

# *The Well Being*

created by  
Andrew Buckland,  
Lionel Newton, and  
Lara Foot-Newton  
(collectively known as **mouthpeace** theatre)

## Study Guide

THE NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE ENGLISH THEATRE  
PROGRAMMES FOR STUDENT AUDIENCES  
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## About This Guide

This study guide is formatted in easy-to-copy single pages. They can be used separately or in any combination that works for your classes. Here is an outline of the contents of each page with suggestions as to its use.

<b>Page(s):</b>		<b>May Be Used To:</b>
Pages 2, 3	<b>About The Play</b> Plot outline of the play, character descriptions, themes and comments.	Aid students in appreciating the script and performance.
Pages 4, 5	<b>Biographies of Creators</b>	Provide students' enrichment.
Page 6	<b>Glossary</b> Afrikaans terms found in <i>The Well Being</i>	Aid students' understanding of language in the play.
Pages 7, 8	<b>Brief History of South Africa</b>	Foster students' understanding of the political and social background.
Pages 9 – 11	<b>South African Playwrights</b>	Foster students' understanding of the theatre background.
Page 12	<b>Activities Before and After Viewing the Play</b>	Prepare the class for the performance or reflect on it afterwards.
Page 13	<b>Movies, Books, Web-sites about South Africa</b>	Provide sources for discussion or research.
Page 14	<b>Curriculum References</b>	Provide the teacher with connections between curriculum and performance.
Page 15	<b>Theatre Etiquette</b>	Prepare students as audience members

## About the Play (page 1 of 2)

### Plot Synopsis

*The Well Being* tells the strange tale of Flo Deluge, a young woman living in narrow-minded village at the edge of a forest in a valley. Flo is raped by the local preacher and in her trauma she retreats to live in an isolated cottage in the forest where she obsessively proceeds to dig a huge hole as if her life depends on it. Flo's bizarre behaviour has become the principal topic of conversation for the villagers. The rains come, turn into floods, and her estranged community leaves her to the rising waters and the company of two garrulous "skollie" frogs. To the rescue comes a porpoise who persuades Flo to frolic with him in the waves. He leaves her with a strange "egg" to which she eventually gives birth, the offspring being a half-fish half-human. The flood is followed by a scorching drought which devastates the countryside once more. The fate of Flo and her baby is sealed when the rumour mill in the community decides that this strange woman and her deformed offspring are the cause of all its misery. The villagers descend on Flo and insist that she give them the water from her well.

In short, *The Well Being* is the story of love, water, a porpoise, a watermelon, and two frogs.

### Character Descriptions

*(All characters are played by two actors making rapid adjustments in voice and physicality.)*

**Flo** – a young black woman who retreats to the forest and digs a magical well.

**Sydney and Lenny** – two slang-speaking Cape Plains frogs.

Reverend Caketin – the two-faced minister of the village.

**Skidmark** – Flo's friend, the deformed "village idiot".

#### Villagers:

**Andrew and Lionel** – the actors themselves.

**Hilda and Marcia** – two old tea-drinking biddies.

**Boytjies 1 and 2** – two dart-playing pub buddies.

**Cherisse and Esme** – two air-headed young girls.

**Martin and Theodore** – the town drunks.

**Daphne** – Rev. Caketin's smarmy two-faced wife.

**Telephonists 1 and 2** – gossips.

**Mrs. Stoepkak** – an Afrikaner.

**Jock and Damien** – young ruffians, later married to Cherisse and Esme.

**A Porpoise** – a playful "fish" who visits Flo during the time of the flood.

**Nortjie** – the ineffective and pompous sheriff.

## About the Play (page 2 of 2)

### Style and Themes

The "action theatre" style developed by Buckland and Newton allows these two remarkable South African performers to create a myriad of characters using the minimum of theatrical effects. Using a minimalist design – a bare stage, green overalls, and only newsprint and a watermelon as props - the pair metamorphose into everything from English aristocrats to drunken louts to amiable Cape frogs as they relate their surreal tale. Andrew Buckland, and his work with **mouthpeace** from 1988-2000, provides a clear and unique example of this movement in contemporary South African performance. Trained as an actor and in classical illusion-based mime technique, as well as many dance forms such as ballet, contemporary and jazz, he has virtually single-handedly created and shaped a particular performance trend that is in line with contemporary international trends but retains a distinctive South African flavour. Pure performance skill stimulates the imaginations of the audience to involve them in a creative dialogue as rich as any realistic representation with set and props.

Buckland's work shows a strong influence coming from the German Tanztheater, or Dance Theatre, developed in the earlier parts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The name "tanztheater" refers to a performance form that combines dance, speaking, singing and chanting, conventional theatre and the use of props, set, and costumes in one amalgam. It has been described as a new twist on an old form: German Expressionism. The work of German choreographer Pina Bausch is often thought of as the most prominent example of Dance Theatre. Often what is most vivid in Bausch's dances is the inhumanity of men and women toward each other and the callous indifference of the world that surrounds them. Add to the surreal nature of Dance Theatre the brilliant clowning and mime techniques of Jacques Lecoq and you approach the almost indescribable phenomenon of Buckland and Newton's action theatre. The use of the frogs as storytellers and the villagers as a kind of Greek chorus reminds us of the origins of theatre.

The themes worked on in *The Well Being* deal with our superstitions concerning and negative reactions to those ideas or phenomena that we don't understand in society. The cruel injustice of an unfeeling authority figure (Rev. Caketin) and the rejection of the small-minded villagers lead to the tragedy of Flo's life. The frogs comment on Flo's bizarre surreal world where love comes from a "fish" and life comes from a watermelon. Flo's obsession to reach to the heart of the earth ends with the heartless persecution of the villagers.

Written with help from:

[http://www.southafrica.info/what\\_happening/arts\\_entertainment/theatre-wellbeing\\_021203.htm](http://www.southafrica.info/what_happening/arts_entertainment/theatre-wellbeing_021203.htm)

<http://prelectur.stanford.edu/lecturers/bausch/index.html>

### The History of the Play

*The Well Being* has played to great critical acclaim at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg as well as in a variety of Arts Festivals throughout SA. In 2001 it toured KwaZulu Natal and played in Sweden, Belgium, Zimbabwe, and Zambia; it played again in Sweden, Holland and Belgium in Spring 2002. In January 2003 it performed in Winnipeg, Canada. In 2002 it played a nine week season in the UK, three weeks of which were at the Riverside Studios in London, the rest touring Brighton, Manchester, Belfast, Dublin and Bristol.

What the Critics have said:

*"nigh on perfect theatre"* "magical vibrant celebration of performance art"

*The List*, Edinburgh, August 2001.

*"Utterly captivating, painfully funny, deeply poignant and so finely acted that both actors and director Lara Foot-Newton deserve praise beyond the ten stars available."*

(Footloose 17/4/02)

## **Biographies** (page 1 of 2)

### **ANDREW BUCKLAND – co-creator, performer**

Buckland was born in Zimbabwe in 1954 and studied drama at Rhodes University. He and Lionel Newton, performing together as **mouthpeace**, are renowned for their physical abilities, their mime and comic talents. Since 1988 Andrew Buckland has been producing original theatre work of a consistently very high standard and which is clearly seen to be at the forefront of theatre developments in South Africa. Employing a dynamic and exciting combination of visual comedy, sophisticated political satire, clowning, physical theatre, mime and an explosive performance style, the works of Andrew Buckland have become synonymous with provocative, entertaining and stimulating theatre both in South Africa and internationally. The original plays have won a total of 18 national and international theatre awards including several for best performance, best script, best production and play of the year.

A principal feature of the style of the work of Andrew Buckland besides its comedy, is its economy of production and a unique attitude to the relation between word and gesture. The ingenious and skillful use of mime techniques mean that the plays require no set and only simple costumes which allows them to be very easily and cheaply transported to different venues.

Since July 1992 he has been employed as a Senior Lecturer and then Associate Professor in the Drama Department at Rhodes University in Grahamstown where he has developed and pushed the boundaries for physicality in performance investigations since the 1990s.

### **LIONEL NEWTON – co-creator, performer**

Newton, another multi-award winning actor and novelist, studied at Cape Town university in 1986 to 1988. Lionel has acted in over 30 plays for which he has won several awards. He has workshopped over 15 new South African plays and toured extensively internationally. He has also co-written and directed four productions. He has acted in several movies, the most notable of which being The Channel Four movie *Jump The Gun* for which he won The All African MNet award for Best Lead Actor.

Lionel Newton is best known for his work with **mouthpeace**. Over the past ten years he and Andrew Buckland have collaborated on four projects, all of which have been Internationally acclaimed. Their most recent success, *The Well Being*, has recently returned from London after a sell-out season.

## Biographies (page 2 of 2)

### **LIONEL NEWTON** (continued)

Among Lionel's favorite plays are; *Score Me The Ages*, under the direction of the late Barney Simon, and Anatomie Titus' *The Fall Of Rome* under the direction of Marthinus Basson.

As a teacher Lionel has given workshops in physical theatre in Swaziland, Botswana, Zimbabwe, London, and Canada.

*“When I'm busy onstage playing with Andrew in this play there's almost nothing more rewarding. It's not the applause at the end or the bow or the photograph in the paper. It's like riding a fractal. It's like being a guy on a surfboard with a massive wave and while you're on that line you're working under extreme energy and if you f\_\_ up you're going to get dumped. I suppose it's that excitement that I enjoy ...”*

### **LARA FOOT-NEWTON – co-creator, director, designer**

Foot Newton is a multi-award winning theatre director, writer and producer. Lara is a disciple of the late Barney Simon and was the Associate Artistic Director at the Market Theatre (Johannesburg) for 1998 and 1999. One of Lara's achievements was the founding of The Barney Simon Young Directors Festival and The Barney Simon Young Writers Festival.

She has won several awards including the Standard Bank Young Artist of the Year award in 1995. Her latest productions include an adaptation of Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying* and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, both of which premiered on the Grahamstown Main Festival. She has directed over 27 professional productions, of which 23 have been new South African works. She gained national attention 1996 when she wrote the startling *Tshepang: The Third Testament* based on a serious case of child abuse: the rape of a nine-month old baby. She told of the social problems of unemployment, squalor, and alcoholism which led to the appalling incident in a compelling and even humourous way. Other plays that Foot Newton has co-created include *Reggie's Roaring Roadshow*, *Womb Tide*, and *Ma Gents*.

## Glossary of Afrikaans words and phrases

(in order of occurrence)

**moerse** – swampy, well watered  
**lekker** – nice, sweet  
**kaalgat** – bare ass  
**bliksemse** - scoundrelly  
**boytjie** – good ol’ boy  
**vrot** - rotten  
**bossies** – wild, back to nature  
**ja** – yes  
**nee** - no  
**lekker nat** – nice wetness  
**binnekant** - inside  
**Kos is op die tafel.** – Food is on the table.  
**Eina! Los my uit jou bliksem!** – Ouch! Let me out, you scoundrel!  
**papnet** – dripping wet  
**drankwinkel** – liquor store  
**zozo hut** – outdoor privy  
**gaan kak** – go take a shit  
**bietjie dom** – little bit stupid  
**malgat** – silly ass  
**stokseel alleen** – stiff as a poker alone  
**bang broek** - coward  
**Alles moes blank soos a button wees.** – Everything must be clean as a button.  
**weet** - know  
**naweek** - weekend

## The Languages of South Africa

Under the Apartheid government Afrikaans and English were official languages, although they represent the home languages of only 15 percent and nine percent of the total population, respectively. Afrikaans, which is closely related to Dutch, is spoken not only by Afrikaners who are descended from the Dutch, German and French immigrants, but also by 83 percent of «coloured» (mixed race) people. English is the primary language of many whites, but also is spoken by 95 percent of Asians. The English speaking population is largely concentrated in the Western and Eastern Cape Provinces and in Natal. The 1994 constitution added nine African languages to the list of recognized, official languages: Zulu, Xhosa, Sesotho sa Leboa (Northern Sotho or Pedi), Tswana, Sesotho (Southern Sotho), Tsonga, Venda, Ndebele, and siSwati. Some of these African languages are mutually understood and many blacks can speak two or more of them, in addition to English and Afrikaans. Together these 11 languages are the primary languages of 98 percent of South Africans. Many East Indians also speak Hindi, Tamil, Telegu, Gujarati, and Urdu.

[http://www.mapzones.com/world/africa/south\\_africa/langaugeindex.php](http://www.mapzones.com/world/africa/south_africa/langaugeindex.php)

[http://www.southafrica-travel.net/pages/e\\_bevoelk.htm](http://www.southafrica-travel.net/pages/e_bevoelk.htm)

### **Brief History of South Africa** (page 1 of 2)

The recent history of South Africa has been dominated by racial strife, first as a result of the disruption of European immigration, then the internal conflicts of racial groups, and finally due to the injustices of the apartheid era. Today there is a strong hope of the creation, from tremendous diversity, of a single nation whose dream of unity and common purpose is now capable of realization.

The earliest residents of the Cape region were the San and Khoekhoe peoples (otherwise known as the Bushmen and Hottentots) who inhabited the southern tip of the continent for perhaps tens of thousands of years before the arrival of the Europeans. As a result of diseases such as smallpox imported by the Europeans, of assimilation with the settlers and the slaves who were to arrive in later years, and of some straightforward extermination, the Khoekhoe have effectively disappeared as an identifiable group.

In 1652 the Dutch East India Company established a fort at the Cape of Good Hope and developed vegetable gardens and farms for the benefit of ships on the Eastern trade route. As the colony grew in the early 1700s with more immigration from Dutch, German and French Huguenot settlers, independent farmers called *trekboers* began to push north and east, causing stress with the agricultural Khoekhoe. The descendants of some of the Khoisan, slaves from elsewhere in Africa and the East, and white colonists formed the basis of the mixed-race group now known as "coloured". By the second half of the 18th century, the colonists had begun to lose their sense of identification with Europe and the Afrikaner nation was coming into being.

As a result of developments in Europe the British took the Cape over from the Dutch in 1795 and soon some 5000 newly arrived British settlers were placed on the eastern frontier. The Xhosa people's heroic defiance at the additional pressure on their land and independence resulted in a tragic chain of events and massive loss of life. Because of the British presence and the emancipation of slaves in 1834, 12,000 discontented Afrikaner farmers (or Boers) hoping for an independent state engaged in the Great Trek, an emigration north and east into the Natal area. This brought them into conflict with the resident Zulu nation. The British, fearing repercussions in the Cape Colony, annexed Natal where they had already established a small colony. On the Highveld, however, two Boer republics were formed: the central Orange Free State and Transvaal to its north.

Almost all of the indigenous people lost the struggle against white population, British or Boer. One territory that retained independence was the mountain region of the Basotho nation which offered refuge to tribes fleeing the invasions. Clashing with the Free Staters, the chief asked Britain to annex Basotholand, which was done in 1868. Known today as Lesotho, this country is entirely surrounded by South Africa but has never been a part of it.

After the discovery of diamonds a skirmish for land broke out and the Orange Free State and Transvaal were defeated and incorporated into the Cape Colony in 1880. The colony had taken tentative steps towards political equality among the races but the franchise was based on economic qualifications which unfortunately excluded the vast majority of African and coloured people.

With increased tension following the discovery of gold, the Orange Free State formed a military alliance with the Transvaal and initiated an insurrection. The resulting Anglo-Boer War began in 1899. Up to half a million British soldiers squared up against some 65,000 Boers; black South Africans were pulled into the conflict on both sides. There was an appalling loss of life, not only of soldiers but also of blacks, "coloureds", and Boer women and children. The war ended in Boer defeat in 1902.

## Brief History of South Africa (page 2 of 2)



The power in government in the emerging new country, however, remained in the hands of the white minority. The African National Congress (ANC) came into being in 1912 to protest segregation, low wages for non-whites, unfair taxation and white only rule. Strikes and protests continued for the next few decades as the new Nationalist Party strengthened its protection of white government. In 1936 black Cape voters were removed from the common roll; in the following year laws were passed to stem black urbanization and compel municipalities to segregate black African and white residents.

Developments in the ANC in the early 40s marked the start of what was to be nearly 50 years of head-to-head conflict between that organization and the Nationalist Party. In 1944 the ANC Youth League was formed with its first secretary Nelson Mandela. It was a time of rapid industrial expansion but skilled work remained the domain of whites. On the other hand, the black influx into urban areas combined with the continuing repression strengthened black resistance. The ideals of the United Nations cast a spotlight on the country's racial inequity and the first of many attacks on the country in the General Assembly came from the Indian government in 1946. The Nationalist Party, however, was gathering strength and, in a surprise result, gained power in the 1948 election - power that it would not relinquish until 1994. "Coloureds" were removed from voters rolls; blacks were gradually removed from representation in parliament; leaders of the ANC were imprisoned for treason. Apartheid became official government policy.

During the 50s and 60s South Africa's isolation increased, as did internal repression, militant resistance and strikes. Many leaders of the insurrection including Nelson Mandela were sentenced to life in prison. The UN General Assembly brought about international pressure and economic sanctions. The brutal suppression of the Soweto uprising and police murder of Steve Biko shocked the world in 1977. By the late 80s outside pressure and parliamentary chaos prompted the start of negotiations between President PW Botha and Mandela. The next leader of the government, FW de Klerk finally began lifting restrictions on opposition groups and releasing political prisoners including Mandela.

South Africa's first democratic election was held in 1994, with victory going to the ANC in an alliance with the Communist Party and Cosatu. The apartheid era was over. Nelson Mandela was sworn in as President with FW de Klerk and the ANC's Thabo Mbeki as Deputy Presidents. Mandela's presidency was characterized by the successful negotiation of a new constitution; a start on the massive task of restructuring the civil service and attempts to redirect national priorities to address the results of apartheid; and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, set up primarily to investigate the wrongs of the past. Thabo Mbeki became President in 1999.

Written with help from:

[http://www.southafrica.info/ess\\_info/sa\\_glance/history/history.htm](http://www.southafrica.info/ess_info/sa_glance/history/history.htm)



### South African Playwrights (page 1 of 3)

The following playwrights represent a short selection of a very rich community of writers in South Africa who have developed a unique style and content in their work. Like almost all artists who lived under the former apartheid regime, their work is very political in nature by way of protest.

**Fatima Dike** has been a widely recognized playwright, poet, raconteur, director, teacher and political activist. She is hailed as the "mother of South African Theatre" by her people. She received the South African Women for Women award in 1997 and an award for lifetime services to the performing arts was granted to her by The Cape Tercentenary Foundation in 2000. Born in 1948 in the township of Langa, Cape Town, where her family had been forced to settle in the 1930s, she was educated at church schools. Objecting to the limited choices of profession for black women, she worked at a book store and volunteered at the Space Theatre, a nonracial theatre in Cape Town devoted to producing Athol Fugard's early plays. Encouraged by white writer/director Roberto Amato to use her rich knowledge of the people's customs and language, she wrote *The Sacrifice of Kreli* about a king of the Gcalekas who chose self-exile over being enslaved by the British colonizers. It was produced in 1976 during the Soweto uprisings. The publication of the play in 1977 made Ms. Dike the first African woman to publish a play in South Africa. In 1977, she wrote *The First South African*, an exploration of racial identity. *The Crafty Tortoise*, a children's play based on African folklore, followed in 1978. Inspired by the 1976 students' uprising in Langa, Ms. Dike wrote *Glass House* in 1979, which examines the relationship between a black woman and a white woman. In 1991, when she was living in Johannesburg, daily contact with the local women inspired her to write *So What's New?* This domestic comedy is about three township women who work in and outside of the legal system under the injustices of South Africa's apartheid system. It was a step toward bringing black theatre back to the townships from which it came. Her latest work is another urban drama, *Street Walking and Company Valet Service*, written in 2000. This story about the shocking escalation of drug problem in South Africa is directed toward young people.

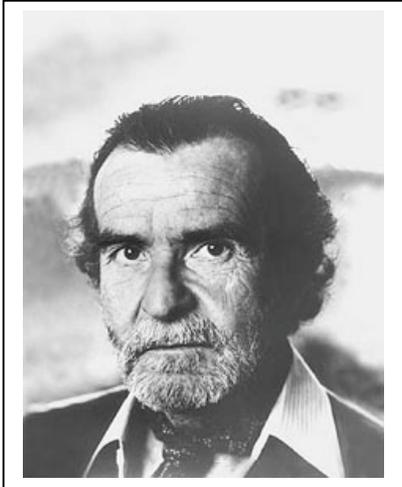
**Charles Fourie** has quickly established himself as one of South Africa's leading and most prolific playwrights. At 36 years of age he had written 36 plays - all produced professionally in SA to great acclaim, at the Market Theatre, (Johannesburg), State Theatre (Pretoria), Artscape Theatre and Baxter Theatre (both Cape Town). Few South African playwrights come close in commitment, passion and experimentation. Fourie is known for his diverse and sometimes controversial plays like *Big Boys*, *Braaivleis* and *Vrygrond*. *Big Boys* is set in a prison cell in 1986, a year in which a state of emergency declared under the rule of PW Botha gave virtually unlimited power to thesecurity forces. Solomon, a member of a black youth gang, accused of murdering his mother, and Daniel, a well-off white boy arrested for joy-riding in his mother's Porsche find themselves thrown together in prison and under the control of two brutal jailers. *Sodom*, his most recent play, is a love story set in a mental institution and leper colony at the turn of the last century. Fourie is the recipient of several awards including the Amstel South African Playwright of the Year Award which he received on two occasions, the AA Vita Best New South African Play Award, and the SACPAC award for his dark political comedy *Don Gxubane* which played to packed houses at the State Theatre in Pretoria.



Photo courtesy <http://www.angelfire.com/film/dockrat/dscripts1.html>

## South African Playwrights (page 2 of 3)

**Athol Fugard**, South Africa's most widely known dramatist, was born in 1932, the son of an English-speaking father and an Afrikaans-speaking mother. His position as South Africa's most prominent playwright owes a great deal to his ability to turn apparently regional and local themes into more universal metaphors for his deeply felt liberal concern with humanity and his existential struggle to understand his own life.



Making use of a simple and direct form of neo-realism within a "poor theatre" framework, he combines an actor's sensitivity for dialogue with a designer's eye for the powerful visual images generated during live performance, and he uses these qualities to explore relationships between two or three exquisitely drawn individuals. In 1964 Fugard settled in Port Elizabeth to become a full-time professional playwright. Since then, except for periodic stints as resident playwright and director at various places in the world, including a very creative period with the Yale Repertory Company, Fugard has remained and continued to work in his "region", namely Eastern Cape province. Fugard has been extremely influential in South Africa and in world theatre. There are primarily two reasons for this: first is his political profile

as an opponent of apartheid. Second is his skill as a technical and thematic innovator in South African, and indeed world, theatre. Plays of note are: *Boesman and Lena* (1969) which deals with the lives of two disenfranchised "coloureds", *Sizwe Bansi Is Dead* (1974) influenced by the improvisational work of Grotowsky, *'Master Harold'...and the Boys* (1982), his highly autobiographical view of apartheid, and *The Road to Mecca* dealing with personal freedom and the role of the artist. He has received numerous awards over the years, including the Commonwealth Theatre Award and honorary doctorates from Rhodes University, Yale University, Georgetown University, the University of Cape Town, and the University of the Witwatersrand.

Photo courtesy <http://www.post-gazette.com/ae/20030117fugard0117fnp4.asp>

**Gcina Mhlophe** is an actor, playwright, children's writer, director, but most importantly, a storyteller. Having taken her work throughout her country as well as Europe and North America, she has become one of the icons of performing theatre in South Africa. Born in Natal of a Xhosa mother and Zulu father and raised by her grandmother from whom she learned her skills as a consummate teller of stories, she relates experiences of an eventful childhood in her autobiographical play, *Have You Seen Zandile?* (1988). Since 1983 while not on tour in Europe and North America she has worked with the Market Theatre in Johannesburg. Mhlophe's commitment to promoting and preserving oral tradition led her to found the Zanendaba Storytellers. A dynamic narrator who captivates audiences with her stories, movement, and music, she translates in her written stories that talent with which she breaks down cultural barriers, creates a new awareness of history, and emphasizes the universality of experience within the framework of her tradition.



Photo courtesy <http://www2.txt.de/Hammer/TXTSIAutor/1661-Gcina-Mhlophe>

### South African Playwrights (page 3 of 3)

**Mbongeni Ngema**, South African playwright, musician, choreographer, and director, was born in Verulam, South Africa. In 1979 he and fellow actor Percy Mtwa created for the Market Theatre *Woza Albert!* (1981), an episodic treatment of the gospels from a South African black theological perspective, which toured the world and won more than twenty international awards. Ngema's award-winning *Asinamali!* (1984), a musical exploration of township rent strikes, was followed by *Sarafina* (1987), which celebrates the indomitable spirit of South African youth. *Sarafina* was nominated for five Tony Awards and a Grammy after its successful transfer to New York. For the film version, which starred Whoopi Goldberg and Miriam Makeba, Ngema wrote and produced the soundtrack, co-wrote the screenplay with William Nicholson, and co-choreographed alongside Michael Peters. *Township Fever!* (1990) was based on a railway strike in which scab workers were killed. The musical *Magic at 4 am!* (1993), inspired by Muhammad Ali's 1974 fight against George Foreman in Zaire, premiered at Johannesburg and toured the world in 1994.

**Pieter-Dirk Uys** (pronounced "Ace") was born in Cape Town, South Africa. He is a writer, actor, comedian, satirist, and South Africa's answer to "Dame Edna". His plays have been performed all over Africa and overseas including the United States and Great Britain. He has over 35 plays to his credit including: *Paradise is Closing Down*, *Adapt or Die*, *God's Forgotten* and *Farce about Uys*. His best known one-man show, *An Audience with Evita Besuidenhout*, has been performed all over the world. The character of "Evita" is Ambassador without Portfolio, chief liaison person with President Mandela's office with regard to Afrikaans Cultural Affairs and sits on a committee looking into what should be done with the old Symbols of State. Uys takes delight in satirizing Evita and her "contributions" to the new South Africa.

These pages were created with help from <http://people.africadatabase.org>  
Photo courtesy <http://www.wic.org/bio/puys.htm>



## Activities for the Classroom Before and After Viewing the Play

1. Some of the most remarkable aspects of the performances of Buckland and Newton stem from their ability to create clear and memorable characters through simple postures, gestures and physical rhythms. Drama students could experiment with a variety of walks leading with different parts of the body, i.e. leading with the chest, the belly, the knees, the chin, etc. Experiment with the way the arms move in walking, the position and/or movement of the head, the position of the toes, the energy of thrust, the speed of steps, the rhythmic/arhythmic quality of movement, the stiffness/looseness of the body, etc. Have the students play out a street scene with characters crossing from one side of the stage to the other, rapidly transforming into another character in the wings and then crossing again. Repeat several times.
2. To encourage attention to different body parts in mime, one or two horizontal screen(s) (curtains, sheets or flats on their sides) could be set up behind which the actor plays out a silent scene. First a scene could be played out by one or two characters in which only the feet and ankles are visible, then only the arms and torso. A more intricate set-up allows the audience to see only the lower body of one character and the torso of the other. Encourage the actors to refine their movements so the characters and storyline are clear.
3. Have the students read the pages on **A Brief History of South Africa** included in this Study Guide, then do research on the internet regarding the treatment of the indigenous peoples in both Canada and South Africa. A classroom discussion comparing the two countries could follow.
4. *The Well Being* deals with the superstitions of the residents of a small isolated village and how they lead to misunderstanding and prejudice. Have the students write a short piece on how a misunderstanding in a community leads to an injustice.
5. The film *Cry Freedom* deals with the arrest and subsequent murder of a black South African, Steve Biko, who was an organizer for a protest group under Apartheid. Show the film to the class and discuss the injustices of Apartheid. Discuss the place of the arts (literature, theatre, music, dance) as a protest medium. Have the students read the section on **South African Playwrights** included in this Study Guide. Much of the work in the arts in South Africa over the past few decades has dealt with aspects of segregation, political injustices, and misuse of authority.
6. Encourage the students to see one of the videos mentioned in the **Movies and Web-Sites** section of this Study Guide. *The Gods Must Be Crazy* is a fine example showing the interaction of the white population with the indigenous Bushmen.

## Movies and Web-sites About South Africa

### Web-sites of Interest

<http://www.mediaport.net/CP/AeC/Theatre> General comments on the health of theatre throughout the African continent, events, festivals, theatre companies.

<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/aoi/artsedge.html> A valuable source of information on the various arts and arts education in Africa.

<http://www.southafrica-travel.net/index.html> A large site giving information on history, culture, attractions, people, travel destinations, etc.

<http://www.und.ac.za/und/ccms/publications/articles/cinemasah.htm> An essay tracing the history of South African film making.

**Some South African Films** The following films give some idea of the political nature of SA cinema, which, like all the arts up to the late 1990s, has been dominated by reactions to the former Apartheid regime:

***On Tip Toe: Gentle Steps to Freedom*** (2000 Academy Award Nominee, Best Documentary Feature) tells the inspiring story of the group that introduced South African music to the world - Ladysmith Black Mambazo. This film recounts how a music affirming its deeply traditional roots has been passed down and popularized under the most hostile circumstances not only for South Africans but also for people everywhere.

***Long Night's Journey Into Day*** (2000 Academy Award Nominee, best documentary feature) For over 40 years, South Africa was governed by the most notorious form of racial domination since Nazi Germany. When it finally collapsed, those who had enforced apartheid's rule wanted amnesty for their crimes. Their victims wanted justice. As a compromise, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was formed. As it investigated the crimes of Apartheid, the Commission brought together victims and perpetrators to relive South Africa's brutal history. By revealing the past instead of burying it, the TRC hoped to pave the way to a peaceful future. *Long Night's Journey Into Day* follows several TRC cases over a two-year period. The stories in the film underscore the universal themes of conflict, forgiveness, and renewal.

***A Walk in the Night*** is one of the first films from a new generation of talented young black South African filmmakers who have become active since the overthrow of Apartheid in 1994. Mickey Madoda Dube's debut feature adapts Alex La Guma's celebrated 1962 novella of the same name into a fast-paced crime thriller set in present day Johannesburg.

***The Gods Must Be Crazy.*** A tribe of bushmen living in the Kalahari Desert find their peaceful, happy existence threatened when a Coca-Cola bottle falls from the sky. The natives squabble incessantly over ownership of the mysterious item, which they believe to be a gift from the gods. Hoping to restore order, one tribesman is elected to return the bottle by journeying to the ends of the earth, which brings him into contact with modern civilization.

***Cry, The Beloved Country.*** This moving 1995 adaptation of Alan Paton's celebrated novel stars James Earl Jones as a beloved, rural minister in South Africa who makes his first trip to Johannesburg in search of his son. The latter's destiny has been linked with that of a doomed, young white man, whose racist father (Richard Harris) is approached by Jones' character in the spirit of mutual understanding.

## **CURRICULUM REFERENCES**

### **The Ontario Curriculum: The Arts**

**A visit to see a live stage production helps fulfill the following curriculum expectations:**

#### **Dramatic Arts, Grade 11 (University/College Preparation)**

##### Analysis: Overall Expectations

- evaluate dramatic performances presented in the school and the community.
- explain how dramatic arts represent, influence and contribute to culture and society.

#### **Dramatic Arts, Grade 11 (Open)**

##### Theory: Specific Expectations (Role/Character)

- describe the process of portraying a character in a script through voice, gesture, props, and the character's relationships with other characters.

#### **Dramatic Arts, Grade 12 (University/College Preparation)**

##### Analysis and Evaluation: Specific Expectations

- explain how theatre can reflect issues, societal concerns, and the culture of the community, the country and other countries.

#### **Dramatic Arts, Grade 12 (Open)**

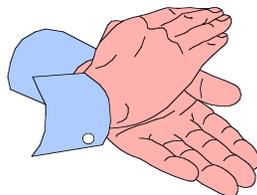
##### Theory: Specific Expectations (Role/Character)

- describe how dramatic elements (e.g. costumes, make-up, props, lighting, set design) are used to develop character and theme.
- describe how acting techniques are used to develop characters that are in keeping with the themes in the script.

## *Theatre Etiquette*

Please take a moment to prepare the students for their visit to the National Arts Centre by explaining good **Theatre Etiquette** which will enhance the enjoyment of the play by all the audience:

1. *Matinées* at the NAC are for students and the general public. It is important for everyone to be quiet (no talking or rustling of materials) during the performance so others do not lose their immersion in the "world of the play". Unlike movies, the actors in live theatre can hear disturbances in the audience and will give their best performances when they feel the positive involvement of the audience members. The appropriate way of showing approval for the actors' performances is through laughter and applause. For the enjoyment of all, people who disturb others inappropriately during the show may be asked to leave the theatre.
2. It is important that all cell phones, pagers and anything that beeps be turned off so the atmosphere of the South African forest is not interrupted by electronic devices. Cameras and other recording devices are also not permitted in the theatre.
3. Seating in the NAC Studio is open, so that those attending may sit where they choose. Teachers may wish to pass out the tickets before arriving at the doors of the Studio.
4. A trip to the washroom before the play starts is a good idea. Anyone leaving during the show will unfortunately not be allowed back into the theatre.  
***The Well Being* runs without an intermission.**





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