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The patients crowd into the cable car that might take them away from the clinic in *Platz Mangel*. Photo: Dorothea Wimmer.

tions mockingly linked high-culture icons to our bloated present, ranging from the kitschy "You Can Win If You Want" by Modern Talking to "We Delight in Heavenly Joys" from Mahler's *Fourth Symphony*—ironically applied, of course. Marthaler has perhaps the lightest touch of any living German-language director, employing humor to develop his serious concerns.

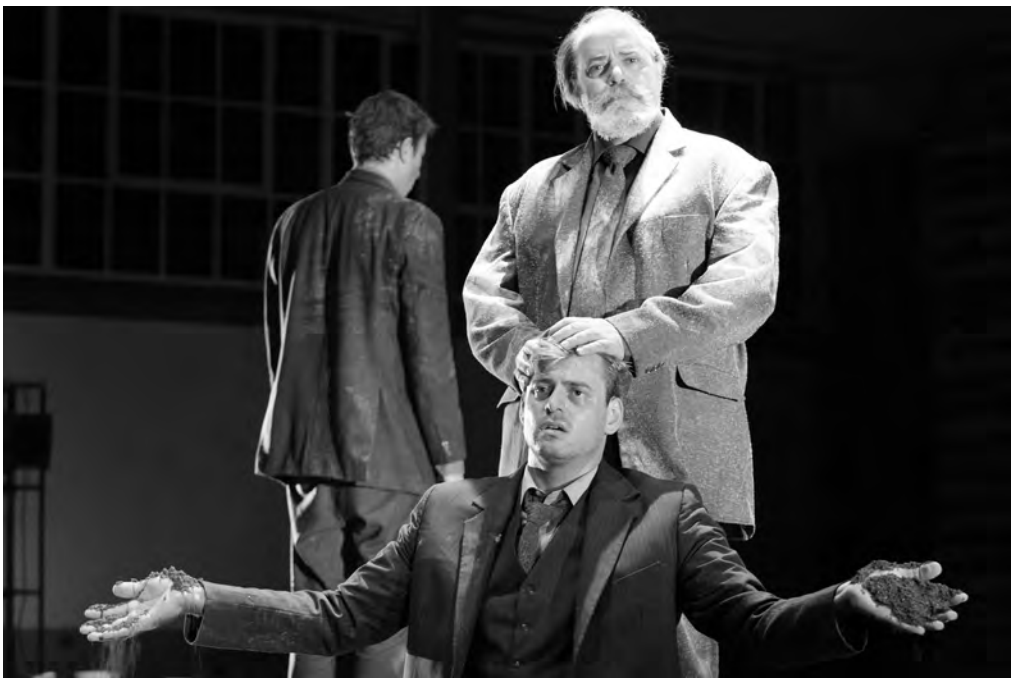
Marthaler is fifty-six years old and a formative influence on younger generations, including the generation represented by most of the directors invited to this year's Theatertreffen, men in their mid-to-late forties. All but Signa have been invited at least once before; several have been invited multiple times. It is fair to say that these directors represent the generation now defining, even running, Germany's theatre institutions. By staging their productions in a two-week period, the Theatertreffen let us see how divergent their styles and approaches are. The contemporary German theatre has none of the consistency attributed to the *Regietheater* in its heyday, but neither is there much consensus about how the theatre may best address contemporary experience, or perhaps that is the new consensus. It will be interesting to see what approaches are being developed by a younger generation of directors that seems not yet to have achieved much visibility, though there is some concern that the group may be smaller than the German theatre needs. It is also clear that despite some distinguished exceptions, women continue to be shut out of the directorial ranks in Germany, let alone the front ranks, although they have become very visible in the design fields, where, as in the United States, the grip of the male "mafia" is looser. Not so long ago, the Theatertreffen was often a young artists' venue, launching new careers as well as confirming developed ones. Perhaps the Festspiele and the jury need to reconfirm this commitment.

JOHN ROUSE
University of California, San Diego

(UN)PATRIOTIC ACTS OF AN IMAGINED COMMUNITY: THE KLEIN KAROO NASIONALE KUNSTEFEES (KKNK). Oudtshoorn, South Africa. 21–29 March 2008.

Scholars and reporters have criticized the annual Afrikaans-language KKNK festival for perpetuating the principle of the *laager*, or circle of wagons, creating an exclusionary, white cultural festival—a *Boerefees*—each year in Oudtshoorn, South Africa. The 2008 festival had its share of nostalgic, sometimes disturbing performances of whiteness, but simultaneously enacted a nuanced questioning of exactly what the imaginings of this imagined community of white settlers in Africa are, or can be. These acts, circling around issues of land, identity, heroes, whiteness, brownness, and belonging, articulated the diversity of what it means to be an Afrikaner in contemporary South Africa.

Imagine *Saad* (*Seed*), written by Saartjie Botha and directed by Jaco Bouwer: on a makeshift stage peppered with mounds of rich brown soil, a family of white Afrikaners wrestles with the death of their patriarch (Marthinus Basson) and what to do with the family's farm—their *grond* (ground/earth/soil). This overwrought drama seemed to be working toward a settling of accounts: the father's will (ominously mentioned three times) has yet to be read, and we assume that the land will be bequeathed to the two silent black women (Thembeka Sivanjana and Yoliswa Nkolose) who form the furniture and scenery—even a kitchen doorway!—against which the white characters play. Quietly carrying sprouting *mielie* (corn) babies on their backs, these two ciphers are silent in the contemporary debate over land redistribution—the anxious core of this play—that is dividing many contemporary communities and that signals a symbolic and physical loss of identity,



Marthinus Basson and Altan Ungerer in *Saad*. Photo: Michael Hammond.

power, and place in the national landscape for many Afrikaners. The two actresses were hired from the local community for this show—"It was a good job," they told the visiting Dutch delegation when asked about their participation—and expressed no deep connection to the text or the performance. Bouwer seems to have ignored the troubling implications of staging silent black bodies without any agency. Instead of a transformative story through which the anxiety over land loss or the role of whites in South Africa's history is worked, this play becomes a re-inscription of the familiar narratives justifying white land-ownership. The dead patriarch haunts the final scene, admonishing his three adult children for not believing in "the language of grond" well enough to hold on to the farm. In a poignant stage picture, their mother (Juanita Swanepoel) feeds each of them a spoonful of the brown soil. *Saad*'s message is a force-feeding of the age-old story of white dominion over the land and its silenced black inhabitants. Judging by audience response, for many, this story was a welcome communion with the past. But in 2008, in South Africa, even within the Afrikaner laager of the KKNK, such a story is unpalatable.

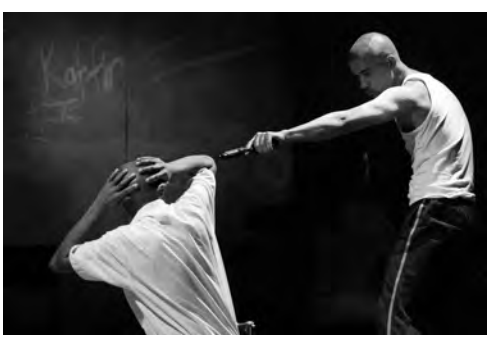
Imagine, now, the heroes: in 2006, pop singer Bok van Blerk released his chart-topping single, "De La Rey," a homage to General Koos de la Rey—a Boer War hero with a wild, bushy beard who led the Boers to victory over the British. The nostalgic anthem's refrain asks: "De la Rey, will you come to lead the Boers?" The song became a battle hymn for white Afrikaners, a cry of longing for the heroic masculinity of the past, and a trigger point for renewed performances of *volktrots* (national pride) as well as heated public debate.

In contrast, Mike van Graan's 2008 play *Die Generaal* focuses on a different kind of general: Bolla, a prisoner earning his gang rank through murder, a monstrous man born of the apartheid past whose presence is a constant reminder of the violence, pain, and anger that haunt South Africa today. Like *Saad*, *Die Generaal* addresses land loss, but here the playwright explores the complexities of all the stakeholders in the democratic South Africa. Using the rear wall of the stage as a chalkboard on which the players inscribe their individual stakes in this new democracy, *Die Generaal* navigates the complex interrelationships of Willem and his sister Anna, who are torn over the family farm, the marriage of Bolla's white defense attorney (Anna) to Bolla's black prosecutor (Sizwe), and Afrikaans police officer Johan's relationships with his devout wife, Mari, and his Tswana partner, Fani (whose brother is the one claiming Anna and Willem's family farm). In this intelligent, witty, and probing drama, the lives of all the characters are enmeshed, crossing racial and social boundaries, and revealing the intricate stakes involved in claims to land, legitimacy, and belonging.

Ian Roberts as De la Rey. Photo: Simone Scholtz.

Additionally, in October 2007, Professor Andries Raath was given sculptor Anton van Wouw's death mask of De la Rey, which he displayed for the first time publicly at the 2008 KKNK. Festival organizers presented the mask atop the 150-year-old *Vierkleur* (the four-color flag of the first Boer Republic), along with a poster-sized DNA match of hair from the death mask to De la Rey's descendants as well as images of the bullet holes in his clothing from 1914 when he was shot in a roadblock on his way to Pretoria. In a corridor alongside the mask installation, a series of powerful photographs from the concentration camps where the British killed over 28,000 Boer women and children was displayed. As part of the exhibition, Rian Malan wrote and directed a one-man play about General de la Rey, starring Ian Roberts in frontiersman beard and trekker garb. This rather rough stage exploration attempted to fill in the details of a complex historical figure who led the Boers to victory, argued for peace instead of war, and allowed the wounded British Lord Methuen, his arch enemy and butcher of the Boers, to receive medical treatment after his capture, much to the shock and outrage of his compatriots. It was a portrait of a man who defied easy categorization. If Bok van Blerk's song was widely mobilized to articulate anxiety over the Afrikaner's position in the fourteen-year-old democracy, then this installation, in its own small way, illuminated—and expanded—the discourse surrounding the imaginings of history, of the heroes of the past, and of the contemporary political landscape.

Imagine, as well, the dethroning of heroes: *Totanderkuntuit* (literally "through the other cunt out," with a deliberately feminized pun on *anderkant*, or "other side") was the most compelling performance of the entire festival and one that interrogated the imagined community of the Afrikaner most directly. The brainchild of Laager Commander Peter van Heerden, performance artist, and

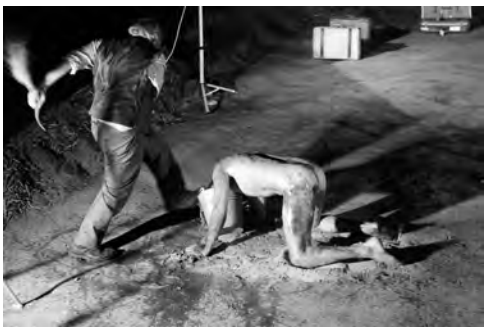


Brendon Daniels as Bolla and Wiseman Sithole as Sizwe in *Die Generaal*. Photo: Michael Hammond.

Peter van Heerden in *Sweepslag*. Photo: Simone Scholtz.

Laager Preacher André Laubscher, social activist, *Totanderkuntuit* was a site-specific laager built on a plot of land in the middle of the festival. From this site, Peter and André lived, performed, and dialogued. "We brought an ox wagon full of questions to the festival," stated Van Heerden.

Van Heerden and Laubscher used the punning capacity of the Afrikaans language to its fullest, calling themselves *Voortrekkers* (pioneers), *Draadtrekkers* (wankers), and *Saamtrekkers* (journeyers, those who bring together). The installation opened on Good Friday with a crucifixion. The words "*wit kaffir*" scrawled on his chest, Peter was blindfolded and tied to a cross, while André preached below him. Like stations of the cross, for the next eight days performances took place around different themes that used familiar symbols of Afrikaner culture and trekker mythology as a springboard to address issues in contemporary South African life and culture. On *Dag van Bloedrivier* (Day of Blood River), which in Afrikaner mythology marks the holy day in 1838 when God blessed the Boers in victory against the Zulus, the artists invited visitors to make an AIDS baby out of scraps of recycled rubbish. On *FAK-Plaas Dag* (Fuck farm day), which refers to the FAK (Federation of Afrikaans Culture, founded in 1929



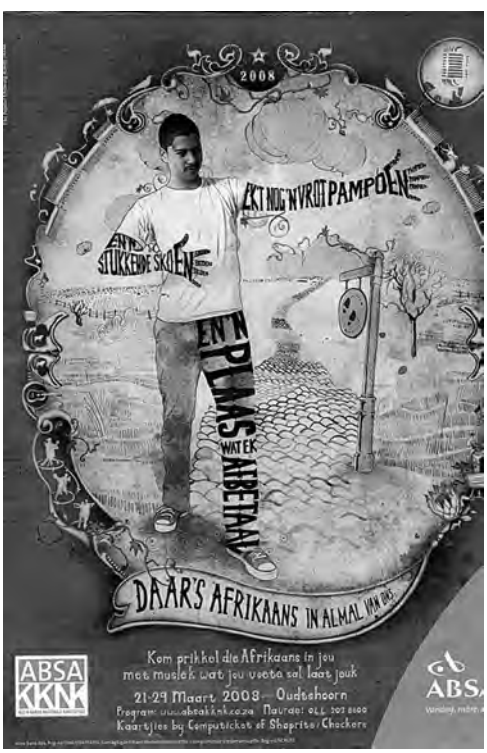
Peter van Heerden and André Laubscher in *Sweepslag*. Photo: Simone Scholtz.

to establish Afrikaans as the national language), the topic was sexual abuse. Visitors could tour a series of cubicles each dedicated to a different perversion called *BangKock* (*Bang* translates as "afraid"). And on *Helde Dag* (Heroes day), Peter and André dug graves in the hot sun and impersonated apartheid-era security police, including Gideon Nieuwoudt, the policeman who testified at the TRC about murdering the Pebco Three.

Each evening, the two men performed *Sweepslag* (Colonial whiplash). An indictment and interrogation of colonial white-male Afrikaner baggage, *Sweepslag* was a thirty-minute playscape of stage pictures, short scenes between father and son, and heavy use of symbolic objects, including the *Vierkleur* and the new democratic flag. In acts of abjection designed to provoke a violent critique of, and transformative thinking about, Afrikaner male identity, Peter birthed himself naked into the dust from a plastic "womb" suspended from a tree; was whipped, tortured, and baptized Peter Os (Peter Ox) by Pa the patriarch, played by Laubscher with his long grey beard and Calvinist admonishments; tried to smash history—his father's collection of alarm clocks—and had to wrestle with his father's corpse before he bellowed like an ox and carried two suitcases—his burden—out through the audience. The stage pictures and installation art that these two men created were provocative, difficult, and deliberately challenging. But most compelling was the dialogue in which both artists engaged throughout the festival in personal conversations with audience/visitors during the daily installations and at post-show discussions each evening.

Totanderkuntuit forced an engagement with the familiar safety of identity and the past. Deemed turncoats by many in the audience, André and Peter catachrestically exposed their culture to itself in order to transform the ideology of white masculinity and to open up possibilities beyond the laager walls. Taking sacred cows, oxen, and bulls by the horns, they deliberately dethroned heroes and engaged in acts of patriotic betrayal, throwing rocks at themselves in order to rupture the old identities and dislodge the thinking that yokes Afrikaners to fixed identities and the past. On two occasions, drunken festinos threw rocks and bottles at them, defaced the installation, and shouted insults; their artistic betrayal opened up the laager of the KKNK, as it simultaneously marked the limits of what is imaginable about this imagined community.

Finally, imagine beyond whiteness: what of performances by brown Afrikaners (the 4.2 million mixed-race Afrikaans speakers previously known as "Coloureds") at the festival? While their presence on the main theatre circuit was predominantly as performers and dancers (rather than directors or writers), brown Afrikaners participated in the festival in visible, if somewhat muted, numbers: from an academic and journalist think tank around the idea of *bruin* Afrikaners that somehow remained caught in a binary debate about Uncle Toms versus real journalists, to the squads of taxi drivers who shuttled festinos around Oudsthoorn to the ear-shattering *doef-doef* music, to street kids who started



"There's Afrikaans in all of us" ad. Photo: KKNK program.

out singing renditions of *Suikerbossie* and ended up competing for attention and coins from passersby by sitting in silence. Notable were a Cape minstrel band that spent the first few days of the festival in costume and makeup parading up Baron van Rede Street, and the impromptu brass band of young men and women that played for nine hours straight on the same street a few days later. The minstrels attracted a bemused curiosity from the predominantly white onlookers, whereas the brass band played for a brown crowd of old and young that stayed till late in the evening supporting their musicians, creating an autonomous space within the festival for themselves. While both of these performances took place in the center of the festival, brown Afrikaners are still marginal, perhaps willfully so, and marginalized, perhaps willfully so again, at the KKNK.

The slogan for the 2008 festival—"There's Afrikaans in all of us"—marks a desire for an inclusive festival, or perhaps signals an anxiety about criticism the KKNK has received for being an exclusive, white laager. The promotional ads in the program and on posters in town depict brown male bodies whose limbs and torsos are inscribed with, and formed out of, Afrikaans words. While the intent might have been to include all Afrikaans speakers, the images read as a troubling colonial cartography, and the ads invite a series of questions: For whom, or at whom, was this slogan imagined? Whose Afrikaans (culture) is being inscribed onto whom? And how is the Afrikaans language being imagined and embodied by white and brown Afrikaners? This past March, questions of who is included, who speaks, who speaks out against, and who questions what it means to be an Afrikaner found fertile, if conflicted, voice within and around the laager of Oudtshoorn.

MEGAN LEWIS
University of Minnesota

SIZWE BANZI IS DEAD. By Athol Fugard, John Kani, and Winston Ntshona. Directed by Aubrey Sekhabi. A Baxter Theatre Centre (Cape Town) production, Rhodes Theatre, Grahamstown, South Africa. 1 July 2006; BAM Harvey Theatre, Brooklyn, NY. 18 April 2008.

The BAM Harvey's grand stage seemed unusually empty on 18 April 2008 as the last straggling audience members filed toward their seats. The few simple properties of the Baxter Theatre Centre production of Athol Fugard, John Kani, and Winston Ntshona's *Sizwe Banzi Is Dead*—a camera and tripod, a table topped with everyday objects, a cardboard display covered with photographs—were swallowed up by the cavernous space. What unfolded after the entrances of veteran South African actors Kani and Ntshona, however, provided a stirring reminder of just how full a theatre space can seem when pulsating with the humor, intelligence, moral conviction, and vital energy of two virtuosic performers. In many ways, *Sizwe Banzi*'s long history can be seen as a continuous process of filling-out—one that began in the early 1970s with the conjuring into three-dimensional life of the image of an anonymous black South African captured in a found photograph. Now, eight years into a new millennium, the stream of human impulses comprising Kani and Ntshona's collaborative performance has become unusually dense, saturated with years of performance practice and life wisdom—two spheres of experience that the seasoned South African actors have often emphasized are, for them, inextricably interfused.

From its very genesis, *Sizwe Banzi* has undertaken the work of revival. Provoked by their seminal photographic "mandate" (Fugard's term), the creative team breathed theatrical life into a moving narrative of an everyman who takes on the identity of a murder victim in order to circumvent apartheid's Kafka-esque pass-laws and provide for his family. The eponymous protagonist's agonized decision to surrender his name asks the audience to weigh compromise and survival against the preservation of personal integrity. The universal implications of its theme and the successes of its international engagements in London and New York during the mid-seventies secured for *Sizwe Banzi*'s co-creators a place in theatre history—both in South Africa and abroad—as iconic artist-activists of the "protest theatre" movement. Of course, the moral–historical significances attending the *Sizwe Banzi* production's relation with its apartheid past are highly context-specific. Thus, I will address these significances comparatively by assessing the dynamics of reception at the revival's 2006 South African premiere, and those surrounding its run at the BAM Harvey almost two years later.

The news that Kani and Ntshona would revive *Sizwe Banzi* under the direction of State Theatre (Pretoria) artistic director Aubrey Sekhabi generated considerable anticipation both within South Africa's theatre community and in the nation's mass media. The revival would carry a doubly weighted sense of historical import as a reanimation of the social behavior of black South Africans under apartheid, as well as the restoration of a powerfully oppositional political engagement with the regime's oppressive ideology. Plans were laid for the production to follow up its premiere at Grahamstown's Rhodes Theatre