terms of promoting the performing arts, where the government in 1975

nationalised the theatres and turned theatre into a profession supported by the state. Amateur groups at district and sub-district level were given an annual grant equivalent to 5000 U.S. dollars per annum.<sup>27</sup>

Comparisons of this sort show to some extent that what is needed in Zambia is a stronger cultural policy concerning the arts in order to encourage or precipitate its development. Theatre in a country such as Zambia needs that kind of support since where else is it going to come from?

### CHAPTER THREE

#### NOTES

1. Mwansa, D., "Adapting Theatre For Community Animation, Cases From Zambia", December, (1981), P. 3.
2. Mwansa, D., "Popular Theatre As A Tool For Social Animation," (1981), p. 12.
3. Ibid, p. 12. Laedza Batanani:  
In Botswana the project was initiated by adult educators, whereas Chikwakwa was initiated by dramatists. From 1975-77, campaigns became an annual event with extension agencies and local leaders involved and pedagogy stressed. The project was concerned with methods of encouraging local people to participate in community activities, and take some positive action.
4. Chalimbana Teachers Training College, 28 miles east of Lusaka.
5. Kerr, D., "Didactic Theatre in Africa," UNZA, Seminar paper, (1980), p. 19.
6. Mwansa, D., "Adapting Theatre for Community Animation Cases From Zambia", December, (1981), p. 5.
7. Ibid. p. 5.
8. Popular Theatre Workshop  
The basic formula for the workshop had been tried and tested in national workshops in Botswana (1974), refined and further developed in a series of workshops in Zambia (1979-81), Nigeria (1979-80), and Tanzania (1981).

Nigeria has organised three workshops arranged by Ahmadu Bello University.



Swaziland held its first national workshop in October 1981, followed by district workshops.

In Zimbabwe in 1983, African Popular Theatre Workers from 25 African Countries met in Harare to share experiences, and participate in Zimbabwe's campaign of community mobilisation. There are similar community action-oriented theatrical activities going on in India, Bangladesh, Latin American, the Philippines and the Caribbean.

9. Mwansa, E., "Popular Theatre As A Tool for Social Animation December, (1981), p. 7.
10. Kerr, D., "Didactic Theatre in Africa," Seminar paper, UNZA (1980), p. 19.
11. Kidd, Ross, Popular Theatre and Popular Struggle in Kenya: The Story of Kamiriithu, Race and Class, XXIV, 3, (1983), p. 303.
12. Ibid, p. 303.
13. Ngaahika Ndeenda: The central character of the Play, Kigunda, is a poor farm labourer employed by a rich farmer and former colonial collaborator, Kioi. Kigunda is swindled out of his small plot of land by Kioi, aided and abetted by the manipulations of religion. His daughter is impregnated by Kioi's son, thus forced to drop out of school and begin work on a coffee plantation. She falls in love with a worker from the Bata Shoe Company and resists the men who come to seduce her, saying, "I Will Marry When I Want". At the end of the play the worker organises a strike at the Bata Shoe Factory and the daughter leads a struggle against the multi-national owner of the Coffee Plantation.
14. Kaunda, K.D., The Watershed Speech, 30th June 1975, Zambia Information Services, Lusaka, p. 28.

15. Tikwiza Founder Members: Masautso Phiri, the club's leading creative force. Parnwell Munatamba, Youngson Simukoko, Mapopa M'tonga, Mumba Kapumpa, Matilda Malamamfumu, Haggai Chisulo, Willy Magwali, Edwin Manda, Bryson Lhanggi, Dorcas Habenzu, Emmy Kaluwa, Esau Phiri, and others.
16. Crehan, S., "The Significance of Tikwiza", 1984, p.5.
17. "Uhuru Wa Ndongo", (programme).
18. Phiri, M., Soweto, Flowers Will Grow, NECZAM, (1979), pp. 89-90.

The development of an actor-centred approach is something I have been researching in since my involvement with Bazamai Theatre. This stems from the idea that an actor in a production must reach his own climax... the actor lives in a world of his own - a world outside the existence of other actors. Thus communications with other actors is deliberate - can easily be discontinued if need be.
19. Soweto Plays: "Flowers of Soweto" (1976), "Soweto Revisited" (1977), "Soweto Remembered" (1978). The trilogy: Soweto: Flowers Will Grow.

The first movement of the play was conceived as a result of the massacre on 16th June 1976, of school children protesting against the imposition of the Afrikaans language in schools, under the Bantu Education Act. The rising that followed resulted in 160 killed and many injured.
20. Crehan, S., "The Significance of Tikwiza Theatre", 1984, p.8
21. Tikwiza's productions: Examples of the many productions produced by Tikwiza.

- 1975 : Uhuru Wa Ndongo.  
1976 : Mercenaries, Transit Office,  
Flowers of Soweto.  
1977 : Soweto Revisited.  
1978 : Soweto Remembered.  
1979 : Fanon's Notebook; Christ Unlimited.  
1980 : Let Me Die Alone, The Trial of Dedan Kimathi.  
1981 : The Island, Knot of a Kind.  
1982 : Che Guevara, The Trials of Brother Jero,  
Smallpox on the Junkbin, The Cell.  
1983 : A Raisin In the Sun.

22. Conference on the Performing Arts in Zambia, July 1984,  
Mumba Kapumba questioned on Tikwiza, a spontaneous  
presentation.
23. Crehan, S., "The Significance of Tikwiza", 1984, p. 8.
24. The Cell, discussed in Chapter IV: A Play about prison life.
25. ZANTAA accused TAZ of preserving European "Civilization"  
at the expense of stifling and ridiculing indigenous  
performing arts. Further still, they claimed, TAZ  
has created and continues to create a Zambian elite  
who continue to pass on the colonial cultural values  
to the Zambian people.
26. New Theatre Quarterly, 9. Vol III., Feb. 1987.  
Cambridge University Press, P. 35.
27. Mwansa, D., "Popular Theatre As A Tool for Social Animation  
December, (1981), p. 7.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE PRESENT SITUATION 1984, AND A DISCUSSION OF ZAMBIAN PLAYS AND PLAYWRIGHTS

The year 1984 was crucial to Zambia's theatrical history. At this point it is necessary to question why Zambian Theatre has not quite succeeded in coming of age. Why is it that there is still no body of written work, that has the same international recognition as Wole Soyinka or even Ngugi wa Thiong'o for example? Experiments have been tried, the work of ZAT, The Cultural Services, UNZADRAMS, Chikwakwa, Theatre Circle, Mukuba Workshop, Tikwiza, Chalimbana and other theatre groups, yet all in all everything seems to die out. There is a lack of real continuity and development. Nothing ever "takes off". Movements start and are nipped in the bud. Talented people rise so far and no further. It is all a dismal tale of failure, looked at from a negative and pessimistic angle.

1984 saw the formation of an arbitration committee to resolve the wrangle between TAZ and ZANTAA. This committee was headed by the then Minister of General Education and Culture, Honourable Kebby Musokotwane.<sup>1</sup> The Committee proposed the formation of one umbrella theatre association.

One cannot deny the resistance viewed by various members of both TAZ and ZANTAA to the proposed merger. A TAZ affiliate, Lusaka Playhouse, chaired by Mike Fotheringham<sup>2</sup> reacted with a three-point statement:

We are members of TAZ because of its annual festival. We are an autonomous co-operative within the co-operative laws of Zambia. We will support actively any genuine attempt to further the cause of theatre and culture in Zambia. 3

In fact implying that the Lusaka Playhouse had as a second thought the idea of boycotting the merger. Some members of TAZ feared that the merger might bring very serious problems, unless the government was prepared to put a lot of money into the venture.<sup>4</sup> Mike Fotheringham, for example, expressed what many regarded as an extreme colonial view saying:

if the merger talks were to be resolved, what sort of plays would be put on? The new federation would have to embark on a massive campaign to educate and encourage more Zambians to come to the theatre. If Zambian Theatre is to have success it would take a lot of education in training Zambians to appreciate theatre. 5

ZANTAA it was felt,<sup>6</sup> was not mature enough to handle the running of, and bureaucracy involved in such a national theatre association. Its leadership was disorganised and its administrative work poorly run. ZANTAA's feelings expressed at The Conference on The Performing Arts in Zambia held at the Ridgeway Campus from the 27th to 30th July 1984, was that there is no way that TAZ and ZANTAA could merge.

The difference between the two is ideological, the two stand for opposed stances - TAZ by nature is capitalist, oppresionist as well as segregationist, while ZANTAA is for the masses, the workers and peasants.<sup>7</sup>

continues to undermine the role of the Zambianization programme in the country. Many believe that the presence of expatriates staging western plays and continuing to have such a stronghold in the country is an element which will continue to brainwash and manipulate black minds into believing western theatrical forms to be superior.

What is needed in Zambia is a strong cultural policy which will be given the financial backing it needs. Take the example of Ethiopia, the leading country in Africa in government involvement for the performing arts which after the 1974 revolution against the feudal monarch nationalised the theatre in 1975, and opted for a professional rather than an amateur cadre supported by the state, and managed by the Ministry of Culture. Artists were put on state payroll. There is a national theatre in Addis Ababa which is well funded. It has a professional company in the capital and professional companies in the Province. There are also amateur groups at district and sub-district level that are given an annual grant of the equivalent of 5000 U.S. dollars per annum.<sup>9</sup>

There is need for positive support and financial backing in order to boost the whole "industry". As Mwansa pointed out, at this level it is impossible to be self-reliant, it is only with funds that anything can develop.<sup>10</sup>

A comparison can be made with Nigeria, where the government set up Arts Councils in all states which are responsible for the promotion of culture, but as observed by Abah and Crew<sup>10</sup>

theatrical work of the council is poorly organised and often does not go beyond organising of traditional dances at cultural festivals and as adornments to political courts.<sup>12</sup>

It is true for most African countries that performing arts means only cultural dances. Apart from Ethiopia, support for the performing arts in Africa remains sporadic. Often African governments are quicker to censor works than to support them. A good example is Sierra Leone where severe censorship on all political plays puts playwrights in an atmosphere of servitude, as most theatre is tampered with.<sup>13</sup>

There is need at this time for conscious and deliberate policies concerning the performing arts, otherwise this area will continually remain insignificant. Initiatives to redress the colonial legacy and make theatre in Zambia "authentic" have come from various groups and individuals, not so much from the state itself. There are many groups mushrooming around the country, most of which are affiliated to ZANTAA, who work independently and courageously producing plays.<sup>14</sup> Of these groups the most outstanding are the Zambia National Service Group (ZANASE) which won first place in ZANTAA's 1984 festival with Graig Lungu's<sup>15</sup> "Welcome to Babylon," and third place with "Second Before The Storm," another of Lungu's work. The latter play was chosen to be taken to Vancouver in May 1985,<sup>15</sup> because it aptly fitted the peace element of the Vancouver festival. ZANASE's members are all employees of the Zambia National Service and all its theatre work is considered as part and parcel of their work. All its activities are sponsored by the Zambia National Service.

The Fringe Theatre, operating from Findeco House, Lusaka, and Kanyama Theatre Production Unit are the only two groups in Zambia which are moving towards professionalism. The Fringe Theatre is backed and controlled by a businessman, and have now built themselves a small theatre house which other groups are allowed to use at a small cost. Kanyama Production Unit consists of four men who perform in school and community halls. Its four members began in 1978-79 on a self-sponsored project to entertain in towns and rural areas. The Cultural Services at this time facilitated these productions. The Department of Social Development of the Zambia Council For Social Development (ZCSD) later used their skills to propagate views on Primary Health Care. The group is now attached to the Department, ZCSD and conducts Theatre for Development in rural areas. The group plans in 1985 to hold workshops in Lundazi, Katete and Petauke, where the four-man team will hold discussions on a number of subjects relating to forming TD in those areas. Participants in the workshop will be selected from various Ministries. The whole project will be sponsored by the Danish Volunteer Service. The group has been able through the sponsorship of various international organisations, for example NORAD, UNESCO, and the Danish Volunteer Service to generate sufficient income to pursue its work.

There are other groups that concentrate on Popular Theatre. Examples of these are Targets 2000 from Lusaka and Pamodzi Travelling Theatre from Luanshya. The former claims to be a "people's theatre group", and is sponsored by the Mental Health



The last strand is the controversial or groups which Fwebana Africa belongs to. They began as the African Dramatist Theatre based in Kitwe. Members of the group pledged to take an oath committing themselves to propagate African Drama. They marched to a stream where the oath was taken. The group was originally sponsored by the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), but after a scene where they actually burned a bible on the stage the YWCA abandoned them. They continued as an independent group and firmly anti-Religion. After a short while they claimed that the English language was betraying them, thus they turned to performances performed in African languages and became "Fwebena Africa," we Africans, the irony of it being that Chibale Kalaba its leader is not fluent in Bemba which is supposed to be his own mother tongue.

A splinter group from ZANTAA, Zambia Arts Theatre Union (ZATU) in 1984 is birth of another controversial group. It is the complaint against the way ZANTAA was being operated that forced the formation of this group.

At a festival held by ZANTAA in Kabwe in August 1984, many groups affiliated to ZANTAA were able to get together and demonstrate their work. It is interesting to concentrate on this festival which to a large extent illustrates a general trend and direction that Zambian theatre is taking today.

The theme, "A Decade of Reflection", was well illustrated in the thirty-six play productions which were performed. The plays could be divided into three main groups. Firstly traditional plays, with their village settings, which dealt with

Masiye (The Lands of Kazembe) and Kasoma ("Lobengula" and his Black Mamba plays). Second are the political plays which often make social commentaries on modern Zambia, as Dickson Mwansa's "The Cell" and Stephen Chifunyise's "I Resign", and Masautso Phiri's Soweto, Flowers Will Grow. The third category and by far the largest are the social plays that deal with problems such as, modernity versus tradition, Darius Lungu's "The Bottle and the Slave", which shows the problems and contradictions that a modern westernized Zambian encounters with the pressures of a conservative family. There are also those that reflect modern contemporary Zambia, and mock the immorality and hypocrisy of modern society, like Kasoma's The Fools Marry, and Chifunyise's "The District Governor Goes To The Village". These plays often reflect a pessimistic view and disillusionment with independence and modernity. Lastly are the plays that blame society in general, not Zambia alone but the world at large for the chaos that prevails in the world, as does Graig Lungu's "A Second Before The Storm" with its peace theme. A recurring theme in many of these plays is the idea of madness, social insanity and the imposition of institutions such as cells and asylums. The idea of madness, drunkenness, and crime is often used as a reflection of the whole society in general, and is a condemnation of society and the world at large.

The theme recurs in many plays, "Welcome to Babylon," "The Bottle and the Slave," "The Cell", "Smallpox on the Junkbin," and other plays. In Graig Lungu's "Welcome to Babylon," he questions whether it is correct to call people mad just because they divorce themselves from formality, and whether society rides

There was a tendency for Zambian playwrights to concentrate on the pre-colonial and colonial era. (Masiye and Kasoma, The Lands of Kazembe, Black Mamba and "Lobengula"). This was certainly the trend of the older generation of Zambian playwrights. This tendency quickly changed as the disillusionments of independence were felt. Plays and productions then became more politically and socially biased criticising the system, questioning the status quo and condemning the morality of the people. Kabwe Kasoma's "The Fools Marry," for example, written in 1969, is a social commentary depicting life on the Copperbelt. It ridicules urban society, the immorality, gossip and pettiness that exists to an extent that the world to the traditional mentality appears to be upside down, where "men are going to the moon".<sup>20</sup> All traditions are slowly being destroyed, where women are sleeping with their "bapongoshi" (in-laws), which is taboo in traditional Zambia. More and more writers begin to question modern society. Stephen Chifunyise's "I Resign", is critical of the political evils yet at the same time commenting on social injustice. It too, like "The Cell" or Graig Lungu's most recent play "Horses On The Rider," (which will be mentioned later) and many other Zambian plays, have a socialist bias. "I Resign" focuses on a Managing Director, Mr. Leeds, of a mining company whose attitude to people and things is what the author is critical of for example, his allegiance to Britain and not to Zambia, and finally his hypocrisy. The play advocates and concretizes the philosophy of humanism when correctly practised, and attempts to speak up for the unskilled or semi-skilled labourers who suffer from the selfish attitudes generated by the Zambian Copper-mines owners.

1969-1971 was the emergence of the armed struggle in the South, this emergence immediately had an impact on Zambian society and thus was reflected first in its theatre productions. In 1970 UNZADRAMS produced Che Guevara, and the seventies saw more productions reflecting the theme of the armed struggle, for example The Trial of Dedan Kimathi. In 1976 as a result of the massacre of school children protesting against the imposition of Africaans in schools in South Africa in Soweto, Masautso Phiri conceived Soweto, Flowers Will Grow. Its theme is the spirit of liberation and independence of the African

The movement from pre-colonisation, colonialisation, the African reaction, and the struggle for independence, and lastly independence and the crisis of expectation, is followed by plays like Soweto, Flowers Will Grow, which make reference to a continuation of this struggle for other African people and study the spirit of liberation. By far the largest category are the plays that make social commentaries, whether political or purely social on life in contemporary Zambia.

The criticism of these plays is that in most of the plays, themes, are not explored and developed. Most Zambian plays are only one-act plays which rarely follow the traditional pattern, exposition, climax, denouement. Kazembe and the Portuguese for example has been criticized for the non-dramatic progression of the play, and the apparent absence of a final climax. Most African playwrights' response to this sort of criticism is that

if you are not looking for these things you do not miss them.<sup>21</sup> However, one must bear in mind that there is a difference between a well-made play which rejects traditional forms, and one which simply fails to achieve this goal on a pretext of having rejected traditional patterns.

It seems to me that most Zambian plays are short and simple, often only one-act plays. All this said and done in one act, thus hardly ever achieving a development or exploration of a theme. The historical plays are often straightforward sequential, and episodic. Kasoma's Black Mamba is the best example of this. It is tenuous, a series of short scenes which lead up to independence. This style give the impression of a simple play with very little complexity. The most complex is perhaps Black Mamba III, where the major conflict moves away from African against Colonialist to a fight within the movement itself. It is this thinness, and situational drama rather than internal psychological conflicts, and the presentation of stock-type characters which makes Zambian plays appear amateur and mediocre. None of the characters are given much depth in fact characters are often simply used as mouth-pieces for the author's ideas. Rather than showing how things became what they are, we are simply told how someone arrived at the situation they are in now. Opinions are voiced, and situations explained and in one act all is said, and seldom shown. Conscience in "The Cell," Samuel in "Smallpox on the Junkbin" or even Mr. Leeds in "I Resign," are presented without the counterveiling irony or shading of an alternative viewpoint. The central characters or characters in general are not presented subtly enough. Conscience, for example in

"The Cell", offers ready-made solutions to problems in an overtly didactic manner, in this way it produces a naive drama, and at the same time the message intended for the audience becomes ineffective.

There is also the criticism that not enough theatre genres are explored, for example the techniques of multiple irony, symbolism, historical distancing, and the exploration of community myths. In an anxiety to popularise their ideas and philosophies playwrights are supporting a regrettably second-rate theatre for Zambia. Plays in Zambia must be capable of using a fuller range of dramaturgical skills, intellectual complexity, psychological depth and emotional resonance.

Another criticism too is that of the dialogue. Characters often fail to speak in character and often the flow of language is unnatural. In Darius Lungu's "The Bottle And The Slave", for example, there is a village girl, Tikambenji whose personality in dramatic context is not congruent with her character; she talks about her preferences not mattering so that the terminology or the language she uses is not in character. Perhaps it is the problem of writing in English that we are up against here. There is also the point of the unnatural flow of language which gives the impression that playwrights do not listen to colloquial language. In "The Cell," the prisoners talk to each other about freedom:

Prisoner: How could I - I am behind the bars -  
you are there with your unfettered  
freedom - the freedom that has turned  
you into a citizen - no sense of  
direction heading for collapse -  
distruction the social black out.

Man: tell me how you have come to know  
lots of things about me. If you  
don't then I know that you are mad.

Prisoner: Sanity is relative.....22

And so the play goes on line after line, ..... "you are  
stations in foreign climes....., Mr. Thinker in verbosity ..."  
All is didacticism, and one questions whether this is the way  
people really speak, and one questions too the likelihood of  
prisoners speaking to each other in this manner. It would  
certainly prove tedious to any audience to follow any play  
presented in this manner, where every line is filled with  
didacticism and where there is virtually no action. The same  
criticism can be made of Soweto, Flowers Will Grow which  
presented in its elegiac poetic fashion is in fact a documentary  
with no action, conflict, crisis or denouncement.

The biggest problem that amateur playwrights are faced  
with is that there is no body to criticise, evaluate and direct  
their work. Most playwrights have no formal training in writing  
and producing skills. What is greatly needed in Zambia is formal  
training, which could be arrived at by opening a Drama School  
which is yet non-existent.

It is time to recapitulate and form some kind of overall  
conclusions. Going back to Independence 1964, ZAT's activities  
were continued by the Department of Cultural Services. The only  
really successful project of this Department was the Dance  
Troupe, which today has become a mere tourist spectacle.

1970-71 was a "crisis" year, it was the time that revolutionary popular theatre in Zambia began to arouse the masses and invoked support for the freedom fighter (MPLA, The Popular Movement For the Liberation of Mozambique). This brought radical change in Zambian society. It did it seems produce a confrontation of some kind, though nothing like that in Kenya. The "Popular Theatre" movement died out, largely, by 1979-80, and Chalimbana was really the death-knell. What had begun as conscientising, proto-revolutionary theatre turned into "Theatre for Development," a one-off affair, with no follow-up. All that is left of Chikwakwa is its "offshoots", or its children, and the activities of small theatre groups like Kanyama Production Unit that continue TD projects and participatory research in identifying development problems.

The attempt to Zambianize "conventional" theatre in the theatre houses, cannot be described as a success. With Tikwiza dead what remains at the Lusaka Playhouse for example are mediocre inartistic, feeble productions, produced and directed by Crawford Moyo, Sam Sikazwe, Felix Chileshe. The Venus Theatre is given to beer "guzzlers," and theatre there has become almost non-existent. The "Zambianization" of theatre houses although nearly complete, has been no gain in artistic terms for Zambia. At the Lusaka Playhouse, the Zambian productions do not attract audiences<sup>23</sup> and most of the Zambian productions are subsidized by the European musicals.

The "merger" it appears is an attempt to "kill off" ZANTAA as a force for change. The call for a "merger" came exactly after ZANTAA went "radical," demanding a policy on the cultural



issue. It also demanded for the nationalisation of the theatre houses. The governments response to this was to arrange for the gentle dissolution of ZANTAA. What continues on a more concrete level is the school, college, and other drama groups, which continue to propagate amateur theatre productions which regrettably have no clear direction. The new movements ZANASE, Tithandize, Zaninge and others, the most important being ZANASE, are perhaps the sole movement that continues to be moving in the direction of creating something in theatre that is distinctly Zambian. Take the example of ZANASE, the Party and its Government have done their best to smother Graig Lungu's talents by sending him for political "education" in Kabwe to train as a "political facilitator" for Zambia National Service. The result is that he does more and is rapidly moving on a collision course with the authorities. He is becoming more and more critical and his last play "Horses On The Rider," produced in 1985, is extremely critical of Zambian society.<sup>24</sup>

Generally what happened is that the Freedom Struggle in Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Soweto, and Tikwiza's emergence as the voice of "Front-line" support for our brothers and sisters in South Africa has given way to the problems within Zambian society: crime, rich and poor, corruption, poverty and other social problems. When Zimbabwe became independent the steam probably went out of Tikwiza, and the failure of the club to turn from the freedom struggle to contradictions within Zambian society was its death knell. The Death of Tikwiza was 1984, formally, but when Masautso Phiri left in 1979-80, (coinciding with the death of Chikwakwa

and Chalimbana workshops, but also with the growth of new clubs), its end was already in sight.

Generally the failure for a Zambian theatre to emerge is due to four issues: A failure to establish an alternative, strong "Zambianized" theatre with its own theatre audience, alternative, that is, to the "little theatres" under TAZ, and there is little sign that this is on the way. A failure too, to develop or at least sustain a radical "Popular Theatre," because even popular theatre needs money. The "Popular Theatre" movement died, more or less, around 1979-80, but its spirit was broken before. A failure to produce a body of published work of plays that are worth studying, and a failure to transform traditional theatre: The National Dance Troupe serves foreign visitors only.

The government's role in all these theatrical developments has been in a very subtle way, not overtly to crush radical theatre or critical plays. When Chikwakwa was born in 1969, soon after, 1971, Etherton was deported as a prohibited immigrant along with Andrew Horn. Neither are allowed into the country ever again. Edwin Manda at this time became, important as he began to produce "unique dance dramas;" and the National Dance Troupe became a group of mere tourist entertainers at the airport and public functions, which is in fact exactly as the Party and Government want. Tikwiza was immediately recognised and praised by the government and funded by parastatals. By 1983, the support dissolved; already conflicts had emerged.

In 1980 Mainza Chona told Kapumpa that "Dedan Kimathi" was an anti-party play; in November 1982, there were threats to ban "The Cell" at the Ridgeway Campus; Tikwiza had served its propaganda function and was no longer needed. On censorship the government has often threatened to ban "The Cell" and Black Mamba.

ZANTAA's initial grant of K5000 was in the 1982-83 period immediately cut to K1000, when ZANTAA became extremely radical and made a push for dominance, to oust TAZ. Two reasons for this are of course ZANTAA's bad administration and organisation and a shortage of cash. But these reasons are not enough, the first is a pretext, the second does not explain why large sums are spent on culturally useless, unproductive areas, for example, Mercedes Benz for the last SADCC (South Africa Development Co-ordinating Conference), Conference.

Government officials hardly ever patronise the theatre and an audience unless a top official is attending. The Government Party executives and top parastatals and other leading figures in Zambia seldom go to the theatre. The elite (unlike the elite in Nigeria) is largely uninterested and more than suspicious of theatre. They prefer to watch television, video films, maybe blue movies too, while they publicly denounce violence and pornography, and applaud the "cuts" (no kissing and no actual shots fired or blows struck) on television. It could be argued in fact that the Zambian "educated" elite are primarily to blame for the fate of Zambian Theatre and drama.

Masautso Phiri, who is obviously a powerful creative force in Zambia's theatre history, was "ousted" from Tikwiza, and it is Mumba Kapumpa, who courted the authorities, who was publicly praised. Phiri, feeling "pushed out," went abroad and came back to make films and start a newspaper. He soon found himself sacked from NECZAM because of his absence from work, the Zambia press crushed his new upstart, and the government film and camera people made sure that FITECO, his new group, died. It died unlamented by Television Zambia. He is now Protocol Adviser at the American Embassy.

And what of all the creative vitality of Zambia, and all the other "dramatic" figures. Mumba Kapumpa is "incorporated" as legal adviser, Steven Moyo is now comfortably Director of the Institute for African Studies, Mapopa M'tonga has gone abroad to do a doctorate. The University drama course has come to an end because there were no more students who enrolled for the course from 1982 onwards. The New Centre for the Arts is still in question, and one wonders what it will really achieve. Edwin Manda, unfortunately had a brain tumour and had to undergo a serious operation and is out of the theatrical field. Kasoma still battles on at the University, but ideologically he has no clear sense of direction, simply because he is now an "old man" and it is really time for young creative forces to take over the reigns. Andrea Masiye is "incorporated" into the elite, as are many others. Pat Maddy has left, so has Parnwell Munatamba, who is now in Botswana. Jeff Sitali is now doing pathetic Colgate advertisements on television, hardly the sort of thing relevant

to the development of theatre today. Ex-UNZADRAMS, Chikwakwa, and drama students are either rotting, unfulfilled, in school or in a few cases developing drama clubs, for example, Jacob Chirwa, or many have simply settled down in good jobs or have left the country and are not likely to return. Very few are able to keep up with interest in theatre except those in school who are running drama clubs.

To end on a more optimistic note, one could say that the direction taken by Popular Theatre activities and Theatre for Development, TD, is the most encouraging aspect of Zambian theatre today, and that this kind of theatre offers the most viable future for Zambians. The advocates of Popular Theatre work enthusiastically with the people in rural areas. Most of their activities are sponsored, and finally these are the people learning and expressing the local culture, exposing the problems of the people and finally manifesting Zambian cultural expression. This form of theatre, developed to a certain level of sophistication could become a strong cultural force. Playwrights could use the basic themes gathered from the people themselves, their problems and the contradictions within the community to help lead audiences to a fuller understanding of the forces at play in the world, to seek a fuller understanding of "what life is all about, and where we are going."

## CHAPTER FOUR

### NOTES

1. Minister of Education and Culture who in 1985 after the reshuffling by the President became the Prime Minister.
2. Mike Fotheringham: Lusaka Playhouse Chairman (1964).  
In the past he has worked with big names such as Morecambe and Wise, Kenn Dodd and John Hanson.
3. Zambia Daily Mail, 17th December 1984, Theatre Club Rejects Merger, p. 4.
4. Discussions with members of TAZ indicated that they viewed the merger as contradicting the government effort in establishing co-operatives. TAZ affiliates, it is argued, are autonomous co-operatives where members buy shares. They refused to accept the accusation held by ZANTAA that the little theatres stage mainly western plays. The Lusaka Playhouse for example, produced an average of about six African plays out of their ten annual productions. The main reason given for continuing the western plays is that African plays did not make enough money and were in fact often heavily subsidized by the western musicals and pantomimes.
5. Personal interview held with Fotheringham.
6. Zambia Daily Mail, 9 June 1985, ZANTAA Criticised, p. 4  
ZANTAA national leadership criticised for maladministration and abandoning its priorities in its quest for a merger between TAZ and ZANTAA. The leadership was accused of inefficiency, (Southern Province Chairman Rhobie Mahki):  
  
"It is unfortunate that the national executive has chosen to do more talking on unnecessary issues instead of dealing with issues that are more pressing. ZANTAA seems to be lost in direction everyday... How can an association with such confusion talk about taking over little theatres in this

country when it cannot run its current small membership. What will happen when all theatre houses are run by these people? We should stop all this talking until we re-organise our leadership."

7. Francisco Banda, "Quest For An Identity, ZANTAA as a National Movement," p.5. Conference on The Performing Arts in Zambia July 27-30, 1984.
8. Mr. Sinyangwe questioned at the Conference on The Performing Arts. 27-30 July 1984.
9. Mwansa, D., "Popular Theatre As A Tool for Social Animation December, (1981), p.9.
10. Dickson Mwansa speaking at the Conference 27-30 July 1984.
11. Representatives of Nigeria at the IATA Advisory Conference on Theatre in Africa held in Harare, 3-5 September, 1983.
12. IATA Advisory Conference on Theatre in Africa held at the University of Zimbabwe, 3 - 5 September, 1983.  
Paris: I UNESCO (draft and document) 1983, p. 18.
13. Ibid, p. 119.

Examples of Zambian Theatre Groups:

14. Mwansa, D., "Popular Theatre As A Tool for Social Animation  
Lusaka: Lilayi Police Training School.  
ZANASE: Zambia National Service Group.  
Evelyn Hone College Drama Club (EHCODRAMS).  
UNZADRAMS (University Drama Club).  
Targets 2000.  
Tapeza Theatre Group.  
  
Kitwe: Tithandize Theatre.  
Fwebena Africa.  
Zhaninge Travelling Theatre.

Chingola: Twapenga Theatre Group  
Lutonuma.  
Pamodzi Travelling Theatre.

Ndola: Kandondo Theatre, now working in Luapula Province.

Kabwe: Tekumwenzo Kabwe Creative Arts Movement.  
Tikondane.  
Iseni Tutambe Theatre.

Chipata: Chipata Teachers Training College Theatre Group.  
Bayeti Theatre Group.

Kafue: Muhapi Theatre.

Mkushi: Zwangananga Theatre.

14. Graig Lungu: Prominent Zambian playwright and organiser of ZANASE.
15. The Canadian Red Cross Society has invited ZANTAA to take part in an international theatre festival to be held in Vancouver in May 1985. The theme of the festival is to be peaceful, development and participation of youths in development.
16. Muhapi Theatre is sponsored by Kafue Railways and has produced a number of Zambian plays in the township. Tekuwenzo from Kabwe performed "The Tramps" which took first place at the Third ZANTAA Central Festival held in Mumbwa 29th June to 30th July 1984. Tithandize Theatre from Kitwe rounded off the year with Graig Lungu's comedy "A Known Country", a play set in an independent Third World Country and shows chaos and trouble of changing governments without thinking of the consequences of such a move. These groups are referred to as semi-professional. Their emphasis is to promote Zambian plays.



17. Targets 2000 is a "Peoples' theatre group" which is sponsored by the Mental Health Association of Zambia. They recently launched a massive tour of the North-Western Province, (1984). Luanshya's Pamodzi Travelling Theatre concentrate more in rural areas.
18. Adjudicator: Steward Crehan, Senior Lecturer at UNZA, Department of Literature and Languages.
19. The Playwrights are: Maurice Chishimba, Stephen Chifunyis Chisala Felistus, Fairchild Chibomba, Kabwe Kasoma, Chibwa Kalaba, David Kerr, Moses Kwali, Kwaleyela Ikafa, Grant Lumbwe, Darius Lungu, Graig Lungu, Andrea Masiye, Fwanyar Mulikita, Mulenga Ngandu, Dickson Mwansa, Mary Mzyeche, Masautso Phiri, David Wallace, Whiteley K., Judith and George Yiend, Robert Baptie, Watts D., Malcolm J., Benson
20. Literally the line alludes to men menstrating, something unheard of.
21. Masiye, A.S., The Lands of Kazembe, NECZAM, 1973, p. iv.
22. Mwansa, D., "The Cell", 1979, p. 4.
23. Kabwe Kasoma's production "The Victim" had to be cancelled because of no audience.
24. The play is based on the master-servant theme but the house which symbolises Zambian society is mismanaged by a bankrupt, hopeless, drunken and dictatorial master and mistress, who are outwitted by the domestic wage-slaves; the workers do not leave because they have no where else to go. The master is declared unfit to rule and the play ends with the servants taking over. In fact the master is sacked because he cannot pay to keep the house so it is the workers who pay, and so the house is saved.

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