

**Staged Authenticities: An Exploration Of The Representations Of AmaXhosa  
Culture Within The Main Programme Of The National Arts Festival, 2009.**

A thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS**

Of

RHODES UNIVERSITY

By

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December 2011

**Abstract**

This thesis investigates the presentation of AmaXhosa traditional dancing and music on the stages of the National Arts Festival (NAF), Main Programme, of South Africa in 2009. Four productions featuring AmaXhosa traditional dancing and music, as well as a fine art exhibition, are analysed to determine how the AmaXhosa culture is being portrayed, what is considered authentic and how these productions may affect the memory of the AmaXhosa nation. In an attempt to understand the position of these productions within the NAF the South African cultural context as well as the NAF is examined. The post-apartheid, post-rainbow nation, South African cultural context is discussed and how the NAF could contribute towards creating a more unified South African identity.

Incorporated and inscribed memory categories are related to how one could determine authenticity in traditional indigenous productions. A cautionary note on incorporated memory is linked to efficacy, while a loss of incorporated memory within the AmaXhosa society may result in ritual acts being orientated towards entertainment. If the private culture is consistently displayed in the public realm then it is inevitable that the ways in which the AmaXhosa recollect their history will be altered. The contribution of the transitional spaces of theatres and proscenium arch stages to the choreography and incorporated memory of the performers relates to the collective recollection of the AmaXhosa.

Bearing this in mind, this thesis suggests that the NAF is playing a dual role in the evolution of the AmaXhosa. It is both positively contributing to the economic upliftment of a sector of the population and exposing people to this rich and multi-layered culture. However, it is also impacting the efficacy of the private culture and fracturing the traditional knowledge of the AmaXhosa by assisting in the inscription of their performance forms.

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## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Anton Krueger for his invaluable assistance and guidance with the writing of this mini-thesis.

Appreciation is extended to the Reeve family, especially Christina Reeve, for their unwavering support and inspiration.

Heartfelt gratitude goes to my friends, Rachel Stols and Jesse Moore, for assisting me with the editing and submission process.

The opinions expressed in this thesis are those of the author and not necessarily that of Rhodes University.

## PREFACE

### Ways of remembering the AmaXhosa

The search for a definitive culture of any one society is impossible. So in my attempts to define an overarching South African culture and within that the AmaXhosa<sup>1</sup> culture I consistently came up against porous divisions between different peoples and their communities. It seems that each community inevitably carries a shadow of another community within it, over it and around it. There are no completely bound autonomous societies any longer, this overlapping of people and cultures results in changes within cultures and societies, as elements of one culture are appropriated and mixed into another culture. The consequences of this are variegated and rich societies and cultures, each one contributing to an entire nation. However, the porous nature of societies and the absorption of other ways of thinking and acting have an impact on a society. One of these impacts is a modification of the way in which a society remembers its past and consequently an alteration of how a society defines itself. This thesis attempts to determine how a particular society is portraying its culture and heritage within a milieu of tourism and festivals and how this representation may affect the society's memory recall. The representations of the AmaXhosa at the National Arts Festival of South Africa provide a case study for questions of memory and authenticity.

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<sup>1</sup> The prefix "Ama" refers to the plural form of Xhosa, as in the AmaXhosa nation. "Isi" refers to the Xhosa language, IsiXhosa. "Aba" is the prefix for people, as in AbaThembu. This research makes use of these prefixes.

Chapter One discusses variously how memory is located in the past and thus how the history of South Africa impacts on the multiple societies and communities within the country. Of course, all experiences are mediated through personal experience and knowledge of past events and occurrences. Thus, the ways in which a society remembers will also be located in the past. South Africa is a melting pot of indigenous ethnic groups, societies and cultures. One of these ethnic groups is the AmaXhosa who are dominant in the Eastern Cape Province. The AmaXhosa are a society within the broader society of South Africa, thus any concept of nationhood they have will be layered with the collective psyche of South Africa's past.

Colonialism and apartheid form large and all pervasive shadows on the heritage and collective memory of South Africa and all the people within it. The trauma of colonialism and apartheid will surely be recollected in the collective memory of South African society. The effects of colonialism and apartheid on the AmaXhosa were manifold and this research is not able to incorporate that body of information in this analysis. This research is concerned with how festivals, in particular the National Arts Festival of South Africa (NAF), are contributing to the alteration of memory amongst the AmaXhosa. The choreography of four performances showcased at the NAF in 2009 will be investigated to determine how, if at all, the production of private traditional dances, songs and music for public consumption may affect the performance tradition within the AmaXhosa society.

The NAF plays a major role in showcasing and developing local talent and culture. In the 2009 Festival, there were five productions on the Main programme that featured and focused on the traditions and culture of the AmaXhosa. They were: *The East Cape Ensemble*; *Intersections: Swiss/Africa*; *The Studio* production presented *Vumelani: Let Us Dance Together* and *The Eastern Cape Indigenous Orchestra* presented *The Songs of the Amagcaleka*. Furthermore the 2009 Standard Bank Young Artist Award Winner for Visual Art was Nicholas Hlobo, his exhibition was titled *Umtshotsho*, *umtshotsho* refers to a traditional AmaXhosa youth party (NAF brochure, 2009:20).

Culture has become a global commodity and a lucrative tourist attraction for South Africa. Poverty is a major concern for the current government and

South Africa's rich natural and cultural heritage, and the fact that it is clearly one of the more appealing and rapidly growing tourist destinations in the world, make this sector an area to which government, entrepreneurs and communities are currently looking very seriously (Binns and Nel, 2002:236).

Thus both national and local government are actively promoting tourism as a means of alleviating poverty and generating private and public income.

Culture is being used to generate money and thus it cannot escape being an economic and political tool. The post-apartheid South African Government has been given the task of creating and fostering a culture of inclusion, tolerance and diversity. During apartheid "[h]eritage performed an important didactic function in supporting Afrikaner nationalism, separate development and white supremacy"

(Deacon *et al*, 2003:8). It was used to segregate people and now it is being used to, possibly superficially, create bonds between people while simultaneously being used to generate money. Traditional practices generate social realities which provide that community with a sense of belonging, the practices organically evolve within the community when the negotiation (Picard, 2006:3) of elements is being done, thus traditional forms will never be static. However the rapid rate of change being witnessed in AmaXhosa traditional performance indicates that the change is not an organic presentation of re-negotiation within the AmaXhosa, but rather an outside element compelling change within the group. This period of change within AmaXhosa society is a liminal phase in the community and it is being spurred on by the crisis that South Africa is undergoing in trying to create a unified nation.

Chapter two sets up a key argument used throughout this thesis, which is the connection between authenticity, efficacy and incorporated memory. When festivals showcase indigenous performances or art forms from indigenous cultures, this contributes to the process of change within an indigenous culture. This change relates to the ways in which a society remembers and recounts its history, the efficacy of a society's ritual practices as well as the notion of authenticity. The performances analysed were advertised as being avenues for experiencing AmaXhosa culture, these avenues were for people outside of the AmaXhosa nation yet, they have a profound effect on the performers and consequently on the AmaXhosa society. This affect is due to the incorporated memory that

performance engenders which is contradictory to the incorporated memory engendered in the original form.

The seemingly small adaptations required for performances for productions outside of ritual functions changes the muscle memory of the performers and this has potential ramifications for the incorporated and recollected memory of the AmaXhosa nation as a whole. If the incorporated memory of a nation is altered then the ways in which the society remembers and continues will change too. Inscribed memory forms influence the incorporated memory of a society. This chapter explores the notion that if the dance traditions of the AmaXhosa are continually performed for festivals outside of their original functions then these forms will become inscribed and subsequently the incorporated memory of the nation will be modified.

Inscribed history allows for societies to innovate and alter traditional forms. However, if the original form is not maintained on an incorporated muscle memory level then the performance of it will alter and possibly diminish. This is because it will no longer be understood on a physical level and as such will be performed as an imitation of a form instead of an integral part of a society. Inscription removes history from society and becomes the domain of a few rather than remaining in the public realm. Incorporated memory is linked to being able to perform a task convincingly because it is placed on the habit memory scale of memory. If a practice/task is a habit memory then it is done with ease and relatively little conscious thought. This ease in performance comes from consistent practice and

in terms of traditional dancing (before the advent of cultural groups for tourist and festival performances) this ease came from practising for ritual performances or from regular gatherings of a community. Thus, if the reasons for the gathering of the AmaXhosa communities are altering, which it could be due to urbanisation, then the incorporated memory will change. This change results in new experiences and expectations of efficacy, subsequently notions of authenticity within a society also alter.

Chapter three investigates how the display of private acts in a public domain affects the private culture of a society. The use of culture for economic ends is inevitable and not a recent phenomenon, however the relationship created between economics and culture is often unbalanced, with culture in the subservient position. If cultural performing groups wish to be consistently hired and remain popular amongst organisers of tourist groups and festival selectors, then they would have to create a product that serves all of these needs. Therefore a public culture is manufactured for the perceived wants of the public, it is designed for economic display and this public culture has direct implications on the private culture of the performing society.

Three traditional dance forms, the flamenco from Andalusia, Spain, Nigerian dance and the *bharata natyam* of South India, are used as indicators for an analysis of how traditional AmaXhosa dance may be altering due to consistent performances for outside audiences. The Andalusian people of Spain have actively cultivated a private flamenco form that is distinct from the tourist public

flamenco; Nigerian traditional dance has splintered into multiple forms, neo-traditional being just one of the traditionally inspired public dance forms widely practiced now; while the *bharata natyam* is a completely new 'traditional' South Indian dance that usurped the ancient *nautch* form because political ideologies and affiliations were changing. The traditional dance form of the AmaXhosa has similarities to each of these dance forms and thus a comparison between them allows for a potential prediction of how AmaXhosa dance may change if the issue of public displays of private acts is not addressed.

Chapter four is concerned with the spatial aspect of the private and public performances of traditional acts. This chapter investigates ways in which the transitional or liminal stage that AmaXhosa culture is experiencing can be analysed through how the society engages and is made to engage with arenas and stages. The rituals and accompanying dances of the AmaXhosa were dominated by circular environments, especially the round homestead and the round cattle byre. Consequently the formation of the majority of the dancing and singing was circular, with some events requiring a linear pattern. Each of the four performance productions analysed were placed on proscenium arch stages in colonially layered buildings. The history of the environments in which the productions occurred is crucial to the understanding of how those areas may affect the AmaXhosa society. It appeared as though none of the productions actively tried to reclaim these spaces from their colonial and apartheid histories. This research challenges the producers of these shows as well as the NAF to reclaim

these venues and to explore the use of alternative venues that are better suited to the performance of AmaXhosa traditions.

In conclusion, the performance of culture cannot be separated from the ways in which a society recalls its past. If the AmaXhosa consistently perform their traditional dances and songs for outside audiences on linear stages then the incorporated memory of the AmaXhosa nation may change. The transformation of a society is inevitable, the AmaXhosa nation has been evolving and adapting to cultural influences since its inception. This thesis is attempting to outline how festivals and tourism are currently contributing to this potential modification of the performers incorporated memories and how the NAF and the performing cultural groups could work in tandem to foster the culture of the AmaXhosa nation.

## CHAPTER ONE - SHADOWS

if liminality is regarded as a time and place of withdrawal from normal modes of social action, it can be seen as potentially a period of scrutinisation of the central values and axioms of the culture in which it occurs.

Victor Turner (1969:167)

### **1.1. Introduction**

Festivals are microcosms of the country in which they are held, and so they cannot escape the political implications of their time and place. Therefore, festivals might be used to explore the political realm of society at a particular time in a controlled environment. Festivals provide a contained backdrop for the analysis of a society and country, since culture and politics are not mutually exclusive festivals become a means to view how the cultural body of a country and the government interact. And yet, when culture is used as a political tool it is important to know that according to Harriet Deacon, Sephai Mngqolo and Sandra Prosalendis, in *Protecting Our Cultural Capital, A Research Plan for the Heritage Sector*,

in complex postcolonial societies seeking to reconcile different viewpoints within a new political order, heritage 'becomes a highly political and contentious arena in which decisions have to be made about its conservation, presentation and current usage against a background of various and possible competing interpretations'(Deacon, *et al*, 2003:8).

Thus, all of these elements need to be addressed when a festival actively showcases the indigenous culture of a tribe or society.

Culture evolves and changes as the people who perform it and understand it alter. The changes in a culture are gradual and often imperceptible, the elongation or shortening of traditional acts often happen imperceptibly and it may be assumed that they will continue in the same way they have always been remembered. But this is not necessarily the case, since as societies change so too do their traditions and cultural performances. This research focuses on the AmaXhosa nation and how their traditional dancing and subsequently their culture, is altering due to societies inevitably changing as well as the performance of their culture in public domains, such as the NAF.

The term 'AmaXhosa' is a blanket term given to a large community of ethnic groups within the Eastern Cape of South Africa, the AmaXhosa are people of "...Nguni stock who migrated from North-East Africa and settled first in Zululand, [where they] were scattered in tribal fights and escaped to the Eastern Cape Colony" (Tyrell, 1968:183) in the early nineteenth century. There are multiple clans within the AmaXhosa, such as the AbaBhaca, AbaMfengu, AbaPondo, AbaQaba, AbaThembu, AbaBomvana, AbaFingo, AbaNhlangwini and AbaXesibe. Within AmaXhosa traditional dance each clan has its own performance form which has been altered to suit their specific temporal and spatial needs. Thus there is no overarching universal syllabus for AmaXhosa dance, but there are specific ritual practices and performances for certain rites of passage or ceremonies that are common to all AmaXhosa speaking clans, and it is these that are handed down through the generations. Each community, within the clans as well as the villages,

has developed their own style and has added or subtracted their own (in western terms) choreographic signature to the dances over time. However, with the growing need to generate income to support the family and the community, what is occurring is that dances for tourists are being generated. Part of this generation of tourist dances is the appropriation of forms from various areas and clans not necessarily in the immediate area of the performers and then all these forms are being amalgamated and manipulated to suit the perceived wants of the tourists.

The culture of the AmaXhosa has been undergoing consistent change since their settlement in the Eastern Cape and the arrival of the first European settlers. Yet the rate of change within the society was as constant as the change of a person's shadow as the day progresses, it was change that was understood, if not always consciously recognized. Societies adapt to their surroundings and as such the traditions and culture of the AmaXhosa people has been constantly changing, the rate of change however has been increasing since colonialism. An example of an alteration within the AmaXhosa society is the ritual of initiation and what it symbolises for the AmaXhosa people, Peter Tshobiso Mtuze in *Introduction to AmaXhosa Culture* states that

what initiation means has changed over time. When once it was the public affirmation of manhood – of independence from father's house and a challenge to build one's own *umzi* it is now much more. It is an assertion of Xhosa identity in a poly-ethnic society – hence the insistence that it be done the Xhosa way, and any compromises with contemporary medical views are viewed with intense suspicion and caution. It is also the assertion that regardless of the forces of education, religion, employment, economics which have accompanied and out lived the colonial conquests, the Xhosa mind and

spirit has not been conquered or colonized by aliens or modernity (Mtuze, 2004:50).

Mtuzze is asserting that many AmaXhosa are asserting their traditions in some aspects in order to proclaim themselves as part of a definitive society to avoid losing sight of the origins of their culture. This assertion of “Xhosa-ness” is a reaction to the idea that it may become diluted due to outside forces. It is a political move as much as a cultural act to emphasise a rite of passage into manhood. Thus, the changes observed in the AmaXhosa culture can be linked to the political environment of South Africa.

During apartheid, with the introduction of the Bantu Authorities Act, Act No 68, of 1951, the Bantu tribes of South Africa fell under the authority of the separate development laws and placed in established homelands to more effectively contain the perceived threat of black empowerment to white rule. This divide and conquer attitude was not in line with international human rights laws and provided an arena for much controversy and debate internally and internationally; yet it did provide the various Bantu tribes of South Africa with a space in which their cultures could continue without major influences from other tribes and cultures. However, since labour was required in the cities, mine workers from all over Southern Africa were exposed to differing cultures and subsequently new cultural forms were created by this amalgam of tribes and practices, such as gumboot dancing.

The homelands provided a place for the efficacious acts of each tribe to evolve at a similar rate to previous generations. With the advent of democracy and the banishment of divisions amongst the differing people of South Africa, each community was exposed to one another. This eradication of divisions was law and decades (some might say centuries) of divisions do not disappear in a short period of time. In light of the need to begin the process of integration and the creation of a unified South Africa, the government used culture as a way to create bridges between seemingly disparate communities.

The influence that public performances can have on private acts is manifold. The private culture of a society is a memory that is not just located in the verbal thoughts and acts of the people, it is an embodied memory that is practiced almost unconsciously within a society. The ways in which younger generations of a society are taught the culture will be a reflection of the way in which the older generations recall their practices and acts. Culture is woven into social memory and cannot be divorced from it, as such Paul Connerton, in *How Societies Remember*, believes that:

social memory in particular, [is where] images of the past commonly legitimate a present social order. It is an implicit rule that participants in any social order must presuppose a shared memory. To the extent that their memories of a society's past diverge, to that extent its members can share neither experiences nor assumptions. The effect is seen perhaps most obviously when communication across generations is impeded by different sets of memories. Across generations, different sets of memories, frequently in the shape of implicit background narratives, will encounter each other; so that, although physically present to one another in a particular setting, the different generations may remain mentally and emotionally insulated, the

memories of one generation locked irretrievably, as it were, in the brains and bodies of that generation (Connerton, 1989:3).

Connerton posits that this knowledge, which is potentially locked in a generation, is an incorporated knowledge and that it is passed down through commemorative acts, performances, verbal stories and written records. If the incorporated memory of a society is changed by consistent performances of a different way of practicing the culture then the embodied memory of the society will alter.

The loss of deep incorporated memory is regrettable as it means that a society becomes less cohesive and more fractured as there is no longer an urgent need to remember the past, because it is inscribed and therefore there is less need to be in the company of fellow community members recalling acts and stories of the past. This display of the private incorporated memory in the public domain in front of people from outside of the community results in a fractured knowledge of the community. While it disseminates knowledge and a shallow understanding of a community to a wider audience, it also fragments the knowledge of the group both within the society and outside of it. The knowledge of the community becomes something independent of the society and “disembodies” the society from its practices, if the heritage is no longer a solid form for a community to form around then the community may disintegrate. Thus, if there are fewer and fewer people with an incorporated memory of the AmaXhosa culture, there will soon be no recognisable embodied memory of the practices and only a small shadow of the inscribed recollections will remain. Performance is a means for the AmaXhosa to

remember and define themselves, since remembering and recollecting a past are ways of defining a present culture and society.

### **1.2. The social function of traditions**

There is a distinctly different social purpose and a different cultural form which is brought about by commodification. There is a possibility that the form may become reified, in the sense that it is objectified by becoming a commodity. Although Richard Schechner believes that all forms of performance are an intricate braid of efficacy and entertainment and in this way all performance has the potential to be ritualistic and entertaining for an audience. There will usually be a predominant mode of reception, but the one is inseparable from the other. So if the form, for example AmaXhosa dance, becomes reified in the sense that it no longer has the ability to perform a meaningful social function other than the earning of money within the society, then it is predominantly a form of entertainment and can be transplanted to any venue for any audience. Yet it will still have its foundations in an efficacious practice and thus will forever contain traces of efficacy within the performance. The degree of efficacy, as in the degree to which the performers can convince the audience that they understand and believe in the power of the performance will vary and possibly diminish as the performers can no longer remember the ritual and social beginnings of the dance. The incorporated memory will change and the origins of the dance will become situated in the entertainment category of the braid.

Yet if these performative ritual dances and acts are largely dying out within a culture, then one might say that these performances, despite “being emptied of sacred significance” (Gilbert *et al*, 1996:59) assist in the continuance and regeneration of a tradition and in this way perform an act of ritual by working to preserve history. The performance of AmaXhosa culture in the NAF loses its original function, but it does pay tribute to the practice and aids in exposing an audience to an important and valued traditional act. If the NAF wants to positively contribute to the AmaXhosa society then it needs to review the performance spaces it allocates to the AmaXhosa performing groups.

The effects of performing a culture in the public domain for economic gain has been documented in various countries, three examples are used in this research, Nigerian dance, the Flamenco and South Indian dance. These will be analysed as providing useful points of reference, since each of these dance forms have been used for economic benefit and have been manipulated by the political aims of the ruling government of the time and the traditional spaces in which the forms were created have been changed to more western proscenium arch venues.

AmaXhosa traditional performance is rapidly changing and becoming an inscribed act. One inscribes something in order to preserve it and ensure that it has an existence outside of its temporality. Inscription removes an object or act from transience and fixes it so that it can be revisited, however the fixed nature of inscription ensures that only one angle or viewpoint is recorded. The thing inscribed loses its vitality and as such risks becoming reified.

### **1.3. Areas of liminality – festivals as bridges between communities and identities**

Festivals have become important in the forging of bridges between people and communities as they are viewed as spaces which are outside of everyday structures and life. They provide an arena for enjoyment and the abandonment of regulations. During the early transitional stage to democracy in South Africa's history the culture of South Africa was dubbed the 'rainbow nation' by Archbishop Desmond Tutu at a celebration commemorating the new nation where the rainbow was introduced as a symbol of reconciliation and unity among all the diverse people of South Africa (Moller *et al*, 1999:246). Nelson Rolihlala Mandela then catapulted the term into international currency in his inauguration speech in April 1994. This rainbow of cultures and people were now a unit, joined together under a democratic government and, as such, South Africans were asked to foster a sense of national pride and loyalty as well as a culture of acceptance, tolerance, and forgiveness. However the trauma of apartheid cannot be pasted over with a rainbow and the decision to have the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was an admission that the past cannot be erased without action.

Yet after 17 years the South African government has not managed to create a culture of inclusion and tolerance, where communities have truly forgiven each other for the pain of the past. It is a polarised rainbow nation that exists in South Africa, this polarisation exists because South Africans are still addressing the question of what unity means. The racial and cultural divisions that were cultivated

in South Africa during apartheid for the purpose of control become apparent in the present day every time there is a national crisis that splits the country apart. South Africa may be the 'rainbow nation', but like the rainbow with its separate colours lying next to each other, so the different creeds and cultures often only stand side by side. It seems as though instead of being in a dialogue with one another, they just quietly lie next to the neighbouring colour and hope that nothing comes up to disrupt the harmony of apathy. There are severe cracks in this rainbow, the various groups that make up the different stripes in the rainbow are quick to smile for the cameras and dance together at international gatherings or wherever a camera is present; but the problem is that as soon as there is dissonance, the colours of the rainbow group together in terms of their race and creed instead of their ideological standpoint.

Perhaps forging real emotional connections between people might be a potential way of creating this illusive unity. If people could relate to one another on levels outside of race then they are already creating bonds that go beyond racial affiliations. This is where festivals become important in creating a South African identity based on unity rather than race – unity in ideas and thought patterns rather than in past grievances and current economic issues. A liminal space is one which occupies a position on the boundary or threshold of something. The liminal space that festivals inhabit and encourage is the place where people can connect because they are on the boundaries of culture, politics and economics. Performances in particular, are areas in which for the duration of the performance,

everyone is connected and is actively creating a bond between each other. These bonds are not stable and their longevity is questionable, but they are connections nonetheless and thus must be encouraged and consciously nurtured so that there are more frequent opportunities for people to make connections. These connections are beyond conceptual divisions, and that is what makes them powerful despite their transience.

The NAF cannot be separated from politics and

[w]hen looking at the literature on the social dynamics of arts festivals, one often finds a strong link between ... festivals and politics. It is therefore important to take cognisance of the fact that, ... 'the festival tradition demonstrates another trait: that of subversion, and at the various historical moments subversion has become celebration'. ...the history of the festival demonstrates most effectively the fraught marriage between art and politics (van der Vyver and du Plooy-Cilliers, 2006:193).

Initially the festival was created to celebrate the English language in the arts and the home of the festival became the 1820 Settler Monument, which is a building situated on a hill overlooking Grahamstown, in 1974. However, the monument created dissonance within the Grahamstown community as many people were not

...happy with the association of the monument with strictly settler, qua 'imperial', history. Nor were all willing to conform to governmental mandates without objection. Some were keen to examine that history critically and to fashion the monument in ways that might bridge South Africa's racial chasms. From the start, no overt racial barriers were permitted in the facility. The words of John 10, verse 10, were inscribed around the monument's centrepiece fountain, 'That all might have life and have it abundantly'. From the beginning of the planning for the monument and the festival, there had been a tension between two ostensibly incompatible aspirations-a desire to celebrate English-speaking South African culture and an appreciation that

this culture must interact with and encourage the cultures of their fellow compatriots, in the broadest sense (Grundy, 1994:390).

Thus the festival's mandate now is in line with the initial intentions of the festival establishers; however this was not always the case. In 1980 the word 'national' was added to the "formal name of the festival, nonetheless, the programmes were hardly representative of the cultural richness and diversity of South Africa" (1994:389). Until the 1980s the festival showcased mostly South African art of European derivation instead of showcasing the work of non-white artists. It appeared as though the festival committee was intent on keeping art and reality separate and as such the only style of performance that was performed was predominantly European and disconnected from the surrounding political and cultural tensions burgeoning in South Africa.

As a result of this, critics labeled the festival 'parochial' and discredited the title 'national' in the name, yet in the "1980s, progressive artists sought to widen the content of the festival's offerings beyond Eurocentric forms and eventually to gain a voice and possibly control of the festival's direction and management" (1994:387-8). This process took time and initially the progressive and not commercially safe material was only found on the fringe festival. The organisers were in a position to address the imbalance and showcase black artists, yet they purposefully chose not to, because "[a]s long as the main stage relied heavily on state-financed performing arts councils, the opportunity for a greater appeal to the majority community or even for more topical political themes was limited"

(1994:393). Between 1987 and 1989 the NAF began to be seen as a more inclusive festival and the message of township theatre groups was heard by a wider more racially diverse audience than they were used to in the townships.

What is more, the censorship laws were not applied as strictly to the productions at the NAF as they were in the townships and South Africa at large, thus protest theatre was able to gain ground. This leniency towards the festival productions relates to the function of the *Mardi Gras* carnivals in New Orleans and Louisiana, in the United States of America. According to Mikhail Bakhtin, the carnival was a period of time in a society where the rules were abandoned or consciously flouted and revelry and chaos were allowed to occur within the confines of the carnival arena. Joseph Roach, in his article "Carnival and the Law in New Orleans", used Bakhtin's theory on the carnival to analyse the Mardi Gras Carnival in New Orleans, he states that

Carnival, [is] an occasion for festive transgression, limited only by human imagination or stamina (whichever exhausts itself first), apparently flourishes beyond the law, above the law, and even against the law. In the Bakhtinian construction of the European "carnavalesque," seasonal revelry and masquerade offer release from the oppression of official culture, a suspension of its laws, an exhilarating inversion of its authority, a momentary state of "topsy-turvydom," in which the common people become powerful and the powerful people become ridiculous. To the august majesty of the law, the carnivalesque says, "bottoms up!" (Bakhtin 1984), (1993:44)

The Carnival or festival is only ever a relatively short period of time and if we apply Bakhtin's theory then it is always known that the rules and regulations will be reapplied to society once again. The importance of the carnival is that it provides a

respite from the regulation of everyday life, but the rules are only suspended, their shadow is still present.

So, while the NAF may have been a haven for theatre groups and a platform to voice protest, the laws were merely suspended and not voided and as long as the organisers kept the main programme politically safe, no actual progress was being made at a fundamental level of the NAF,

[i]n this sense, what is apparently 'rupture of hegemony' is usually officially sanctioned rupture and thus ineffectual. ... [F]eelings of freedom associated with festivity can be seen to be orchestrated moments of 'counter sublimation' and hardly a real threat to political authority (Picard and Robinson, 2006:7).

Bearing this in mind, it is apparent that while festivals provide an arena for change and the voicing of opinions otherwise censored in mainstream society, they are bounded, yet this does “emphasise the point that festivals exist and resonate within wider contexts and structures” (2006:7). The NAF was and, to some extent still is, a reflection of the political structures and atmosphere of South Africa.

#### **1.4. Cultural politics**

Albie Sachs addressed the ANC at an in house seminar on culture in Amsterdam in 1988 with the paper “Preparing Ourselves for Freedom, Culture and the ANC Constitutional Guidelines”. He believed that the African National Congress (ANC) and the new South Africa under them would be able to create a new South African culture of inclusion and tolerance; a South Africa where

difference is celebrated, and the way in which one expresses oneself is not dependant on race and social class.

Sachs believed that if culture was used unthinkingly for political means then the people and artists involved diminished<sup>2</sup> because their culture was being manipulated and used. He stated that:

Culture is not something separate from the general struggle, an artefact that is brought in from time to time to mobilize the people or prove to the world that, after all, we are civilized. Culture is us, it is who we are, how we see ourselves and the vision we have of the world. In the course of participating in the culture of liberation, we constantly remake ourselves (Sachs, 1989:189).

South Africans had and have the opportunity to constantly remake themselves through contact with other cultures that were previously, by law, separated. Thus each time the freedom inherited by the new South African government is experienced a new sense of what South Africa could be emerges.

Sachs envisioned a South Africa where everyone was equal. A nation where all the cultures and ethnic groups of South Africa were allowed to express themselves and were given the space in which to develop freely and without restriction. He believed that it was possible to have

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<sup>2</sup> Diminished is used here to infer that the people and the political cultural acts that they were involved in lost the essence of what they were doing as well as the power of culture in and of itself. If culture becomes estranged from its reason for being and becomes manipulated by external forces then it risks losing its power to create change that has longevity.

a single South Africa with a single set of governmental institutions, [to] work toward a common loyalty and patriotism. Yet this is not a call for a homogenized South Africa made up of identikit citizens (Sachs, 1988:190).

The matrix of cultures in South Africa can only continue to exist if each culture is actively maintained and practiced; otherwise each society within South Africa runs the risk of being consumed by globalisation or lost due to lack of interest. If South Africa's diverse cultures are not cultivated and conserved then there is the risk of developing a homogenised society. Bearing this in mind the post-apartheid South African Government has been given the task of creating and fostering a culture of inclusion, tolerance and diversity amongst the South African population. Sachs believed that it was vital that a common culture of patriotism and loyalty in our country be established and nourished, because the struggle had been so violent and had cost so many lives and dreams.

However this does not appear to be the case anymore. It is now imperative that the 'new' South Africa is seen to perform as a thriving unit because chaos and turmoil within a country scare away potential investors and tourists, as Tony Binns and Etienne Nel say:

South Africa's rich natural and cultural heritage, and the fact that it is clearly one of the more appealing and rapidly growing tourist destinations in the world, make this sector an area to which government, entrepreneurs and communities are currently looking at very seriously (Binns and Nel, 2002:236).

Thus the focus of government may have shifted from creating and fostering a national sense of pride and cohesion because of the trauma of the past to nurturing a cohesive culture for the purpose of creating money and future investments. In Jacob Zuma's State of the Nation address in February 2011, he listed tourism as a key area that needed to be developed in terms of job creation and boosting the economy. He specifically mentioned that the government "...will continue to develop the cultural industries sector, which contributes about R2 billion to the Gross Domestic Product"<sup>3</sup>. However, this emphasis on creating an income out of culture does not address the potential effects of presenting culture outside of its intended functions and how this will affect the efficacy of the various societies in question.

The ability to imagine life beyond race and discrimination is the 'sufficient imagination' (Sachs, 1988) that Albie Sachs referred to and if culture is being manipulated by the tourism industry then it potentially falls to artists and performers to begin this transformation from a foundation not based predominantly on economic gain. Realistically, race will always be an issue in South Africa, an underlying current that may come bubbling up at any moment in the course of interaction, but it must not be the first port of call in dissonance. Creating national unity and social cohesion takes time and it requires a sense of community, these small acts of communion in performance and at festivals are part of the process.

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<sup>3</sup> Zuma, Jacob. State of the Nation Address February, 2011. South African Government Information. <http://www.info.gov.za/speech>

The arts have a social responsibility to contribute towards creating a nation that is not based on race and division. In creating and showcasing work that opens up dialogue, artists and performers are helping to make a space where people can talk about the issues that confront them every day. They provide a medium through which dialogue can be generated. With the showcasing of indigenous and ethnic performances there are multiple discussions about difference and commonality that could emerge.

Creating national unity without reducing culture to a political medium is difficult especially because the previous cultural model that the 'new' South Africa had was created predominantly for political means. It is also impossible to separate culture and politics, because people are what makes culture, furthermore people and their actions are inherently political, therefore "[i]t is not a question of separating art and politics, which no one can do, but of avoiding a shallow and forced relationship between the two" (Sachs, 1988:187). This shallow relationship between politics and culture was the case during apartheid where "[h]eritage performed an important didactic function in supporting Afrikaner nationalism, separate development and white supremacy" (Deacon *et al*, 2003:8). It then fell to the post-apartheid government to redress these issues of separation and exclusion.

The then Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology in their *White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage*, written in 1996, made it clear that it would "constitute grave short-sightedness on the part of Government [if they failed] to

recognize the healing and recreational potential of arts and culture in a period of national regeneration and restoration” (White Paper, 1996:14).

In this vein the government has decided on a mandate of ‘social cohesion’ for South Africa and the current Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture (DSRAC) has been given the directive of implementing this vision amongst South Africans through the arts. The vision of the DSRAC is to “develop and preserve South African culture to ensure social cohesion and nation-building” (Strategic Plan 08-011, DAC, 2008:8). Part of the current strategic plan for the DSRAC is the “promotion, development and transformation of Arts, Culture, Museums, Heritage and Language Services in order to contribute to: Sustainable Economic Growth and Opportunities; Nation Building; Good Governance and Social and Human Capital Development” (Strategic Plan 07-010, DSRAC 2007:44). Hence it is clear that culture and heritage are being used as political and economic tools. This is inevitable, but it is alarming nonetheless because it suggests that culture might have to conform to certain criteria in order for it to be seen as an economic benefit to the country. Therefore, the public culture that is manufactured for economic display is designed to create money and interest in the country and not to maintain a vital and necessary part of society.

### **1.5. Crisis and liminality in society**

All culture is fluid and in a process of change. Bearing this in mind all cultures still have moments or periods of relative stability. Victor Turner applies the word

'crisis' when a particular culture or person is undergoing a process of change, such as the initiation period between adolescence and adulthood; marriage ceremonies or the instalment of a new monarchy or presidency. This stage of crisis is divided into three phases in which the transformation process occurs, Turner labels them the 'preliminal, liminal and post liminal' phases. It is problematic applying these terms to an entire country, as it is difficult to determine if there is ever a post liminal phase because of the enormity of any given society, and as South Africa is configured of multiple indigenous communities this adds to the difficulty. However, it is possible to view how South Africa has passed through various crises and then to discern what the preliminary and liminal phases were. Nevertheless being able to confidently say that there will be a post liminal phase where the country is in a period of calm before the next crisis is virtually impossible, as South Africa is in a spiral of crises and liminal phases while democracy and governance are still being interpreted and adapted to suit South Africa's needs.

Still, if one were to apply these terms to an entire country then in the case of South Africa one of the preliminary stages the country experienced was the demise of the apartheid government and the inauguration of the new democratic ANC government, this was also the transition between separation and unity across all races. Currently South Africa is in a liminal stage of this crisis, where the elusive national South African identity still does not exist and dissonance continues to run along racial as well as economic lines.

AmaXhosa culture is currently going through a process of 'crisis' and is transforming from a 'private' culture into a 'public' culture because of economic and political conditions in South Africa. The process of transformation is conceivably engendering a reification of AmaXhosa culture and transmuting it from a living, practised culture to one that changes merely for aesthetic<sup>4</sup> reasons and not for the enabling of cultural beliefs and the furthering of traditional bonds. Access to AmaXhosa culture is far easier now and more readily available to people outside the AmaXhosa nation. The AmaXhosa culture that is displayed to outsiders is a dim reflection of the real entity, however this may become the only remaining tangible element of AmaXhosa culture.

#### **1.6. The function of the NAF in South Africa, the creation of *communitas***

...festivals provide arenas for possibilities and this would seem to be a mark of their persistence and pervasiveness, indicating the (potentially universal) human desire to re-enchante the world in, or shortly after, situations of societal life crisis caused by changes in the political, economic, demographic, scientific or natural environments.

David Picard & Mike Robinson (2006:8)

The South African National Arts Festival (NAF) plays multiple roles in the cultural and political sphere of South African life. Two of these roles are creating and fostering a national South African identity of cohesion and unity in the face of diversity, as well as contributing to the transformation of AmaXhosa culture from

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<sup>4</sup> The word aesthetic is used here in terms of how the performances for outsiders is consciously designed to be appealing and attract audiences.

the private to the public. The NAF is playing an integral role in the cultural transformation of both AmaXhosa tradition and South African identity. Any understanding of current performances, especially productions of traditional cultural acts, must be located in the political environment of the period in which they have been staged as well as the political history of the NAF itself. The history of the NAF is located within a political paradigm of the apartheid regime, it was "... [e]stablished in 1966, [and] it has blossomed into a gigantic, multi-dimensional enterprise" (Grundy, 1994:387). This festival is bound up in the history of the Eastern Cape and the settler history that is intricately intertwined in the Eastern Cape.

The NAF is hosted annually in Grahamstown, and is a self-professed platform for fostering and creating South African culture and tradition. According to Ismail Mahomed, NAF Director,

the NAF recognises the transformation potential and nation-building capacity inherent in the arts; and in cognisance of the courage and passion demonstrated by South African artists to build a South African nation which does not discriminate against gender, class, race, religion, economic and geographical location, the NAF is committed to staging South Africa's foremost annual multidiscipline arts event which will develop, reflect, promote and reward excellence of all forms of South Africa's diverse arts and cultural expression (Mohamed, personal communication, November 2008).

Therefore the mandate of the NAF is structured around showcasing and developing local talent and culture in order to develop and nurture the South African arts. It is committed to the task of nation-building, however nation-building

requires an ideological cultural shift from the separation policies of the apartheid regime to the current democratic era in which South Africa is now. One of the ways in which the NAF can assist cultural transformation is by creating a sense of community amongst South African theatre goers. The communities created during apartheid through protest performance and theatre were a major contributor to bringing together like minded people despite issues of race. Therefore, in South Africa there is a history of using performance as a medium for fostering a sense of cohesion.

The nature of festivals is such that they create small pockets of communities in each show that is staged during the duration of the festival. Performances create a relationship between spectators and performers. Erika Fischer-Lichte describes this relationship in terms of a loss of self, this loss is a process of transformation that occurs between the performers and the spectators and this transformation implies “a temporary annulment of the principle of individuation” (Fischer-Lichte, 2005:7). This principle of individuation is moved aside and a community is created where the “boundaries separating individuals [are] dissolved” (2005:7). Fischer-Lichte believes that this is exceptional because of the cult of the individual that predominates global culture currently and because the community that is created is “based on a shared experience and not on common beliefs, values, convictions, interests and so on” (2005:7). This is important to note because in South Africa there are clear yet mostly invisible boundaries separating people. They are demarcated racially and economically.

Festivals are periods in societal life where people allow themselves to have fun. Festivals are a time for revelry and escape from the rules and regulations of everyday life. In this way festivals are liminal spaces, they provide a communal space in which people can engage with concepts and ideas not ordinarily available to them and this allows for people to engage with each other on a more active, fun and personal level. Festivals are a space and time separate from the everyday work environment, their nature is to be in between the prosaic and the fantastical. This gap allows for the creation of communities amongst normally disparate people. Festivals provide an arena in which people can find a common ground and where they can exchange ideas and concepts regarding their place in society and the ways in which society and the individual usually interact. Festivals bring ideas into the public forum and make them accessible to a large proportion of people.

Festivals provide an arena for differing ideas and notions about the world to be performed alongside each other, in this way debate and dialogues are created and nurtured. Dialogue is the key to fostering and furthering the concept of a unified and democratic South Africa and often there is still a lack of constructive dialogue amongst people with differing ideas. Theatre and performance offer a space in which people can start talking and discussing their ideological perspectives and interpretations of the action happening in the performances being viewed. Performances have the potential to incite debate around pertinent issues, instead of regurgitating trite arguments. The NAF could be used as a space to reclaim and affirm ethnic identity as well as being positively used as a

platform for freedom of expression. It could also become a place for the creation of cross cultural relationships. The NAF provides an arena for the creation of collective experiences and it enables people from all walks of life to generate relationships. Festival's create dialogue; they have the ability to regenerate cultural interest and they provide a space for the performance of tradition, which otherwise may not have an arena in which to be presented to people outside of the specific culture being showcased.

The creation of communities in festivals could be on a superficial level of merely being in the same place at the same time buying curios and trinkets at the market area. Or they could be more meaningful and sustained as when an audience becomes completely absorbed in a production they are viewing. There is a bond that is formed between audiences watching the same show as well as between the audience and the performers. This bond creates a sense of *communitas* amongst everyone present in the venue. Victor Turner used the term 'communitas' in his research on ritual in society. The act of *communitas* is an active phenomenon, where the link between people has been forged by active participation in an act of some sort, it can be a ritual act or being a part of an audience or a production. Turner described *communitas* as being able to occur within the bonds of structure. In the case of the NAF the overarching structure in place is the festival itself, with its 10 day duration and its placement within the small city of Grahamstown, then there are various sub-structures within the NAF,

one of which is the structure of the individual productions performing at the NAF.

Communitas is a phenomenon that

breaks through the interstices of structure, in liminality; at the edges of structure, in marginality; and from beneath structure, in inferiority. It is almost everywhere held to be sacred or 'holy', possibly because it transgresses or dissolves the norms that govern structured and institutionalized relationships and is accompanied by experiences of unprecedented potency. The processes of 'leveling' and 'stripping'...often appear to flood their subjects with effect (Turner, 1969:128).

The 'leveling' of differences and the 'stripping' away of the normal, often limiting, structures of prosaic life, imbues the process of communitas with more power.

These small pockets of communitas that are created during the structure of festival productions are unstable and short lived. They exist nonetheless and it is this liminal state of commonality that needs to be explored and understood because they have the potential to contribute towards creating a sustained culture of unity and cohesion in South Africa. Communities are inherently powerful because they stem from a sense of common ideology, if the short-lived sense of communitas that is created during performances can be extended beyond the performance venue then perhaps South Africa may be able to move forward from the divisions embedded in the psyche of the country.

There are many different communities that are formed when a production is created and during the performance of the show between the performers, this is also a form of communitas. A bond is formed between the cast that assists in creating a sense of unity amongst the performers and the show so that the

audience, usually unaware of this, senses that this is another world that they have entered into once the performance begins. The audience, on the other hand, consists of individuals, whether they are there with their partners or friends, their experience of the show is a singular one. However there is the potential for the community that is on stage to transform the entire space of the performance so that the performers and the audience are united and become a single entity experiencing the performance and transcending the space that they entered into. As previously stated, this is a liminal space where the “boundaries separating individuals [are] dissolved” (Fischer-Lichte, 2005:7) and a community is created wherein the audience feels connected to the reality of the performance.

This dissolving of the boundary between individuals and the world of the performance has the potential to unite disparate and often antagonistic viewpoints thereby creating an arena for dialogue. The nature of liminality is transient which inhibits the ability to exploit this magical space of unity, Fischer-Lichte (2005) describes this liminal community as an ‘aesthetic community’ that is unstable and disintegrates after a performance when the audience wakes up from the hypnotic or ecstatic state in which they were lulled into during the performance (2005:7). Although this is an unstable community it is still a community and even though in its semi-tangible form it disintegrates there is still the memory of connection between individuals. This memory of unity needs to be discussed and kept alive in the memory of individuals because it is the key to establishing connections and

allowing society to accept and acknowledge their common denominators instead of easily fracturing into factions of race, economics and knowledge.

### 1.7. AmaXhosa culture, the NAF and politics

The NAF has the potential to develop pockets of *communitas* between the audience members and the performers in the staging of traditional AmaXhosa culture. In the 2009 Festival, there were five productions on the Main programme that featured the traditions and culture of the AmaXhosa. They were: *The East Cape Ensemble* which claimed to be presenting a “rich spectacle of movement with stirring music, song, and a huge radiantly costumed cast” (NAF brochure, 2009:5), while *The Eastern Cape Indigenous Orchestra, The Songs of the Amagcaleka* featured “Eastern Cape singers, accompanied by traditional instruments, perform time-honoured songs and music from Gcalekaland” (2009:14); *Intersections: Swiss/Africa* was a “musical dialogue [which] brings two worlds together through a new vocabulary made out of sounds, clicks, words, vibrations, emotions and gestures” (2009:14); and *The Studio* production presented *Vumelani: Let Us Dance Together* which drew “on the talents of three traditional dance groups” (2009:27). Furthermore the 2009 Standard Bank Young Artist Award Winner for Visual Art was Nicholas Hlobo whose exhibition was titled *Umtshotsho*, “Umtshotsho refers to a traditional AmaXhosa youth party” (2009:20). All of these productions were purportedly presenting re-presentations of traditional practices and culture for consumption by the audiences of the NAF, However Hlobo was exhibiting his interpretation of the evolution of the *umtshotsho* tradition

and not just presenting the tradition. While these performances have the ability to generate *communitas* and establish better understanding of AmaXhosa culture for outsiders, they also create arena's in which the traditional culture is misrepresented or adapted for the benefit of outside audiences and as such the unity building nature of performances also has a potentially disruptive effect on the culture being showcased.

The AmaXhosa performances held at the NAF in 2009 were not entirely 'faithful' re-presentations of culture. Instead, some of the performances showcased a highly stylised hybrid form of AmaXhosa culture which promised to take audiences "off on a sensory tour through the living archives of the region's cultural traditions, ancient and modern" (NAF brochure, 2009:5). Thus they were staged authenticities of the 'public' persona of the AmaXhosa for the benefit of outsiders to the AmaXhosa culture. The main programme is sponsored entirely by the NAF. The NAF's involvement in cultural AmaXhosa performance may have been successful in its attempt to assist in cultural preservation and the revitalisation of a tradition that may be lost due to urbanization. It may also be contributing to a positive "crosspollination of ideas" (White paper, 1996:14) amongst AmaXhosa culture and outsiders or it could inadvertently be assisting in cultural commodification and the fixation of a culture. If the latter is the case, this might imply a level of cultural hegemony at play within the selection process and the creation of the productions.

Throughout history, festivals have been used as political tools. Either they have been used as tools for transgressing official boundaries and rules, such as carnivals and the revelry that ensued, in which case it was a political act on the part of a people who felt they were powerless. However, carnivals, such as the *Mardi Gras* Carnivals in the USA, are contrary in nature, because according to Carl Lindahl in “Bakhtin's Carnival Laughter and the Cajun Country Mardi Gras”,

Mardi Gras is absolutely hierarchical in structure. Its great strength as a popular festival de-rives from the fact that it inverts, but does not subvert, the power structure that it mocks. (1996: 63).

Consequently, carnivals and festivals may assist in asserting a dominant hegemonic ideology. Festivals are also, of course, designed to generate money for communities, towns, cities and countries because

[a]s societies position themselves within the transnational fabric of globalisation they find themselves locked within an agenda of apparent competitiveness as newly established social categories such as countries, cities or communities jostle to establish/re-establish profile and power (Picard and Robinson, 2006:9).

Thus, while part of the (potential) function of festivals in society is to create dialogue between people, cultures and societies they are also used to raise the profile of an area and to attract foreign income. Festivals are arenas of change, potential sites of rejuvenation and regeneration of cultures and traditions. If festivals are used as tools to adjust and realign ideologies and cultural differences then it is necessary to investigate the parameters within which festivals work. It

has been said that “[f]estivals celebrate the things people value” (Chappel, 2006:191) but they can also highlight disparities within society. In the case of the NAF 2009, AmaXhosa culture was featured heavily, which raises various questions such as: has this occurred at the cost of featuring other cultures within South Africa? And why is there so much attention being placed on the AmaXhosa at this particular festival? There is a definite priority given to regionalism, since the AmaXhosa were already partially settled in the Eastern Cape when the first Europeans encountered them. The first documented European – Nguni encounter was in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, between the members of the Dutch East India Company and the Nguni tribes that had settled in the Eastern Cape area in search of better grazing for their cattle.

With the increasing implementation of the cultural boycott on South Africa during apartheid the NAF organisers were forced to democratize their programme and include South African playwrights and texts. Since then the NAF has been actively trying to be a platform for every sector within South African society. Despite these attempts at inclusivity, the NAF is still perceived of as a ‘white’ festival. In a research paper published in 2006, two lecturers from Stellenbosch University, Abraham G. van der Vyver and Franzel du Plooy-Cilliers, compared two South African festivals to determine the social dynamics of arts festivals within the South African context. They compared the KKNK, which is traditionally perceived as an ‘Afrikaans’ festival, with the NAF, traditionally perceived as an ‘English’ festival (van der Vyver and du Plooy-Cilliers, 2006:195). Their research

appeared to support these assumptions as “[t]he majority of the respondents attending the NAF festival were English speaking (48%), followed by AmaXhosa-speaking individuals (23%), and Afrikaans-speaking individuals (12%)” (2006:195). These demographics suggest that the majority of audience members at the NAF are English speaking which makes this an ideal arena for the exposure of AmaXhosa culture and language to outsiders. The deliberate showcasing of AmaXhosa culture at what is perceived of as an English festival is interesting and fuelled by various political and economic motives, however the issue of how this overt visibility is affecting the culture of the AmaXhosa nation is one that has yet to be examined.

#### **1.8. The potential effects of the NAF performances on AmaXhosa culture**

Every culture is fluid and in constant flux, but in recent times this fluidity has become marked by a rapid increase in global interaction and increasing economic pressures. These are influencing cultures and tradition at a pace never before seen, tourism has become one of the biggest facets of a country’s economy and therefore heritage is exploited at an alarming rate in order to lure tourists into visiting one country as opposed to another. Within this, each province might be seen as vying for those tourists as well, so not only is the country as a whole marketing itself aggressively, each province or state within the country is also exploiting their natural heritage in order to grab the attention of tourists. The AmaXhosa have a rich and vital cultural heritage which is being used to draw tourists to the Eastern Cape province. This is accelerating the rate of change

occurring in the culture because, inadvertently, there is pressure to help the province financially. Part of the motivation for showcasing the AmaXhosa so extensively on the main festival programme is economically driven and motivated. This is coupled with the desire to uplift local artists and give them a platform to showcase their work.

Essentially, no matter what the ideal mandates of a festival are, the major concerns are economic, which translates into keeping the festival economically viable. In order for a festival to sustain itself it has to be popular and able to consistently attract tourists and audiences, ergo “[f]estivals, whether as 'traditional' moments of social celebration or as constructed and highly orchestrated events, have been absorbed into the expansive stock of 'products' that tourists desire” (Picard and Robinson, 2006:2), consequently if the NAF wants to guarantee funding from the Eastern Cape DSRAC then it has to showcase AmaXhosa culture because this has been established as a key tourism generator. Tourism generates money, the Eastern Cape is one of the poorest provinces in South Africa and as such the EC Government is trying to attract tourists to the province to make money.

Traditional performances can be seen as acts of continuation and regeneration, as affirmations of a culture that is not static. The showcasing of traditional AmaXhosa culture on the Main Programme of the NAF can be seen as an attempt to create and nurture pride in national heritage. However, the placing of AmaXhosa culture on the Main Programme is also part of a larger socio-political agenda in South Africa, which has to do with promoting previously disadvantaged

and marginalized cultures/ethnic populations and the need to create economic security.

Part of the aim of the NAF in showcasing the cultural and traditional practices of the AmaXhosa is to create awareness of the different cultures within South Africa, to cultivate a dialogue between cultures, to uplift the performers and provide an income for them, and to expose their creative talent and skills to a wider audience. Another aim is to conserve and nurture AmaXhosa culture by creating a platform for the preservation of their cultural practices while another driving force is conditional funding from the EC DSRAC. These performances are an incentive to the performers to remember and perform their culture. And yet, is the economic reason becoming the sole reason and motivation for the performing groups? If this is the case the culture of the AmaXhosa is potentially going to become a completely inscribed culture as opposed to an incorporated one where the memory of the society is known and stored in the actions of the society and not just the written history of the people. The concept of incorporated and inscribed memory in relation to the AmaXhosa is going to be discussed in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER TWO - FRACTURES

Knowledge of all human activities in the past is possible only through a knowledge of their traces.

Paul Connerton (1989:13)

### **2.1. Incorporated knowledge in traditional performance**

This chapter seeks to examine the ways in which dance and dancing bodies contribute to the collective memory of a society. Using the work of Cambridge University sociologist, Paul Connerton, and the work of Richard Schechner, professor at New York University, as the seminal texts in this chapter, the commemorative ceremonies practiced by the AmaXhosa will be examined to determine how, once the incorporated memory of the AmaXhosa is altered, their society might be affected. The act of performing culture is a process of recollection. It is a process of writing history and heritage with the body and the voice. The performance of culture outside of its original function within a society is a method of rewriting that heritage, often in small integers, which are hard to discern. However, there are consequences to rewriting the incorporated memory of a society, such as the loss of efficacy from the performed traditions. The heritage of the AmaXhosa is possibly being overwritten by public displays of their culture. If the incorporated memory of the AmaXhosa is altered then the way in which the AmaXhosa recollect their past could be modified.

By staging the culture of the AmaXhosa on the stages of the NAF there appears to be a legitimation of the culture in society. As though, through public

displays of their traditions and exposure to the large audiences, the AmaXhosa culture gains distinction and value as a living culture and a part of South Africa. One of the results of these performances is that they bring “language, memory, and history into the public domain” (Albright, 1997:125) and affirm the new South Africa and the freedom that this concept embodies. The action of the performance requires moving bodies; this performance of culture is an incorporated act on behalf of the performers.

There is a link between the way dancers retain the memory of movement and the way in which people retain the memory of their society. The traditional dancer’s body on stage is a direct link to the culture and tradition being performed, yet there is more than just that link. The dancer’s body provides a link to everything they have experienced, singularly as well as within the society whose culture they are performing. This dancing body gives its autobiography to the biography of the community while they are performing. However this is a reciprocal process because the traditions of the culture being performed inform the dancer, therefore traces of the individual are intertwined with traces of their culture, the two are divorced with extreme difficulty. Incorporated memory dominates a dancer’s ability to move without thinking, to make the movement appear be unconscious, and in much the same way societies recollect their past in the everyday actions they perform, which is predominantly an unconscious continuation with the past. Connerton was intrigued by how societies recollected their pasts collectively, because he was aware that the individual’s personal recollections are completely

interwoven with the memory of the community or society from which they originate. In his book *How Societies Remember* (1989), he carefully investigates the ways in which societies remember. He acknowledges that a society uses inscribed articles of history to recall the past, but that a key way in which a society remembers is through commemorative ceremonies, actions and gestures. Commemorative ceremonies, actions and gestures require an incorporated form of memory, which, once it has been learnt, is often practiced unconsciously. Consequently, incorporated memory's value in society is taken for granted because it is thought of as a habit memory, which as a form of memory has been relegated by social sciences to the bottom of the cognitive ladder.

There are two main recollection practices that occur in societies, the dominant one is a practice of inscription, which is where ideas and histories are written down and stored. The other is a practice of incorporation where the collective memories of a society are stored in the body and known as a habit memory. The reason for the emphasis being placed on inscription is because it is a means of locking and storing knowledge so that it cannot be easily forgotten. Inscribing processes are a documentation of an idea in a tangible form that can be accessed by many people after the fact, which is their overarching feature. Societies have a conscious desire to maintain a sense of belonging and heritage, as this gives an individual a sense of 'rootedness'. Consequently, because history and tradition shape individuals and communities so strongly, there is an almost unconscious desire to perpetuate themselves and have a sense of endless continuation.

The collective memory of a nation, especially after trauma, can be a reflection of the political past. For example, racism will not, and cannot, be erased from the collective memory of South Africa as long as there are still people who can remember it as a personal affliction and experience. The collective memory of a society is harboured in the individual bodies of a society, it is reflected by the ways in which people carry themselves and relate to each other on a physical level. This is the unconscious collective memory which Connerton would describe as involving incorporated practices.

## **2.2. Oral history – cultural acts and dances as a form of oral history**

History leads to the production of formal, written texts precisely because oral histories are predominantly viewed as too unstable to be relied upon for accurate<sup>5</sup> understandings of a society (Connerton, 1989:16). The social memory of a group is often placed as secondary to the texts about that group. The recording of histories often favours the elite or dominant classes, especially individual histories in the form of a memoir. Oral histories “seek to give voice to what would otherwise remain voiceless even if not traceless” (1989:18). Oratory and dancing are not mutually exclusive amongst the AmaXhosa, and as such the relation between oral history and dance cannot be separated when discussing the history of the AmaXhosa.

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<sup>5</sup> This view is a western ideology.

In an attempt to highlight the importance of oral histories in society Jeff Friedman, a choreographer, dancer, reconstructor, documentarian and scholar, founded the *LEGACY Oral History Project* in 1988 in response to the effects of HIV/AIDS on the dance community in San Francisco. This project seeks to preserve the memory of dancers and choreographers affected by HIV/AIDS and other terminal diseases. The LEGACY project specifically does not want to impose a history onto the subjects chosen, rather, it consists of personal accounts and interviews from the subjects that are faithfully documented and recorded. Using some of these oral history documentations Friedman created a dance piece titled *Muscle Memory* (1994), where he danced the memories of chosen subjects. *Muscle Memory* was a choreographic and academic endeavor to further penetrate the latent power of incorporated and oral history. Friedman's

new strategies for dancing oral history investigate how historical events are embodied in individual subjects. Mobilizing how bodies speak to history through performance then works towards rehabilitating embodied experience in the construction and interpretation of history, a remembering (Friedman, 2005:47).

There are multiple ways of interpreting history and various rhythms that influence the ways in which people recall their life histories. Friedman was performing the oral histories of deceased, terminally ill or aging homosexual dancers and choreographers, specifically as evidence that their lives were important and worth remembering, especially amongst the performers in the

San Francisco Bay area as well as in the performing arts community as a whole. This is analogous to cultural practices and commemorative ceremonies as they are performances of oral histories, which then become incorporated actions within that community or society. Each society creates commemorative ceremonies or maintains ritual acts because they are deemed worth remembering within that society.

The performances are autobiographies of each LEGACY interviewee's life, but they are also acts of community with their fellow performers and their performing arts society. So, while Friedman was performing the oral histories of individuals in *Muscle Memory* he was also performing his oral history. As a result autobiography can be seen as an act of community. Ann Cooper Albright, in *Choreographing Difference: The Body and Identity in Contemporary Dance* believes that

although on the surface this may seem like a contradiction in terms, in fact, autobiography has long served as an act of community. Giving testimony and bearing witness by recounting one's life experiences has helped marginalised communities hold onto the experience of their own bodies while reclaiming their history (Albright, 1997:149).

Autobiography is usually singular, a solo act performed by the 'I' in the story being portrayed. Similarly, the performers in the AmaXhosa cultural shows are portraying the singular culture of the AmaXhosa; so while the performers are plural the story is singular. They are telling their plural societal story, as well as their singular stories as AmaXhosa men and women, to the audience

through the medium of song/music and dance. These staged productions of AmaXhosa culture are biographical dances of their history and culture, which, while possibly altering their incorporated memories of their culture are also acting as a way of reclaiming and affirming their history in the public arena.

### **2.3 The AmaXhosa *umtshotsho* dance party**

There are various types of dances recorded as being AmaXhosa. Each of these dances shares a similar movement vocabulary as well as having musical accompaniment. I have chosen to focus on one of these dances, the *umtshotsho*, as it is exclusively performed by uninitiated boys and girls. The reason for this specificity is that the *umtshotsho* is an arena of improvisation within the traditional dance form; simultaneously for the purposes of trying to establish if and how the incorporated memory of the AmaXhosa may be affected by public displays of their performance forms. It seems fitting to examine the form that appears to be dying out amongst the next generation of AmaXhosa men and women. If the *umtshotsho* loses its prominence amongst the AmaXhosa then it is possible that the dance tradition within the society will be reduced and primarily maintained by dance groups, as opposed to being an incorporated memory amongst the majority of the AmaXhosa nation.

An *umtshotsho* is a type of dance party within the AmaXhosa society. It is held for boys and girls, but there is a distinction made between young and old boys and girls. There is an “*umtshotso woogasa (umtshotsho of the young boys)*

for the younger girls and boys, and *umtshotsho wmakwenkwe amadala* (*umtshotsho* of the old boys) for the older girls and boys, the ones who are getting closer to the stage of initiation into adulthood” (Dargie, 2005:2). Despite this differentiation between age groups both types are similar in practice. Both of the *umtshotsho*, *umtshotso woogasa* and *umtshotsho wmakwenkwe amadala*, are held in a large round house and the girls traditionally do not dance, instead they kneel around the walls and clap and sing for the boys. This is called *ukombela*. It is the role of the boys to sing and dance. Until the 1970s it was common for the boys to carry sticks with them to be able to perform stick fighting and they wore blankets and the beads made for them by the girls in their village. The girls wore skirts and beads they had made. Now however, these practices are no longer commonly done.

The main difference between the two types of *imitshotsho* (plural) is that at the *umtshotsho wmakwenkwe amadala* the participants are sometimes possibly given some beer from adults within the community, but this is at the discretion of the adults and not a prerequisite for the *umtshotsho* to take place. If beer is given to the participants then the group will proceed to the cattle byre of the homestead in which the *umtshotsho* is occurring. The cattle byre

is always the centre and focal point of the homestead. It is at the cattle byre that the spirits of the ancestors are believed to gather. At the byre they will pour out a little beer for the ancestors, and then pass around *ibhekile*, the drinking jug, just as the adults do at beer dances. This ancestor ritual shows that *umtshotsho* is considered to be an act of traditional religion, the same as the various types of adult parties (Dargie, 2005:2).

Thus, while the *umtshotsho* is seen as a fun past-time, it is also considered an important practice within the AmaXhosa society because it introduces the solemnity of beer rituals into the less serious dance party of the younger generations.

This dance party is described by Broster as a place and time when the young boys of a tribe or village are able to improvise their dance moves and introduce new variations on standard dance moves, they are “free to try new steps and new songs” (Broster, 1967:22). However, while the dancers may experiment with the form, there is a foundation of dance steps that remains consistent. A characteristic feature of an *umtshotsho* is the use of both a slow and a fast step. The rhythm and

the tempo remains the same, but the clap and dance steps use rapid (double speed) patterns. Usually the dance will begin with the slow step, then the fast step takes over, then back to slow step, fast step again, and so on until the leader decides it’s enough. In the dance, the boys hold sticks in their right hands, and may hold cloths in their left hands. The boys lift their feet as they dance, though usually the knees are not raised much. But at times venturesome spirits may perform more acrobatically. Some may perform the shaking dance, *ukutyityimba* (Dargie, 2005:2).

All these elements are present in the adult dances that occur at rituals and informal beer drinks. Consequently the *umtshotsho* is a preparation for the young AmaXhosa boys and girls for their adult life within the community. The *umtshotsho* provides the boys and girls with the opportunity to learn the rhythms and tempo of the traditional dance form while also providing them with freedom to experiment with it. The *umtshotsho* has contributed to the organic evolution of traditional

dancing within the AmaXhosa and has ensured that the heritage has not remained static. Interestingly, the *umtshotsho* is not the only arena for playing with the traditional form of movement and singing, the adults' dance, *intlombe yabakhulu*, is also an opportunity to experiment and play with the dancing form. Nevertheless the fundamental movements remain the same, it is only the rhythm and sequence of movements that are altered.

The foundation of AmaXhosa dancing revolves around five main sets of movements, which Erick Bigalke states are:

- 1) A semi-shuffle.
- 2) A robust heel-stamping in time to the claps, when each beat is clapped.
- 3) With each foot in succession, the placing of the ball of the foot to one clap, and the placing of the heel to the next clap, the same movements being repeated with the other foot in time to the next pair of claps.
- 4) The *indlamu* style of dancing of youths which is the vigorous lifting and bringing down of the legs and the stamping of the feet, a restrained version of this occurs amongst adults.
- 5) A kind of stylised skip in which the lifting of the legs is done less abruptly and more lightly than in actual skipping. Each foot is brought down in time to a clapped beat or an unsounded one (1982:190).

There is also the shaking of the body, *ukutyityimba*, which is a rapid contracting and release of the muscles of the chest and arms. Curiously, David Dargie (2005) notes that *ukutyityimba*, is practiced by the AbaThembu, but is believed to be an imported dance form, probably from the coast. The standard posture for the AmaXhosa is erect, unless emphasis is being created in which case the dancer will move their body, from the hips, forwards at an angle.

If, as I have stated, the *umtshotsho* is an arena for the learning of the traditional dancing and singing form within a specific AmaXhosa tribe and further, that this event contributes to the evolution of the dancing/singing tradition. It follows that if this form is altered then it will have a feedback effect on the traditional dancing and singing of the AmaXhosa.

#### **2.4. Incorporated and Inscribed forms of memory**

Culture and traditions do not simply continue of their own volition. They require action, people need to perform traditions and continue the narrative; there is a link between the last time a tradition was performed and the next time it will be performed. For the act to be believable the people enacting and performing a rite need to be convincing. To be convincing the performers need to have a muscle memory of the act and not simply an ability to deliver lines and movements on cue. The traditional act must be embodied before it has efficacy. To inscribe is to mark a surface or object with characters or an image. Inscribing is the act of attempting to make something permanent. One inscribes something in order to preserve it and ensure that it has an existence outside of its temporality. Inscription removes an object or act from transience and fixes it so that it can be revisited, however the fixed nature of inscription ensures that only one angle or viewpoint is recorded. The thing inscribed loses its vitality and as such risks becoming reified. It also risks losing a vital link with the people who interact with this form of history and memory.

Incorporating practices and inscribing practices are two fundamentally different types of collective remembrance practiced in society. Incorporating practices can be “a smile or a handshake or words spoken in the presence of someone we address” (Connerton, 1989:73). All of these acts are messages that are imparted through a bodily act. They require the presence of bodies and the transmission of the message is sustained only so long as there are bodies present. Inscription devices, such as film and written documents, trap and hold information long after the act has been committed and there is no longer human involvement informing the act (1989:73). Before the advent of writing and the ability to inscribe, societies were often based on oral cultures and continuous human interaction.

The transition from an oral culture to a literate culture is essentially the transition from incorporating practices to inscribing practices. Any act that is inscribed is fixed, the process that precedes inscription becomes closed once the act is recorded; this then allows for innovation in a field that has been inscribed. In an oral society the traditions and culture of a society are transferred by oral means. A society recollects the past through incorporated acts, the oratory of the society is as much a verbal act as a physical act. The rhythm and intonation of the stories or traditional dances are passed down from generation to generation. They are remembered as full body actions and this is part of the way in which the stories sustain themselves. Improvisation within the stories is inevitable, however it is minimal. Innovation is

discouraged, due to the fact that in order for the stories and dances to have efficacy within a society, and for the stories and dances to be believed and thought of as authentic, they must appear to have never changed. Continuity with the past is essential for a society to believe in its ability to endure.

Improvisation will occur within any society and culture, but this is not the same as innovation. With improvisation, the changes within a culture will be gradual and incremental, so that a society barely notices that the oral tradition has altered at all. However, with the advent of inscribing tools the memories of a culture begin to be “transmitted mainly by the reproduction of their inscriptions rather than by 'live' tellings, improvisation becomes increasingly difficult and innovation is institutionalised” (1989:75). With the advent of phonetic writing two processes were promoted: economisation and scepticism (Connerton, 1989). These two processes generate cultural innovation because communal memory is freed from its dependence on rhythm and the content of communal memory is subjected to systematic criticism (Connerton, 1989). With communal memory being released from its burden of maintaining and sustaining the heritage of a society through incorporated acts, substantial mental energy is released and this allows for the production of unfamiliar statements and novel thoughts (Connerton, 1989). In this type of society there is less fear of heritage being lost or forgotten because everything can be recorded. Communal rituals and traditions are performed from inscribed records. However, this means that the

acts become fixed and once removed from a society. The incorporated nature of recollection is no longer relied upon and as such the efficacy within the traditional performances begins to wane because the energy and conviction required to sustain a tradition within one's body is no longer needed. A reduction in the power of the traditions is a result of a loss of incorporated memory.

Inscription allowed societies to feel reassured that their past would remain. Fear of memories being lost no longer had agency. With records came the establishing of hermeneutics. Texts became the privileged objects of interpretation and study. Interpretation became a reflective process where people were trying to understand past cultures from texts that had been handed down. The study and interpretation of once removed actions, that is, actions that were being experienced secondarily through the interpretation of another person's point of view and bias, became the dominant act instead of simply interpreting actions first hand. Once inscription had become the dominant mode of remembering the ability to understand one's own culture had to do with the ability to understand what had been handed down, in text form, from the past.

Once a society loses the incorporated practice of traditions, the self-evident knowledge of their culture, and has to rely on the interpretation of documented sources of their traditions, systematic misunderstanding occurs (Connerton, 1989). This is because a text can lead a life of its own, it enjoys

“relative cultural autonomy” (1989:96), unlike in oral cultures where there is a specific audience being addressed and a specific person or persons in control of the flow of information. Once a text becomes the dominant means of recollection it becomes open to interpretation by anyone who has access to it and who can read. The memories of a group no longer reside in incorporated practices, they can be freely interpreted and everyone is able to share in their meaning on a superficial level (Connerton, 1989).

Since the 1920s there has been a concerted effort to preserve specific dance steps on paper because of the fear that they might disappear. A written dance language was created by Rudolph von Laban and first published in 1928. It was called Kinetography and “its aim was to record a dance scientifically so that it would live on and be used by the creator, the performer, the language specialist, i.e. the technician, and a new breed of artist who would now emerge: the reconstructor” (Tembeck, 1982:76). The reconstructor is a person who uses the notated dance work to recreate the dance faithfully; the reconstructor is like a director who stages a play and does not alter the script in any way. Kinetography, which is now called Labanotation, made dance into a form of literature, because a “language, when recorded, becomes literature” (1982:66) The Dance Notation Bureau in New York was founded with the intention of advancing “the art (or science) of dance” (1982:77) through a systematic recording of dance. With the institutionalisation of dance as literature, notated dance became inscribed.

Now with a combination of film, photography and dance notation traditional dance no longer has to be an incorporated act to survive.

Inscription has been privileged as a means of recording the past and sustaining memory because it appears to be less fallible than memory in the spoken form. A text can be seen as less susceptible to bias and re-interpretation because once it was recorded it was fixed. However, this is not always the case as any text must be documented by a human being and each human being has a bias. Thus what is documented must be analysed in terms of what was not documented and what was not described. No single text can aptly document an action from all angles. Therefore, any sort of memory (incorporated or inscribed) is in itself flawed<sup>6</sup> from the outset and is always subject to change and re-interpretation.

### **2.5. The value of dance as a tool for recollection in societies**

Dance is a key element of recollection for societies. However, because it is predominantly an incorporated memory it has also been side lined in academic spheres in the analysis of societies and the role dance plays in history. Dance notation was developed to document dance and to have an inscribed history of choreography, yet each interpretation of the documented dances will differ from the original, because the bodies performing the steps are different. This transience

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<sup>6</sup> The flaw is that memory will always be reinterpreted, and thus there is no definitive way of reproducing an exact replica of anything, abstract or concrete.

in dance adds to the difficulty of recording it, as Jeff Friedman states in the article, “Muscle Memory: Performing Oral History”,

[b]ecause of the temporal nature of dance, the art form has a lack of primary documents; it is difficult to record an account of live performance. As a result, we know little of how movement practices speak to history... Further, dancing is a phenomenon inseparable from its embodied medium (Friedman, 2005:35).

It is this embodied medium that makes dancing and commemorative ceremonies seemingly unreliable as sources for mapping the heritage of a society and how they remember. It is this seemingly unreliability that has made inscription so popular amongst historians. While inscription is tremendously useful and fully entrenched in a society, it is a process of reduction and fixation. Ironically, inscription is given priority as a documentation tool because it is deemed more objective than oral or physical histories. Yet inscription is highly subjective and not free from the traces of the individual who recorded them because “...knowledge bears marks of its producer” (Parviainen, 2002:12). As such inscribed knowledge is not neutral.

Physical, and often unconscious, forms of remembrance are as instructive when analysing a society, as its written history. The faculty for retaining memories and for remembrance is an individual act as well as a group act. The collective or social memory of a society influences the ways in which individuals recall specific memories that are unique. This collective memory alters over time and while some aspects of a society seem to remain constant they are actually in a perpetual state

of flux. Traditions and cultures change over time as the collective memory of a group and nation change; retaining some aspects from the past and incorporating new actions and traditions as new encounters are made. Collective memory is tied up in culture and traditions, both physically and in written form, and it is driven by collective actions. Actions require bodies and movements and gestures which in turn generate rituals and traditions, these collective ceremonies create a sense of time being circular and continuous. This circuitous recollection reassures humans that they will continue indefinitely in a certain way, which is perhaps why culture unsettles people when it appears to be rapidly changing, as it disturbs their sense of stability.

One's experience of the present is directly influenced by one's past. Thus when a person is experiencing the present they are simultaneously experiencing events and memories that are causally connected to the present but are not of the present (Connerton, 1989). One's present situations and circumstances also influence and distort ones recollection of the past, which is why memory is an unstable phenomenon. Collective memory, traditions and cultural practices solidify a sense of belonging in a group or society. Ritual performances act as a conveyer and sustainer of images and recollections of the past, they act as a connection to the past and they create a socially legitimate currency of memories (Connerton, 1989). Dance is a form of ritual performance that influences collective memory and assists in

sustaining the social memory of societies as well as acting as a tool for educating societies about the tacit rules and requirements within that society.

A traditional dance connects the performers of the present day with the performers of the past, however, since no performance is ever the same, the illusion of the continuous past and present link is sustained, but it is flawed. This flaw might be described as a “trace element”. The concept of traditional dances is that their choreography remains constant. The choreography is the element that links a society with their heritage and past, while the dancers remind a society of their present position in time.

Connerton (1989) posits that collective memories allow different generations to connect, but if one of those connections is broken then surely the link between the generations is weakened? If dance has the ability to act as a sustainer and conveyer of memories within a group then what happens if the form ceases to exist? The *umtshotsho* is a positive reinforcement of the AmaXhosa memories because it is a purveyor of culture and recollection. Yet it is already disappearing within the various AmaXhosa tribes and villages. In Erik Bigalke’s field work for his masters research on the ethnomusicology of the AmaNdlambe of South-Eastern Africa, he states that “some forms, like *tut* and, of course, *umtshilo*, were already obsolete when I went into the field for the first time in 1967, and the *umtshotsho* had ceased before 1978” (Bigalke, 1982:187). However, Professor Dargie, in his research on the AmaThembu of

the Lumko district in the Eastern Cape, talks of the *umtshotsho* as a practiced tradition, as late as 2005.

Nicholas Hlobo, a young AmaXhosa man titled his Standard Bank Young Artist Award exhibition '*Umtshotsho*'. According to the NAF write up on the exhibition, the practice of *umtshotsho* has become a rarity and has been replaced by going to nightclubs. Instead of wearing blankets and carrying sticks the boys and girls have cellphones and credit cards, thus in this

body of work, Hlobo explores the various ways through which contemporary AmaXhosa teenagers are initiated to bridge the divide between child and adult. Rather than looking back to the old ways, the work engages with new social rituals and their roots in the past (NAF website, 2009).

Hlobo's exhibition was dimly lit, much like a nightclub, with large looming sculptures made from various materials such as rubber, lace, ribbon and found objects. The predominant colours were black and red. Hlobo's distinctive artistic signature is visible stitching between fabrics, this has been likened to him stitching together his identity, that of being a black, male, homosexual, AmaXhosa South African. This portrayal of *umtshotsho* lacked motion and vitality, however it did contain the improvisatory element inherent in the *umtshotsho* practice. It was a static exhibition of an individual's interpretation of a traditional act perceived as dying out in its original form. If artists and performers remind a society of their present position in time then

this exhibition stated that the AmaXhosa society is in a stage of considerable transformation.

Traditions, cultural acts and rituals create and sustain collective memories and when recollection is treated as a cultural activity, rather than an individual act, it tends to be regarded as an inscribed act (Connerton, 1989:4). Traditions often gain importance and value by their inscription in ancient texts and verses. This is further reinforced by Hlobo's exhibition as his title undoubtedly spurred interest in *umtshotsho* and what it is, thereby adding an inscribed value to the practice. Ritual acts, bodily expressions and gestures are by their nature not inscribed. However, this does not mean that they are incapable of continuity and structure and therefore they too can be viewed as a means of recording the past for the future. Yet, since *umtshotsho* is a simultaneously formalised and improvisatory form it would be immensely challenging to notate it, but if this form is becoming a rarity then it would be a valuable project to document *imitshotsho* that are still occurring.

A written dance language was created by Rudolph von Laban in the 1920s because he wanted to make sure that dance, despite written records of dance existing since the 15th century, had the potential to be preserved. Labanotation is now the dominant international form of inscribing dance and it has ensured that choreographers can record their work faithfully. The implication is that if a society values their traditions and cultural acts they feel

compelled to inscribe it in some form so that it may last and gain in status amongst other societies.

## **2.6. Memory in group and individual identity**

The individual's identity is derived from the group story to which it belongs. Social memory plays a large role in the process of forming one's identity. The verb 'remember' is used in multiple ways for many different types of circumstances, and memory "as a specifically social phenomenon has suffered relative neglect, that is at least in part because certain types of memory claims have been privileged as the focus of certain types of extended attention" (Connerton, 1989:21). There are three distinct classes of memory claims: Personal memory claims, Cognitive memory claims and Habit-memory. A habit-memory memory is an incorporated memory. Dancing and singing combine these three forms of memory, the dominant one being habit-memory because the action of dancing and singing becomes an incorporated memory.

The act of remembering is "precisely not to recall events as isolated; it is to become capable of forming meaningful narrative sequences" (1989:26). These narrative sequences are formed through a series of encodings and they are meaningful because the recall is not simply a reproduction of an event or past action. Cognitive memory has three dimensions of mnemonic coding. The *semantic code* is the dominant code; the *verbal code* contains all the information

and programmes that allow the preparation of a verbal expression; and the *visual code* is where concrete items, which are easily translated into images, are much better retained than abstract items because such concrete items undergo a double encoding in terms of visual coding as well as verbal expression (Connerton, 1989). The semantic code is the key to the whole operation of memory and it creates a mental map in an individual and helps place an individual within a collective framework. This mental map is created in childhood and as such is a shared collective map. This is what makes the memories of people from differing cultures vary, their mental maps are different (Connerton, 1989). This shared map also binds people together and assists a society in sustaining a sense of cohesion.

According to Connerton, philosophers have created a hierarchy of remembrance, with habit-memory being the lowest form of remembrance. It is not considered a mental act, because “in ‘true’ memory the remembering itself, as well as what is remembered, is always a certain kind of event; remembering is frequently said to be a ‘mental act’ or ‘mental occurrence’” (1989:23). Habit-memory is relegated to the bottom rungs of recollection because it is the retention of a motor mechanism rather than a recollection of a unique event. However, Jaana Parviainen, in “Bodily Knowledge: Epistemological Reflections on Dance”, states that there is a

growing recognition in many disciplines that the traditional conception of cognition, equated with verbal and symbolic conceptualization and its focus on the criteria of justification, is inadequate to describe or explain the varieties of modes in which human knowing occurs and by which human knowing may be represented. Not only philosophers and feminists, but also

social scientists, historians, organizational researchers, and aestheticians have been urgently addressing epistemological questions (Parviainen, 2002:13).

One way of addressing the epistemological question of recollection is to acknowledge that there is a body memory as well as a habit-memory that works almost unconsciously within society. Habit-memory is directly related to the tacit social rules that govern different societies. Habit-memory in this sense might be defined as social habit-memory which is separate from individual habits. The act of doing something that is a habit is a performance, it follows then that social habits are distinctively social performances. Social habits are legitimating performances (Connerton, 1989:35) that maintain the *status quo* in society. The successful performance of social habit-memory is essential for the convincing performance of social codes and rules. The social habit-memory of the subject is not identical with the subject's cognitive memory of rules and codes, it is part of the fabric of the performance of the social rules and codes. The performance of these social codes becomes incorporated into the body and the mind and, to an extent, unconscious; one does an action without having to consciously decide to do it. This is when an action is convincing to an outsider.

The memory of the group is an integral part of the way in which the individual remembers. Individuals recall memories because they are situated in a collective space, that space is physical and abstract, but it is a common

space. Groups provide frameworks within which memories are localised and, for Connerton,

We situate what we recollect within the mental spaces provided by the group. But these mental spaces...always receive support from and refer back to the material spaces that particular social groups occupy... Our memories are located within the mental and material spaces of the group (Connerton, 1989:37).

It becomes apparent that the individual requires a group situation that is both abstract and concrete in order to form their recollections of the past. Thus if the material spaces of a society are modified then the memory of the group will change. The individual and society cannot be separated when memory is being analysed. Maurice Halbwachs believed that the idea of separating individual memory and social memory is an abstraction devoid of meaning, he stated that

a collective mentality exists and it is not like a lost, isolated or negligible province, but exerts an influence upon all the functions of individual mentality which cannot be understood or explained without it. The consciousness of an individual is not self-sufficient; the ideas of associated men must be related to each other and be considered as parts of a whole which completely penetrates, directs, and organizes them (Halbwachs, 1938:616).

Recollection is an act of transfer. In order to study the social formation of memory it is essential to understand the acts of transfer that make remembering possible. Connerton (1989) targeted two acts of transfer that are imperative to the translation of memories and the analysis of the ways in

which the past is perpetuated and remembered in the present.

Commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices are the two types of social practice that perpetuate social recollection<sup>7</sup>.

## **2.7 Authenticity and incorporated actions**

The notion of authenticity in traditional performance is subjective. The experience and explanations of authenticity vary widely in performance literature. However, there does seem to be a common thread, namely, the performer. Richard Schechner (1974) discusses the concept of authenticity in traditional performance by talking of efficacy and entertainment. He believes that every production in the world has elements of efficacy and entertainment in it, however, one or the other is usually dominant. If efficacy dominates, then the performance is probably closer to its traditional origins and the act is understood and embodied within the performers. Whereas, if entertainment dominates then a production might lean more towards escapism and fantasy, a performance that is designed to provide a show and not to change the audience or the performers in any significant way. Schechner (1974) provides clear descriptions of societies whose traditional performances are evolving to accommodate the desires of tourists to view other cultures as well as the economic pressures to survive.

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<sup>7</sup> He acknowledges that these are not the only means of collective remembrance, the daily practices of talking and recalling the past – which are full body actions – are also ways in which a society remembers, however commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices are key to the understanding that a society recalls the past through performance and performativity.

One of the cultural groups that performed at the NAF, the Eastern Cape Ensemble, is funded by the Eastern Cape Government. The ensemble provides jobs and a regular income for its members. The group was established in 2002, and is made up of the various Eastern Cape cultural groups from around the province. Not all of them are AmaXhosa cultural groups, but the EC Ensemble creates productions that showcase excerpts of traditional rituals and acts predominantly from the AmaXhosa nation. A spokesperson for the Ensemble, Nosinala Mali, was quoted as saying “Our performances reflect our cultural diversities and are aimed at educating the young people about our values as a nation. We are bringing back the culture of *Intonjane*, *Umtshotsho* and others” (Mali, Nosinala)<sup>8</sup>. This amalgamation of various practices into a short production, as well the performance of rituals that would not traditionally be performed together in circumstances outside of these performances, have less efficacy because they are created to entertain and provide social bridges between people, rather than to effect change on an ancestral level.

Performing culture can be a lucrative way of creating an income, but it does affect the efficacy of performance because the culture risks becoming entertainment as opposed to functional on an educational and spiritual level. Once the performance aspect of a tradition begins to lose its efficacy and original function within a society, then only the 'best' performers are chosen to represent

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<sup>8</sup> Eastern Cape Government news article. July 2008, <http://www.ecprov.gov.za/index.php?module=news&id=87>

the society. Once this occurs the incorporated knowledge of the performance becomes the domain of a select few instead of potentially everyone within the society. A culture risks becoming competitive as opposed to inclusive and competition introduces hierarchy. A competition presupposes a winner, or someone being more skilled than another. Within every culture there are traditional forms of competition, for example, amongst the AmaXhosa there are stick-fighting competitions, but the exclusionary nature of competition is built into this act; whereas in a wedding ceremony or an *Intojane* ritual, which deals with a period of seclusion for women who have reached puberty or who are experiencing fertility problems, the emphasis is on inclusion and participation in order for the rite to be successful. However, if a culture leans away from inclusion and towards competition, the incorporated knowledge still exists in an altered form. The question remains whether the performance of traditional acts for a paying audience make the performance less authentic. If this is answered in terms of efficacy, this is true, however the performances are authentic to a certain degree, but the efficacious aspect of the acts will diminish if they are consistently performed outside of its efficacious functions, and in this way the notion of authenticity would need to be adapted.

Traditional acts have currency because, within a society, they provide a link to a perceived past and assist in explaining (perhaps not in intelligible ways) how that society functions. Yet, if these traditional acts are no longer performed for their original purposes they run the risk of becoming hollow and reified. These

ceremonies and acts become museum artifacts where insiders and outsiders view the heritage of a society, but have no way of accessing the vital core of the act as it no longer has agency within the society of its origin. The actions people do unconsciously have the potential to indicate a story from their collective history. For example, in Southern African Bantu societies it is common for men to enter a room first with women following. This is partly because it is a patriarchy and according to custom men enter a dwelling first, but it also has connections to men having to clear a pathway for women when they were in rural areas. However, in the 21st century it is no longer necessary to clear a path into a room and the patriarchy is opening up to provide women with more power within a household, but this habitual action still remains. The action provides a link with a past that no longer exists, but it is embodied<sup>9</sup>.

### **2.8 Traces of efficacy and entertainment within authenticity**

In order to understand the performative notion of authenticity I would like to outline Richard Schechner's concept of the efficacy-entertainment braid. In terms

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<sup>9</sup> Another example might be in South Korea, where it is common to give/receive objects with one hand while placing your other hand under the forearm of your receiving hand. This habit-memory is directly related to the traditional clothes, Hanbok, worn by Koreans in the Joseon Dynasty. Hanbok have very long sleeves that hang to knee level, thus when giving or receiving anything it became necessary to hold the sleeve of the arm that was extended so that the sleeve did not hamper the act. Hanbok are now only worn on special occasions or by Buddhist monks and nuns, yet the act remains embedded in the society and if asked most Koreans cannot articulate why they do it. A society unconsciously practices incorporated actions and they retain agency within a society because they provide a link to a past that, despite not being known entirely, remain integral to the creation of identity for individuals, to a certain degree one becomes defined by ones actions.

of performance the private culture of a society or community is related to efficacious acts done for the benefit of the community, while the public acts performed in a society or community are affiliated to entertainment. Schechner (1974) talks of the efficacy-entertainment braid when he discusses ritual performances and performances done for entertainment. A braid implies that two things have been linked together and while you can tell the separate links that make up the braid the links create one entity. At some stage one link may be thicker than the other and at another stage this may be in reverse. This image describes the way in which efficacious acts have an element of entertainment in them and entertainment has an element of efficacy in it. One element usually dominates, but a trace of the other is almost always present in some form.

Schechner (1974) posits that theatre develops from ritual, however he states that it is an evolution and not a quick jump. The evolution of ritual to theatre is a loss of efficacy and incorporated knowledge by numerous people, because the practitioners of theatre are generally more skilled performers. They become the holders of the knowledge as opposed to everyone within a society having to learn the acts in order to sustain them. He also states the reverse of this, that ritual can develop from theatre; however this type of ritual is less stable and rarely develops longevity because the ritual creates no change in the people involved or in the community in which it is being performed. This is the key to ritual and efficacious acts, they enact and allow for a change in status of the group participating in the ceremony. Ritual allows for a change to occur, and this change is facilitated by the

efficacy of the act and the participants; theatre on the other hand is aligned to entertainment, an act of escapism and relief from a possibly prosaic life.

An example of the fluidity of social roles and performances is indicated in the beer drinking rituals performed in AmaXhosa societies. The host of the beer-drink as well as the *injoli*, who is the supervisor of the event, may diverge from the parameters of beer-drinking if they wish to emphasise a new relationship developing between clans or homesteads, as well as to honour special guests. As Patrick McAllister explains in his article “Domestic Space, Habitus, and AmaXhosa Beer-drinking”,

the customs governing beer-drinking are referred to as *imithetho zotywala*, the rules or customs of beer-drinking, but they are not a set of hard and fast prescriptions. Rather, they are a set of dispositions and principles, an ‘organizing framework’ which is applied in a socially intelligent manner according to specific objective circumstances (2004:130).

Unlike these beer-drinks, which allow for a fluid sense of the application of traditions, the dramatic choreography and scripts determined by cultural performing groups require the cast to follow the prescribed actions so that chaos does not ensue on the stage.

Schechner outlines the two forms of drama, social drama and aesthetic drama. These types of drama assist one in determining where on the efficacy/entertainment braid a performance lies. A beer drink or the informal practice of *imitmtshotsho* can be more easily categorised, as efficacious or

entertainment, using social and aesthetic drama. Social drama is usually performed within set boundaries, there are structures in place that contain the variables inherent in an act that relies on human involvement that is not scripted; a ritual can change or be adjusted according to the personalities or moods of the participants without prior notice. However, the set parameters of the drama/ceremony are usually not overstepped as they mark the bounds of whether an act has efficacy or not. This is clearly seen in the beer-drinking ritual where the governing customs are adhered to, but the host may apply them in a socially intelligent way according to the intentions for holding the ritual. Whereas, aesthetic drama “is less instrumental and more ornamental than social drama. Also, it can use symbolic time and place, and so become entirely fictionalized” (Schechner, 1974:464). Fictionalising a drama or performance implies that the outcome is known and arranged in advance, whereas in social drama the outcome is in doubt. A ritual may be effective or it may fail according to the way in which it is performed (Schechner, 1974).

In social drama, as with rites of passage, the performance has a simultaneous function of symbolising and actualising a change in status – something happens during the performance/act/ceremony to enact change in the participants. Aesthetic drama lacks this convergence of the symbolic and the actual, the relationship between the groups involved does not change (Schechner, 1974). Social drama is effective in this way, it creates a space in which change can occur, but while aesthetic drama may be capable of creating an environment in which

change can occur, that is not its purpose, it does not rely on being able to effect change in society for its rationale. Thus, in AmaXhosa culture the beer-drinks and the *imitshotsho*, are social dramas because they symbolise and actualise change in the community holding the ceremony. Whereas the performance of AmaXhosa culture for tourists and at festivals is a form of aesthetic drama and while it can be a positive force for the community economically it can have an adverse effect on the social efficacious drama of the nation.

Richard Schechner (1974:467) draws up a table between social efficacious drama and aesthetic entertainment drama as follows:

<i>Efficacy</i>	<i>Entertainment</i>
ritual	theatre
results	fun
link to an absent Other,	only for those here
abolishes time, symbolic time,	emphasizes now
brings Other here	audience in the Other
performer possessed, in trance	performer knows what he's doing
audience participates	audience watches
audience believes	audience appreciates
criticism is forbidden	criticism is encouraged
collective creativity	individual creativity

The table makes it apparent that if there is an opposition between ritual and entertainment it is actually between efficacy and entertainment and not ritual and theatre. Whether one calls a specific performance ritual or theatre may depend on the vantage point from which one is looking at it because no performance is pure efficacy or pure entertainment. The degree to which a performance tends assists in the category we can place it into, but “changing perspectives changes the

classification" (1974:468). Any rehearsed production for example, has elements of ritual in the process before the opening, in terms of the course of rehearsals and the motivations for the production. Bearing this in mind, it is still possible to make a distinction between performances that are efficacious and ones that are predominantly for entertainment. There may be ritual elements in a Broadway production and in a work environment, one might find ritual elements in almost every regular act done by humans. However, there is seldom doubt about whether one should label an act ritual or theatre, as the key element of a ritual is that it attempts to effect change in the participants and it is relied upon to create change within a society (however large or small).

Part of the reason ritual is able to effect change is because the physical movement of the performers and participants are incorporated and they resonate within the congregation as links to the cultural heritage of a society. The efficacious performance creates a community within the space and time of that performance, a community that is connected to past members of the society whose ritual act is being performed. Schechner (1974) believes that theatre has the most potency when it is an equal mixture of efficacy and entertainment, when the braid is tight and neither quality is ascending or descending. This is because the performance is able to create a congregation out of the audience, in the sense that a production which has an efficacious nature is able to reduce the distinction between the audience and the performers, and creates a community where each group is affected by the other and feels able to address the action taking place.

Part of the evolution of theatre from ritual is the separation that occurs between the audience and the performers because the “paradigmatic theatrical situation is a group of performers soliciting an audience who may or may not respond by attending” (1974:473), the audience is free to attend the theatrical production and if they decide not to attend then they do not suffer, the production does.

The converse can be applied to ritual, if members of the congregation do not attend they are seen as rejecting the ritual and then they suffer the potential consequences such as being rejected by the congregation which could take the form of excommunication, ostracism or exile (Schechner, 1974). In theatre if the audience numbers are consistently low then the production will fail as it cannot sustain itself, similarly in ritual, if a few people stay away from the ritual ceremonies then they will suffer, however if many people stop attending then the congregation risks disintegrating or dissolving entirely, essentially “ritual is an event upon which its participants depend; theatre is an event which depends on its participants” (1974:473). The transformation of ritual occurs throughout history and with the prevalence of globalisation, tourism and the need to generate income the staging of ritual events has become a lucrative market.

The main cause of ritual transforming into theatre is tourism and a need to generate income to sustain a community or society. Schechner uses various examples of societies that are displaying their ritual acts to tourists and foreigners because they need the money. The effect of tourism on ritual acts is manifold, the main effect being that the relationship between the ritual and the society begins to

fray as the society is forced to adapt their acts to suit a time frame and perceived western standards of performance. However, a ritual may be emptied of its efficacy, but it could still be perceived as different from theatricality, in the sense that it is a husk of an act that held power and was not created purely for entertainment. There are societies that have realised the economic need to display their culture as well as knowing that people want to be exposed to different cultures. For example, Bali is a nation that has created tourist versions of their ritual acts while maintaining an authentic, efficacious ritual tradition. Two systems of performance exist on the island, a tourist and an authentic version, but there will always be an exchange between the two and at some stage one of them will be influenced by the other. Unless the relationship between the audience is changed to suit a more ritualistic setting it is inevitable that the tourist version of a ritual act will have a greater impact on the efficacious act than vice versa. It is possible for ritual to be “lifted from its original setting and performed as theatre” (Schechner, 1974:479) because

context, not fundamental structure, distinguishes ritual, entertainment, and ordinary life from each other. The differences among them arise from the agreement (conscious or unexpressed) between performers and spectators. Entertainment/theatre emerges from ritual out of a complex consisting of an audience separate from the performers, the development of professional performers and economic needs imposing a situation in which performances are made to please the audience rather than according to a fixed code or dogma (1974:479).

Theoretically it is possible for a ritual to be lifted from its context and still retain its efficacy, however, the constant performance of a ritual outside of its context and

with no other reason than economic or to expose outsiders to a new culture will dilute the efficacy of the act because it is not being participated in in the belief that it can effect change within a community.

Traditional performances have power within a community only so long as they retain an element of efficacious power amongst the community. In order for these acts to maintain this power the acts need to be an incorporated memory not just amongst the performers, but among the society too. The performances are efficacious because they are known by everyone participating in them and they are believed to have power. They are also effective because the knowledge of the ceremony is contained in a bodily sense as well as a mental sense. Yet, with economic pressures and a growing demand from the tourist sector to see traditional performances the incorporated memory of societies is diminishing. What must be addressed is how these traditional performances are changing and how much of an influence the public performance of culture is having on the private performance of traditional and ritual acts.

## CHAPTER THREE - DISLOCATION

### The Dislocation of culture and the reformation of heritage, reframing private culture in the public domain

#### 3.1. Dislocated revivals: reframing the private in the public

Performances of traditional AmaXhosa dance, outside of their formal function, in the context of the new South Africa can be seen as an act of continuation and regeneration, an affirmation of a culture that is not static. The showcasing of traditional AmaXhosa culture on the Main Programme of the NAF might be seen as an attempt to create and nurture pride in South African national heritage. Yet the way in which AmaXhosa traditional dance is being framed is potentially damaging to the culture and its evolution within South Africa. The placing of AmaXhosa culture on the Main Programme is part of a larger socio-political agenda in South Africa, which has to do with promoting previously disadvantaged and marginalized cultures/ethnic populations and the need to create economic security.

The insistence by the local Eastern Cape government on presenting AmaXhosa culture in the public domain, and for cultivating tourist performances is part of a dual attempt to support the arts and to create money in the Eastern Cape, which is one of the poorest provinces in South Africa. The Eastern Cape DSRAC has categorically stated that they are providing funding for the NAF specifically to “give a platform to the arts and culture practitioners of this province to showcase

their skills and talent” and that they are “strongly biased towards the groups from rural areas” (Press release for NAF 2009, ECgov), thus making it clear that their funding is conditional. The funding for *The Studio* and the *EC Ensemble* productions are funded by the Eastern Cape DSRAC which is the cultural face of the ANC in the Eastern Cape (EC) and thus the ANC is supporting the arts and attempting to uplift the community. These performances are an incentive to the performers to remember and perform their culture. Yet, the economic motivation may become the sole reason and motivation for the performing groups and subsequently the public form of AmaXhosa traditional dance may begin to subsume the private form.

Matthew Harp Allen (1997), an anthropologist, conducted research into the revival of dance in South India. He notes how the term ‘revival’ is a “drastically reductive linguistic summary of a complex process” (1997:63) and that this term was chosen not by South Indians who had practiced the art of traditional dance since its inception, but by a new class of performers who acquired and appropriated the dance skills. The discourse surrounding South Indian dance has focused and “privileged the term ‘revival’ over other equally descriptive ones, obscuring the complexity of the process, focusing attention onto a simple, celebrative vision of the giving of new life” (1997:64). However, the ‘new life’ that was created in this revival was not a ‘pure’ form, but rather a hybridised form of the performance. Allen (1997) aligns the term ‘revival’ with appropriation and makes it clear that he views the ‘revival’ of this dance practice as a form of lessening as

opposed to adding to the culture. He suggests that by essentialising the discourse around 'revivals' one loses sight of the fact that these acts are done in social milieus that are multi-faceted and connected to multiple discourses and events.

In the case of AmaXhosa culture, the current attention being placed on its practices and traditions, is acting as a spotlight on a previously marginalised practice as well as a form of revival. The revival aspect is apparent because in some cases, if it were not for the public display of AmaXhosa culture, many young performers would not be exposed to these traditional dances and practices. This is due to urbanisation and a shift away from traditional practices in their entirety. Allen's work illustrates how a "ritual dance form was extracted from its original context and then domesticated, reformed, and resanctified for middle-class consumption" (Reed, 1998:508). This extraction of a ritual or traditional dance from its private efficacious function within a society is a process of placing the private in the public domain.

One might say that private acts are for the "inside" and public acts are for the "outside" of a cultural domain. Thus, family celebrations and trials are private acts performed in the safety of the home or within an area and amongst people seen as part of the private domain of their lives. The economic life of a community is generally a public domain and can be seen as actively done in offices and work environments that are outside the home. When the private is revealed to the public it can be traumatic and disruptive to the people/society/community of the private domain. When something is turned inside out, exposure is inevitable and there is

little one can do to limit who is privy to the exposure. The inside, once exposed, undergoes a transformation and even if it is allowed to return to its original form it will be different. In this vein, rituals and traditional acts are considered the private domain of societies and they are done for the benefit of the community, while performances done for economic exchanges are part of the public domain. It can be argued that this too is for the benefit of the community as it creates income, but rituals are processes that enact change among a group or individuals, usually as part of a rite of passage that is not done for economic gain, but rather for spiritual needs and benefits.

The exposure of the private to the public has ramifications for the private. These need to be analysed in order to determine how much of an impact the public has on the private and what can be done to safeguard the practices of the private domain, so that they do not lose their efficacy and ability to create change. The reasons for the exposure of the private to the public also need to be addressed in order to understand the changes that occur in the private form of the act as well as for the community concerned. If the private is consistently displayed in public then it begins to lose its private nature and becomes a representation of the private, an act once removed from the authentic. Peggy Harper, dancer, choreographer and dance lecturer, in an analysis of traditional Nigerian dance documented the following changes in the form once it was consistently performed in a public domain,

the closely knit organic audience-performer relationship of the traditional context is replaced by an impersonal one with an audience that pays for entertainment. They demand variety of material and economy in presentation to hold their interest over a limited period of time. The meeting of these demands immediately affects the form of the dance: movement patterns are simplified, spectacular elements are stressed at the expense of the more subtle rhythms and movements, and definite limits in terms of time and space radically alter the ground plan and overall organization and attitude of the dancers towards their own performance. Dance themes observed in the new setting are introduced, and costumes and movements are tailored to meet standards of decency in the new environment. Festivals of art and similar events encourage and accelerate this transition from traditional to neo-traditional dance (Harper, 1969:291).

These modifications of the audience-performer relationship, the limits placed on time and the demand for spectacular rather than subtle rhythms, evolved the Nigerian traditional form into a neo-traditional dance form. The changes described above can be seen, in some form, in the public NAF performances of the AmaXhosa traditional dance form. The audiences were separated from the performers as each production was held in a proscenium arch style venue; the productions required an entrance fee and it was apparent that it was not a ritual being observed, but an overview of the AmaXhosa traditional dance form in a set time frame, never more than two hours long. The linear proscenium arch stage requires a spatial reorganisation of the patterns of the dances and as such the relationship between the performers is adjusted to a linear outward attitude opposed to a circular inclusive attitude found in the private practice of these ritual forms.

In order to analyse the changes that are occurring within AmaXhosa traditional dance for public arenas, comparisons need to be made with other

traditional performance forms that have displayed their private functions in public domains. The three dance forms I have chosen are – Nigerian traditional dance, the flamenco, of Spain, and South Indian traditional dance. These dance forms are different in form and appearance however they are linked by the changes that occurred in their form due to exposure to outside audiences and performers. Each form was used politically, either directly or indirectly, and this has affected the private form of the tradition. This is useful to note, because until now there have been no in depth studies of the ramifications of public festival and tourist productions of AmaXhosa traditional dance on the private form of the dance. As such, these studies provide a useful comparative tool to determine what may happen to traditional AmaXhosa dance with continued public exposure of their private culture. These three seemingly disparate forms of dance were selected because they resonate with different aspects of AmaXhosa society within South Africa at present.

### **3.2 The creation of the ‘outside’ tradition**

The creation of a public form involves a radical shift away from the private form. M.H. Allen (1997) demonstrates how by reviving an art form, which can seem very innocent and done with noble intentions, several processes are entailed, namely “re-population (one community appropriating a practice from another), re-construction (altering elements of repertoire and choreography), re-naming (from *nautch* and other terms to *bharata natyam* in the case of South Indian dance), re-situation (from temple and court to the stage), and re-storage

(the splicing together of performances to invent a seemingly ancient practice)” (Reed, 1998:508). This is an outline of how these processes can be applied to AmaXhosa dance within the context of the NAF performances.

### **3.2.1. Re-population - one community appropriating a practice from another:**

There were 5 performances of AmaXhosa culture within the Main Programme of the NAF 2009. Each production had an AbaXhosa cast who were performing AmaXhosa dance steps on the stage and in this sense there was no appropriation of AmaXhosa cultural practices by another culture. Yet these performances have created an amalgamation of traditional dances to create a showcase of culture. This amalgamation of various forms within one society has been done with the intention of highlighting a cultural mode of expression formerly relegated to the margins of cultural discourse.

The NAF can be considered a community in two ways, firstly the festival brings together people from all over South Africa as well as from abroad, and for 10 days a community of festival goers is created; regular attendees are known as ‘festinos’ and they consider themselves to be a community of people loyal to the NAF. The second community within the NAF is the board of directors and the selection committee. It is this second community of people who have the opportunity to act out the role of appropriating a culture. The NAF is possibly appropriating this culture in order to expose this vital and meaningful part of the Eastern Cape and South Africa to an audience who otherwise would not have had

the opportunity to see this culture. It also intends to gain access to funding, as the showcasing of AmaXhosa culture is a prerequisite for funding from the Eastern Cape Government. Having the power to appropriate a discourse, such as traditional AmaXhosa dance, means that the NAF 'community' (particularly because the Main Programme is subsidised<sup>10</sup> by the NAF) is in a dominant position to 'revive' AmaXhosa culture.

The NAF is part of a wider arts and culture community, and the conditional funding from the local EC government implies that the local and national government is actively funding traditional arts and culture. The ramifications of this however, are that the government is then appropriating traditional forms as the performers become beholden to the funders in order to receive an income. This avenue of funding obliges the performers to manipulate their form to align themselves with the criteria for funding and to maintain financial support. The National Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) of South Africa has initiated the Investing in Culture Programme (IIC) which is aimed at "[e]nsuring realisation of empowerment opportunities through training and job creation in arts, culture and heritage sector" (dac.gov website). Their mission statement is to "[d]evelop capital by allocating resources to ensure return on investments that will fulfil the key objectives of the DAC and broader imperatives of government" (dac.gov website).

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<sup>10</sup> The Main Programme of the NAF is funded by various sponsors, but the selection process is done by the Festival committee. So while the money may be from Standard Bank and the EC DSRAC, the decisions are made by individuals on the committee. Therefore, the NAF board and selection committee are in a position to appropriate and revive AmaXhosa dance.

These are necessary projects. The point of concern is the need for a return on investments, indicating that the people/groups/communities assisted by the IIC must be successful. Yet, when arts and culture programmes are implemented they are designed for the tourism sector and as such in order for the product to be successful it must be in alignment with what tourists are seen to want. This form of economic assistance is a form of appropriation and in terms of traditional performances and forms, it is a direct reason for the changes that could occur in the form.

A less obvious form of appropriation is the formation of specific dance groups within a community who then become the 'owners' of the dance form and are hired out to perform at functions and events within a community as well as the country at large. In the case of traditional performance groups, the form that they do belongs to the community and society of the AmaXhosa. However, since the practice of traditional dancing is no longer done often on a large scale in communities it begins to become the domain of masters and dancers/performers. These people become teachers who must be approached or the group must be joined (an audition process may occur to gain access to the group); this is a form of appropriation as the form should be accessed by everyone within a society. With the economic incentive becoming the driving force behind many traditional dance groups only the best performers are allowed to perform in public; this is yet another form of appropriation of a public form which should be performed by anyone regardless of skill. The motivation for the acquisition of knowledge of

traditional dance is not for the benefit of the community in efficacious terms, it is economic and as such the private form of traditional acts is being affected negatively as the habit memory of the society is being fundamentally changed and narrowed.

### **3.2.2. Re-construction - altering elements of repertoire and choreography:**

In research done on the changing discourses on gender, tradition and identity in the rural Eastern Cape due to development policies implemented by the apartheid government and the subsequent economic policies initiated by the new democratic government, Leslie Bank (2002) found that traditional AmaXhosa dances have been altered to make them more palatable for tourist audiences. For example, the practice of unisex dancing has been appropriated from Western styles of dancing and incorporated into the performances of traditional AmaXhosa dance for outside audiences. The leader of a cultural group in the Eastern Cape, specifically the Mooiplaas region, told of how she had learnt all the traditional dances, performed by her cultural group, from the older women in her community, “[m]ost of those she was shown had girls and boys dancing separately. Now [she] changed that to appeal to tourist demand” (Bank, 2002:15) and created dances that were unisex. This would ensure that her group remained popular and continued being hired for the ‘cultural village’ they were performing in.

In the four productions analysed, the separation of the sexes was only overt in two of the shows. Both *The Eastern Cape Indigenous Orchestra, Songs of the*

*Amagcaleka* and *Intersections: Swiss/Africa* displayed the performers in single sex patterns. In *The Eastern Cape Indigenous Orchestra, Songs of the Amagcaleka*, there were only female performers, while there were both female and male musicians surrounding the stage. In *Intersections: Swiss/Africa* there were four female performers and one male performer. The women were placed on one side of the stage while the man was on the opposite side. Whereas in *The Eastern Cape Ensemble* there were both unisex dance pieces and single sex pieces within the production. The most overt single sex pieces in the *Eastern Cape Ensemble* were performed by older performers, and even then there were unisex aspects to these dance pieces. In *The Studio's Vumelani – Let Us Dance Together* there were four dance groups participating in the show, three of them were unisex groups while one was an all-female, older dance group.

Consequently, there is the perceived need to restructure the traditional dance forms to make them more consumable and ensure that they remain popular within the economic paradigm of tourism, and in the case of festivals to make them more popular amongst audiences, which also entails economic benefit. Tina Piek, who is not AbaXhosa, directs *The Studio* dance production each year<sup>11</sup>. She has stated that although she tries to alter the dances performed in *The Studio* as little as possible, she does work in conjunction with the performers to “improve, develop

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<sup>11</sup>In 2009 it was “Vumelani – Let Us Dance Together”

and better their performance for stage and as dancers”<sup>12</sup>. She also states “the dance however is still very much their own - only developed in terms of spacing, formation, lines, faces, energy and general choreography” (ibid), implying that in as much as the dance remains their own it is a restructured version of the original for the benefit of audiences.

In the original performance of the dances in traditional practices they would be performed in a circular formation, originally mirroring the round huts and living environments created in rural areas. Circles are also all inclusive movement actions whereby the audience surrounds the performers and have the capacity to join in the performance or respond to it in any way they desire. This adds to the community based nature of these acts and how they are done within a context. Each of the 4 performances during the NAF 2009 were located in proscenium arch style venues where the choreography of the dances had to be altered so that everything was done in a linear pattern.

### **3.2.3. Re-situation - from rural tribal setting and traditional rites to the stage:**

The various dances performed for the NAF productions have been removed from their original setting to the stage, and in the process they have been removed from their original context which gave the form meaning. When asked whether these dances are more theatrical and performative when placed on stage outside

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<sup>12</sup> Piek, personal communication, November, 2008.

of their original function, Piek responded by saying “Not at all. They are performed according to the custom and culture. However - some work has gone into performance skills and choreography, spacing, formations etc... in this sense they are more structured than just dancing in a circle” (Ibid). Thus the re-situation has altered the form considerably, despite attempting to stay true to the purpose and function of the performance. The habit of dancing in a circle can be seen in each of the productions, as at some point throughout each production the performers formed a circle; in the case of *The Eastern Cape Indigenous Orchestra, Songs of the Amagcaleka*, there was a sense that the dances were not choreographed, rather they were structured responses to the music and songs being sung. These dances often resulted in the women forming a circle. In *Intersections: Swiss/Africa* the nature of the production was based on combining the improvisational aspects of Jazz and traditional AmaXhosa music together to see what would occur, thus choreography of the dances before the production would have been counter to the aim. So, the performance of the dancers may be an indication of their natural, habit-memory, responses to the music; if the space allowed the women would form a circle and dance for a period of time in this fashion.

The stage setting also elevates the performers from the audience, which further separates the action from the spectators. The body is the focus of traditional AmaXhosa dancing, thus the re-situation of the form does not involve the loss of specific properties needed for the performances, unlike the *nautch* dance which required the placement of a god on the stage to align the dancers.

However, this dislocation of setting contributes significantly to the impact of the performance on the dancers and the audience as the community created by these performances in a circular setting is completely lost. The re-situation of this form could affect the private culture by creating an audience out of the community instead of active participants.

#### **3.2.4. Re-storation - the splicing together of performances to invent a seemingly ancient practice:**

The language used to frame these AmaXhosa performances was contradictory, it implied a vitality and a sense that audiences would be able to view a museum exhibit. The brochure for the 2009 NAF promised to take the audience “off on a sensory tour through the living archives of the region’s cultural traditions, ancient and modern” (NAF brochure, 2009:5). It is the placement of ‘living’ and ‘archives’ next to each other that makes it problematic, as the nature of an archive is static and infers a level of inscription and loss of vitality. Each production was an amalgamation of dances, a summary of the culture, but as much as the form is changing it is still vital.

The *Eastern Cape Cultural Ensemble* featured dances from various Eastern Cape ethnic groups, the journey through the province encompasses dances from the Khoisan, Eastern Tembu, Kwa-Bomvana clan, the Amabacha, traditional healers from the Tsolo district and the Basotho people. *The Eastern Cape Indigenous Orchestra, Songs of the Amagcaleka*, showcased Gcaleka and

Thembu female performers alongside each other. Ordinarily and historically, these groups would not have shared the same location let alone performed together. In terms of the public display of the culture a seemingly ancient practice was not presented, however these productions are potentially a site for confusion as they are framed as authentic representations of AmaXhosa culture. Peggy Harper (1969) noticed in Nigerian traditional dance that the form began to change once the different tribal dancers were exposed to 'foreign' dance forms within Nigeria, this is how the neo-traditional form emerged. The neo-traditional Nigerian dance was firmly rooted in the traditional form, yet it incorporated actions and rhythms from different clans and communities. Similarly the *Eastern Cape Ensemble* and *The Eastern Cape Indigenous Orchestra, Songs of the Amagcaleka*, by placing differing AmaXhosa clans in the same performing group are potentially diluting the specific clan dances.

The splicing together of ritual dances and practices also reduces the time frame of the performances. The maximum duration of one of the 4 shows being analysed in this research was just over two hours (which was not stipulated in the programme) and for this reason many audience members left. Nowhere in this research have I found a ritual or social gathering amongst the AmaXhosa that was two hours or shorter in duration. The informal *Entlombeni* and *Umtshotsho* dance gatherings last an entire night, "[d]ancing commences at 8 or 9 p.m. on Saturday continuing until sunrise on Sunday" (Broster, 1967:22); and the formal ancestor rituals and beer drinks last 3 days, starting on a Friday afternoon and finishing on

a Sunday evening. McAllister, in his chapter “Ritual and Social Practice in the Transkei” makes it clear that

[t]hese rituals have a fairly fixed structure in which oratory and a predetermined spatial sequence feature prominently. The three main symbolic ingredients – time, space and talk – are carefully manipulated to make statements about relationships based on kinship, territory and gender. Speaking, in a carefully controlled manner in which both content and style are largely predetermined and appropriate to the spatial sequence, communicates information not only about the ritual, but also about values and norms, group hierarchies and social distance, and degrees of inclusion and exclusion (McAllister, 1997:282).

These rituals clearly require defined spatial, temporal and oratory parameters in order to be effective. The rituals become devoid of efficacy if any of the essential elements are restricted or removed. Therefore, if the staging of scenes from the *Intonjane* ritual as well as the displaying of the bride before the elders is highlighted in productions, such as in the *Eastern Cape Ensemble* production, they become entertainment. The issue is that this splicing together of acts that otherwise would not be practised within days of each other, certainly not on the same day in one community, and reducing them to one or two hour performances changes the habit-memory of the performers and as such could affect the actual efficacious practice of these rituals.

### **3.3. Political revivals**

I would like to draw a comparison between the staging of AmaXhosa dance and other indigenous forms of dance. The revival of traditional acts and

performances in Spain and India can be linked to the political environments of the period. Similarly, the gradually increasing public performances of AmaXhosa traditional performances can be linked to the current political milieu of South Africa. The South Indian dance form that emerged from the revival was a clear reflection of the colonial political environment of British ruled India in the 1930s. Despite British colonial rule having ended in South Africa decades ago, the AmaXhosa still suffered repression and colonization under the apartheid government. In Spain the flamenco was used as a political tool to draw tourists to Spain and to subdue the Andalusian population. Correspondingly, indigenous cultures within South Africa are being used for various reasons, among them economic gain and as a tourist draw card.

If the understanding of the private is changed then the ways in which the community remembers their culture will change too. The consistent staging of the private in the public domain will result in a new definition of the private. There will always be a private culture and a public culture, so once an act that was once perceived of as private is made public then the definition of the private adapts and a new opposition is put in place. Thus the private can never be divorced from the public, it requires the public domain to frame it and the private domain is essential for the public domain to be in opposition to. The question though, is why the private has been staged in the public realm? There are various answers to this question, but in the case of traditional dance and performance the main reason encountered in this research is economic. Tourism is now one of the leading

contributors to a country's domestic economy. Culture has become a commodity and if a country/society/clan/community can market their culture and traditions successfully then they can generate an income for themselves and their country. The motives are economic survival, but the effects of 'culture as commodity' are that a new, and often diminished, definition of the 'private' has to be found.

It becomes apparent when comparing and contrasting the three dance forms chosen that the way in which a society recalls its past can be drastically altered by a few protagonists and very often for political and economic reasons. The dance culture of South India was rewritten in the 1930s by an emerging middle class of Indians who were heavily influenced by the colonial setting in which they had been educated. The South Indian dance, *bharata natyam*, that is performed and seen in India and internationally is not even 100 years old, despite the apparent ancient nature of the dance. The revival, essentially the remaking of the entire dance, of Indian high culture was grounded in Orientalist thought and Victorian morality. The "key figures in the movement to revive Indian high culture, such as Rukmini Devi and Ananda Coomaraswamy, far from being isolated mono-cultural social actors, embody in their persons and their intimate associations this intellectually and culturally hybrid world" (Allen, 1997:64). The hybrid world of India in the 1930s was a world of contrasts, Indian traditional society and cultural practices in opposition to British colonialism and Victorian moral idealism.

The public performance of flamenco in Spain has an oppressive history. The history of the flamenco reveals a power play between the performers and the

various ruling elites of the time, with the performers seldom being treated as equals with the patrons. For flamenco artists the public display of their art was linked to social repression and personal exploitation, while for the audience and patrons it stood for display and entertainment (Malefyt, 1998). Thus the private realm of flamenco became a refuge for the performers, but the private could not exist without the public as a source of revenue. Since the 1950s, when Franco opened Spain to tourism to create more income for the country, flamenco was displayed to the public in a greater capacity than ever before. More and more people were exposed to the flamenco and it gained tremendous popularity in Spain and worldwide.

Due to this sudden exposure to a vast public audience the public form of flamenco was (and continues to be) experimented with and competing styles vie for public attention and audiences. Popularised forms of entertainment were enforced under Franco's rule because they were seen as a tool to pacify social unrest amongst the population (Malefyt, 1998), thus flamenco performers had no choice but to perform for a wider and broader audience than ever before. In India a similar perspective was employed by the British government, who were aware that in order to effectively govern and control India it was necessary to understand and modify the traditions and cultures of Indian society. In Spain the reaction to the exposure of flamenco resulted in the formation of *pena* clubs, not only to protect the art form, but also as a means of escaping from the exploitation of public performances.

### **3.4. Public presentations of the private**

Malefyt (1998) discusses the concept of 'inside' and 'outside' in relation to the private and the public realm in Spanish flamenco. He posits that there are two types of flamenco being performed in Spain, the popular commercial 'public' flamenco and the pure art form of the 'traditional' private flamenco. In a similar analysis Harper (1969) discusses the different types of traditional dances that are emerging in Nigeria. Harper states that there are three worlds of dance in Nigeria that can be clearly defined in academic terms, but that in practice they are not so easily separated. The three types of dance worlds are that of the traditional, neo-traditional and contemporary world (Harper, 1969). These three worlds merge in life because they are forms that influence each other and now rely on each other to maintain their existence. Traditional dance is the oldest form and the one that has exerted the most influence on the neo-traditional and contemporary forms of Nigerian dance as traditional dance is the form they use as their source. Since traditional dance is the foundation of the other two dance forms Harper's interest is in understanding the importance and function of traditional dance in Nigerian society.

In traditional homogeneous societies<sup>13</sup> "dance is an essential element of all aspects of life" (1969:280), a dance usually has a principle function, but it

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<sup>13</sup> These types of societies are rare now as there are almost no societies that are not exposed to a global community

inevitably has related subsidiary functions too, which affect the society implicitly if not overtly (Harper, 1969). Dance in traditional Nigerian society is an expression of social organization (Harper, 1969) and it provides a clear visual defining tool for the roles of individuals and social groups within the society. In much the same way Indian society was clearly defined and the performance of traditional dance was practiced by a certain group within the society, this assisted in the understanding of the society as a whole and it set out clear rules for social organization within Hindu society.

In the AmaXhosa society, dance/music/performance played/plays a crucial role in the hierarchy of the society, especially as a means of signifying adulthood. Young girls and boys who were not initiated were allowed to dance together at a gathering called the *Intlombe*. This was a time when they could play with the traditional dances and improvise new moves and rhythms. The older girls and boys who were newly initiated into adulthood, but not married, had a gathering called the *Umtshotsho*, which was a similar gathering to that of the *Intlombe*. However, their dances were not unisex and this segregation of the sexes in the dance forms was a clear indication of the patriarchal society of the AmaXhosa. Now, the performance of AmaXhosa dance is often displayed in unisex dance combinations by a younger generation of AmaXhosa people.

The three worlds of dance that Harper distinguishes are versions of Malefy's terms 'inside and outside' and 'private and public'. Traditional dance is a private, inside form that is performed for the community, it is efficacious and incorporated

knowledge within the society; neo-traditional dance is a public form created from a distinctly private form of performance, however it maintains a direct link to the private form as it is the public representation of the private; contemporary dance is a public, outside form that has been influenced by multiple forms of performance and draws on traditional dance as a source, but it is a form on its own, a fusion form of dancing that combines multiple styles. It could be stated that these new public forms of Nigerian dance and the flamenco are a form of revitalisation of an old form and as such they are integral forms in the evolution of traditional dance. Whereas in South Indian dance, the private form fed the creation of an entirely new form of public dance that usurped the private form completely, yet it was termed a 'revival' of an old form.

### **3.5. The motivation for the public form**

Malefyt opens his paper with the statement that flamenco is internationally recognised as a "quasi-national performance symbol of Spain" (Malefyt, 1998:63), but that its origins are specifically Andalusian. The flamenco, *bharata natyam* and Nigerian traditional dance have become commodities in their countries; they are highly valued as tourist attractions and as a source of revenue. In Spain, this status as a commodity has resulted in popular, tourist forms of the flamenco being performed in public venues, yet this public version of the form has had the effect of generating an intensely private more traditional 'authentic' version of flamenco. Exclusive clubs called *penas*, have emerged all over Spain where flamenco *aficionados* gather to practice and make private performances of flamenco

(Malefyt, 1998). The private nature of these clubs has become “a point of social distinction from public consumption” of the flamenco (1998:63). One of the main reasons South Indian dance was transformed and ‘revived’ was because the private form was placed in a public arena and money was charged to see what was once considered a community practice done for free. It is the exchange of money instead of efficacious acts that affects the private form the most.

There is a direct correlation between the commercialisation of flamenco and the *pena* clubs with their goal of preserving flamenco. Flamenco *aficionados* “claim flamenco song is an art form that imparts cultural heritage in its capacity to transmit the collective sentiments of Andalusian suffering” (1998:63) and that this is almost impossible to transmit to audiences in a tourist and public capacity. The reasons given for this inability to transmit the emotional capacity of flamenco in public arena's is that these performances are superficial and exaggerated whereas the 'pure' flamenco performed in *pena* clubs is intimate and the focus is on the emotional quality of the form and not the performative quality (Malefyt, 1998). *Aficionados* have also spearheaded the *pena* club system because it provides a space in which performers of flamenco can train and nourish the art form. The tourism industry and the selling of flamenco actually assists the *pena* clubs, because it provides a clear opposition; the *pena* clubs foster pure flamenco only because there is the possibility of pure flamenco ceasing to exist. The *pena* clubs are a reactive and proactive response to the tourist industry and the perceived

exploitation of flamenco. These clubs are ensuring that an incorporated knowledge of flamenco continues to exist amongst the Andalusian people.

As early as the 1960s in Nigeria, Harper noticed that a division was occurring between efficacious dance and dance for entertainment. The neo-traditional dance emerges from traditional dance and the form is derived from traditional forms however it serves a fundamentally different function in the society (Harper, 1969). In efficacious dance the community is a unit and the form is familiar to everyone. The known is part of what draws the participants to the ritual, because they have the knowledge to comment on the form as well as assess any changes that occur and decide whether they are in accordance with the dance form and the traditions the dance upholds. It is an inside form, a dance that is intrinsically a part of the society, whereas neo-traditional dance is an outside form and much like the commercial flamenco and the *bharata natyam*, this new form was created for entertainment, money and tourism.

With the advent of urbanisation in Nigeria, traveling within the country became possible on a larger scale and resulted in the exposure of different traditional dance forms to each other. Transference of dances began to happen and dance groups traveled to villages where their form was new and entertaining. This had ramifications for the dance form which resulted in neo-traditional dance. When neo-traditional dance emerged as a recognisable form its origins were clearly based in traditional dance forms, however as performing groups were exposed to more and more varying dance forms their form changed and evolved as well. Until

neo-traditional dance became a reflection of traditional dance and no longer rooted in its original form. This fear is what motivated the establishment of the *pena* clubs, the fear that the flamenco would become a reflection of Andalusia and no longer an integral part of a society.

The *aficionados* and the *pena* clubs are exclusive, and Andalusian's have yet to discard their wariness of public displays of flamenco and its relation to oppression and controlled expression. This suspicion of public displays of flamenco make the *pena* clubs and the intense desire to protect the art form a political act as much as an act of cultural preservation. They are a political group asserting their autonomy from a government perceived as a body out to exploit them as a group and their art form. Flamenco is promoted in brochures and advertisements with images of “the exotic, offering sensational depictions of dancers and singers that suggest their availability for public consumption” (Malefyt, 1998:65). Thus the tourist industry capitalizes on the otherness of flamenco, which provides another way in which the Andalusian people feel alienated from Spain and another reason for them to be disdainful of the public tourist form of flamenco.

*Aficionados* are concerned that the public tourist flamenco is too commercial and because of this it is becoming servile, in the sense that it panders to the tourism industry. The public flamenco has also lost its grounding in the community and can no longer be thought of as an expression of the community, but rather a commercial product. It seems as though without the *pena* clubs to provide a bounded creative space for the continuation of flamenco within the community

flamenco would no longer be an expression of the community nor could it be the creative centre of the Andalusian people. The *pena* clubs provide a space where everyone present is equal, social class divisions apparently dissipate and the flamenco becomes the entire focus (Malefyt, 1998), thus the cultural heritage of the group supersedes any other divisions and binds people together. The *pena* clubs nurture and build a sense of community rather than the public flamenco which fosters economic disparity and division.

### **3.6. Is there a *Pena* club equivalent in South Africa?**

Is there an equivalent to the *pena* club in AmaXhosa dance? A place whose sole purpose is to preserve and nurture the form so that it remains rooted within the community. It would seem as though the rural villages themselves could be the equivalent of the *pena* club system. They are private domains that practice the traditions and culture of the society through habit-memory and incorporated knowledge. As such there is no regulated club system with the intent of preserving the form, but there is a community system that maintains the form. Historically, dance within traditional societies has been used as an overt educational tool.

The nature of dance is such that repetition is required in order to learn a specific dance routine; this repetition of the form also ensures that the same, or similar, group of people is in the same space for regular periods of time. More often than not, not just dance is taught and conveyed in these learning sessions. Just like in a maths class, ordering thought and being clear when applying theories

is a byproduct of the number combinations that are being taught; in much the same way various aspects of the society are implied and taught through the dance lessons. Children and new members to the society are introduced to the “traditional patterns of behaviour and standards of conduct” (Harper, 1969:280) within the society through the dances they are taught as well as ones they are aware of and not being taught. Questions regarding why certain dances are not allowed to be learnt by certain age groups or genders open the doors for conversations regarding social and age related hierarchies. Learning about appropriate dances for certain ceremonies also teaches children and members of the society about their culture and what is expected of them and why. Thus, by physically participating in the society the culture of the group is sustained. Dance provides a means for understanding traditions within a society, that open up that society to people within and without it.

### **3.7. Encouraged change within AmaXhosa dance**

Elements of improvisation have always been present within AmaXhosa traditional dance and the young members of the society have not been discouraged from experimenting with the form. The *Intlombe* and *Imitshotsho* dance gatherings were the forum for improvisation and experimenting with the form for the young AbaXhosa people. Hlobo chose to engage with the concept of evolving traditions in contemporary environments, he selected the *Umtshotsho* as a singular practice that could symbolise every custom and how they are evolving within the AmaXhosa nation. Hlobo suggested that nightclubs have become the

new venues for *Imitshotsho*, but I would like to suggest that the stage and the creation of dances for tourists may become the new *Imitshotsho* practice. The cultural groups may become the arena in which it is acceptable to experiment and possibly forge new dance forms within the paradigm of the culture and the steps already known to the performers. As in any form of dance the form has a structure and then there are satellite forms that emerge from the original, such as Mathew Bourne playing with the ballet canon and creating an all-male *Swan Lake*, or Sylvie Guillem adapting the ballet form to create new modern styles of ballet. In this way a cultural practice such as *Umtshotsho* can continue in a morphed form by the necessity to create new and shorter performance forms for economic purposes. AmaXhosa culture, like any other culture, is not static and outside of external influences, it has the ability to adapt,

[p]eople participate in social situations in terms of specific organizational principles (often including a spatial structure), but these principles can be manipulated, adapted, selected from, ignored, reversed, etc., by the actors to recreate and reinforce relationships or to signal changes in them, in terms of interests and strategies of those involved (McAllister, 2004:118-9).

Thus, the practice of *Umtshotsho* is being transformed, and perhaps not overtly or even purposefully, into an urban practice of going to clubs or into a tourist activity which creates new forms of movement. The form is being adapted and manipulated because of population movement and economic reasons.

The performance of AmaXhosa traditional dance is creating a contemporary form of the traditional form, and in the same way that Harper defines three types of

Nigerian dance, so too AmaXhosa dance can now be separated into categories. There is the traditional form, which is practiced in private and is still efficacious within the society; neo-traditional AmaXhosa dance is the form most commonly seen on stage and finally there is contemporary AmaXhosa inspired dance. Of the four shows analysed in this thesis all three of these forms were visible. *The Eastern Cape Indigenous Orchestra, Songs of the Amagcaleka* and *Intersections: Swiss/Africa* showcased a form most closely linked to traditional private AmaXhosa culture. The performers displayed a deep understanding of the actions they were performing. The muscle memory of the performers was multi-layered and clearly habitual. There was a sense of the performers being lifted straight out of a traditional meeting or ritual practice.

*The Eastern Cape Ensemble* showcased a form of neo-traditional AmaXhosa dance as there was still a very clear traditional foundation from which all the dancing stemmed. There were elements of the traditional form, especially when the older members of the production were performing, however the staging of the show and the choreographed nature of certain sections moved this production away from traditional dance and towards neo-traditional dance. *The Studio's Vumelani-Let Us Dance Together* was a form of contemporary AmaXhosa inspired dance as the dancers were AmaXhosa and the style of most of the dance groups was traditionally inspired, but the overall image of the production was new and contemporary. If one were to place these four productions on Schechner's efficacy/entertainment braid then *The Eastern Cape Indigenous Orchestra, Songs*

of the *Amagcaleka* and *Intersections: Swiss/Africa* would be on the efficacious curve of the braid, *The Eastern Cape Ensemble* contained the most elements of both efficacy and entertainment, although it is leaning towards the entertainment curve of the braid. *The Studio's Vumelani-Let Us Dance Together* is on the entertainment curve of the braid, it has elements of efficacy enfolded within its production, yet it comes across as an entertaining dance show more than a view of traditional AmaXhosa performance.

### **3.8. Conclusions**

Within 13 years the dance practice in South India underwent a complete transformation. Rukmini Devi was the pioneer in this transformation. In her time she witnessed the metamorphosis of the form from *nautch* to *bharata natyam*, and from an activity deemed as 'untouchable' to one that was raised to a national art form and an ability desired in young women. This metamorphosis "enfolded and was nurtured in the Indian nationalist movement, which was deeply influenced by European Orientalist thought and Victorian morality" (Allen, 1997:94). In light of this information it is clear that the *bharata natyam* form of Indian dance that is recognised internationally as an authentic Indian traditional dance form was created almost specifically by political interests and concerns. Thus, this dance form is almost purely a public form that evolved out of a private form that has subsequently diminished in practice along with the people who knew the *nautch* dance form in an incorporated capacity.

The Andalusian *pena* club system manages to maintain two forms of the flamenco, a public commercial one and a private authentic one. However, this emphatic separation of the private and the public indicate how destructive the public form can be on the private form and what measures have had to be taken in order to preserve the private. On the other hand Nigerian traditional dance is rapidly evolving and the neo-traditional form is more widely recognised than the traditional form as the incorporated knowledge of the traditional form is diminishing within the different communities. The varying styles and tribal forms of traditional dance are merging, so now there are fewer variations of styles and forms within the traditional form.

Thus the public commercial display of a traditional private dance form has severe and clear consequences. The private authentic form is more often than not diluted and slowly diminished in power and efficacy by the need to display a public traditional act. The political and economic pressures placed on traditional performers reduces the incorporated knowledge within the societies in question and can permanently change an entire dance form. The change of venue for the public performance of the private form is a crucial factor in the way in which the form is diluted and transformed. The analysis of the changes occurring within traditional AmaXhosa dance can begin from the spatial aspects and the ways in which the form is made to adapt according to the venues in which the public display is situated.

## CHAPTER FOUR - TRANSITIONS

### 4.1. How space informs the reading of performance

The space in which something happens is not neutral. Space is loaded with signifiers and is encoded with various thoughts and memories. Thus the choice of venue for a performance should not be made without thought to how the space will influence the reading of the performance. All four performances that are being analysed in this research were performed in either traditional proscenium arch style theatres or proscenium arch style performance venues. Since the proscenium arch stage is a western invention it is imbued with a western paradigm. This paradigm forms a visual code that is another layer of each production that will be probed in order to discover how much of an influence these stages have on the traditional performances.

Unless the proscenium arch stage is reclaimed and adjusted to the needs of the performing group that is utilising it, then the production will drown in a series of western signs and codes. The space of the performance affects various aspects of the performance and it has the potential to change the dynamic of the event. *The Eastern Cape Indigenous Orchestra, Songs of the Amagcaleka* was performed at The Guy Butler Theatre at the 1820 Settler's Monument in Grahamstown. *The Eastern Cape Ensemble* was performed in the Rhodes University Great Hall and *The Studio production, Vumelani: Let Us Dance Together* was performed at The

Recreation Centre. *Intersections: Swiss/Africa* was performed at the Beethoven Room at the Rhodes University Music Department.

The performance space of any production provides an initial reading of the production before one has even seen it, the space chosen has the potential to enforce a certain audience-performer relationship. In the AmaXhosa society rituals and celebrations are a community event and performances within the rituals or celebratory acts are performed by everyone, as there is little or no boundary formed between the performers and the spectators. In order to interrogate the re-staging of AmaXhosa traditional performance it is vital that one discusses the change in the audience-performer relationship that occurs once these productions are placed on a proscenium arch stage.

In an attempt to gather oral narratives and document the traditional songs and dances of the Chewa people in Zambia, David Kerr (2007) realised that the performance space used by the Chewa, and other African tribes was a key to understanding the theory and practice of African performance; the space establishes the vital dialogic and reciprocal relationship between the performers and the spectators. The Chewa people perform in an area called the *bwalo*, which is a multiple-purpose open space outside the headman's house surrounded by village homes. What makes the *bwalo* special is that it is “totally integrated into the village architecture” (Kerr, 2007:31), it is circular in design and the villagers surround the performers completely. The *bwalo* has various functions, both secular and sacred. It can be used for the secular, as well as political, song and

dance performances of *Chimtali* and *Chitelele* or the sacred ritual form of *Nyau* theatre. For the ritual performances the *bwalo* “assumes a sacred association as the place where the dead and the living mingle in temporary unity” (2007:32), this sets up a different relationship between the performers and the audience.

In the secular performances the audience is encouraged to participate and comment on the action taking place, it is a dialogue lead by the performers, but able to change course according to what is suggested or prompted by the audience. In the sacred rituals “[t]he uninitiated are not allowed to approach too close to the masqueraders” (2007:32-3) and these taboos are enforced. While these taboos are enforced there is still an element of audience participation too, where “members of the audience frequently sing the words of songs, finish off stories, or even get up to join in dances” (2007:35). The *bwalo* has a liminal nature because it is an in-between space where transformations can occur, it is an arena where change is debated and possibly enforced as well as being a space where continuity is performed and the cultural traditions are practiced, thus perpetuating the narrative of the Chewa people. However the most fundamental element of the *bwalo* is that it

can change its status or character from gossip arena, to court, to debating chamber, to entertainment space, to highly charged ritual and symbolic space (2007:34).

The *bwalo* has social and didactic functions and it is an arena where public issues and political matters are debated and enforced. The community organises itself in

this space. Through their knowledge of the *bwalo* and its essential place within the community Kerr and his associates were able to establish theatre for development productions in Zambia and Malawi, they

consciously relied on the notion of performance space as public arena for discussing social and political issues. [The] desire was to use that tradition to come to terms with the complex problems of health, human rights, shifting agricultural practices, and the impact of African integration into an aggressive capitalist global economy. For this purpose the tradition of audience participation was seen as a crucial tool for allowing communities to debate the issues to which those problems gave rise (2007:36).

The space used for these productions was imperative for the success of the debates and dialogues that were sparked by the subject matter for the shows. Kerr and his colleagues used the knowledge and practices of the villages that they visited to assist them, they did not try to impose an arena onto the villagers, but rather chose to synthesise their goals with practices that were known and successful within the various communities. This research indicates that when dealing with African performance forms awareness of the space used by the community is essential for the successful performance of the form. The audience-performer relationship is vital for the form to be valuable and have agency within the community in question.

#### **4.2 The symbolism of space**

Space is symbolic in AmaXhosa life and rituals, the AmaXhosa homestead is spatially symbolic and “space is differentiated and evaluated in a culturally specific manner” (McAllister, 2004:283). The traditional AmaXhosa hut is a circular space

and the cattle byre or kraal is also circular. The space within the hut is gendered and hierarchical. The spatial analysis of a Xhosa hut is as follows:

starting inside the hut itself, the right hand side (from the perspective of one standing at the back and looking out of the door towards the byre) is called *ekunene* and it is associated with men. It ranks higher than the left, *ikholo*, associated with women. The front of the hut near the door, *emnyango*, ranks higher than the back (*entla*), and the outside section against the wall is superior to the inside circle near the hearth. The highest ranked place inside the hut is thus the spot against the wall on the right hand side next to the door, and it is associated with seniority. The lowest ranked, associated with juniority, is at the back on the left hand side, towards the hearth. However, the back of the hut (*entla*) is also the spot associated with the ancestors, where meat and beer are stored during rituals, and from where the beer is distributed at beer drinks (McAllister, 1997:283).

Thus, the spatial organisation of the living space in a Xhosa hut signals conceptual practices as well as daily physical practices. AmaXhosa society is a patriarchal one and the spatial organisation of a ritual gathering can be used to negotiate social relationships and restructure social life (McAllister, 2004). Outside areas rank lower than inside areas and thus during a ritual if there is a ritual dance it will begin inside the hut and proceed outwards from there. The dance is begun by the male head of the household and host of the ritual, the host leads the dancers around a fire made in the hearth at the centre of the hut in an anti-clockwise direction. The women who are sitting around the fire are asked to *ombela* (clap and sing) while the dancing starts. Anyone is allowed to join in the dancing as they feel fit.

The circular nature of the hut ensures that everyone in the hut is involved in the action and whether they decide to dance, orate or simply watch they are integral to the exploit and cannot separate themselves from what is occurring. Thus the shape of the space “facilitates participation and accentuates community solidarity” (Kerr, 2007:35). Depending on the ritual, whether it is an ancestor ritual or a beer-drink, the people in the hut are vital for the efficacy of the ritual. In essence there are no spectators, only performers who are crucial for the success of the performance. Choreographically AmaXhosa dance is designed for a circular venue where the performers and audience are sharing the same space.

The Guy Butler Theatre is a traditional proscenium arch style theatre. Both the Great Hall and the Recreation Centre venues are halls that have been converted into western style proscenium arch theatres. They are converted in the following manner: a stage area is demarcated on the floor by black mats or wooden planks; flat stands are erected to create wings at the edge of the 'stage' area; and a back stage is created by using these flats; grand stand seating is erected for the audience to sit on; lights are rigged along the ceiling and instead of a curtain there is a blackout that allows the performers to enter the stage area as though they are concealed by a curtain. Subsequently, it is a proscenium arch theatre that has been created. The Beethoven Room has also been designed on the proscenium arch style of theatre, there is a small raised stage area and a clearly demarcated audience area where removable seats are placed, thereby creating a division between the performance space and the audience area, which is a defining

characteristic of the proscenium arch stage. There is no curtain, but there are lights that can be controlled by a lighting technician.

Each of these venues were used in the traditional sense, in that the space was not redefined or converted in any way. The performers performed on the stage and the audience sat in the auditorium. The wings and backstage were used and if there was a curtain it was utilised. Proscenium arch theatres are a western creation and are encoded as such. If theatre spaces are to be used as sites of traditional performances then these spaces need to be reviewed, because until these spaces are “adapted to the expressive and semantic intentions of colonized peoples, such spaces exist primarily in the dominant society’s history” (Gilbert and Tomkins, 1996:158). Whatever is performed within the traditional proscenium arch theatre space will be subsumed by a dominant western mode of viewing and understanding.

Richard Schechner (1994) compares the Greek amphitheatre with the proscenium theatre of the eighteenth and twentieth-centuries in Europe. The design of each theatre was based on the society in which it was utilised. The Greek amphitheatre was open, the city surrounded the theatre and was visible throughout the daytime performances. This created a sense of the city and the population being involved in the performance, whether they were performing/attending the show or not. The city limits were the boundary of the theatre and there were multiple accesses to the amphitheatre too, which gives a sense that all were welcome and could come and go as they pleased. The circular

design of the amphitheatre also meant that the audience was viewing themselves as well as the performers, this adds a self-reflexive element to the performance and automatically involves the audience with the show, they become players in the performance. On the other hand

the proscenium theatre is a tightly boundaried, closed individual building with access from the street strictly controlled. Within the part of the structure where the performance takes place and is viewed much effort is spent in directing attention only to the stage; everything not in the show is hidden or sunk in darkness. The building, like the events within it, is compartmentalized; the time for the audience to look at each other is regulated and is limited to before the show and to intermissions (Schechner, 1994:161).

Of all the exclusionary features mentioned above the defining feature of the proscenium arch theatre is the separation of the audience from the performers by the proscenium arch itself. The arch is a framed wall, which literally places the audience in one room looking into another room (Schechner, 1994). If the proscenium arch stage is used in its traditional sense, then there is virtually no contact between the audience and the performers, and the space is not shared. The audience remain detached from the action and, for the most part, passively absorb the show before them.

If the space is not transformed or redefined in any way, then the proscenium arch stage engenders 2-dimensional performing and linear lines that force the performers to face the front and direct all the action frontwards. This results in restricted thinking and stimulates formula directing and choreographing

(Schechner, 1968). Shows are bought, they have to attract buyers in order to survive and be a success. Schechner believes that if the proscenium arch theatre is used in its traditional sense, it is “a model of capitalism” (Schechner, 1994:163). Not only do proscenium arch theatres, in Schechner's analysis, typify the capitalist mentality that drives the 21<sup>st</sup> century they are also spaces that are loaded with a western mind-set and perspective. They are not neutral spaces, rather they imply certain readings on the performance's that are showcased on their stages.

#### **4.3. Post colonial performance spaces**

Post colonial performance discourse provides an interesting view of the spaces used for productions. According to Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tomkins, post-colonial performances include the following features: “acts performed for the continuation and/or regeneration of the colonized (and sometimes pre-contact) communities; acts performed with the awareness of, and sometimes the incorporation of, post-contact forms” (1996:11). These ‘acts’ often involve the representation of ritual acts outside of their original function in an attempt to expose people to these traditions within a given society. Yet, this becomes problematic because they can be viewed as ‘quaint’ and as a means of concretising a culture, therefore engendering a colonial gaze that is paternalistic and patronising. Unless these enactments are framed as vehicles of resistance by acknowledging that they are sites of opposition to imposed values and practices, they run the risk of perpetuating a colonial discourse of subordination (Gilbert and Tomkins, 1996).

The location of these ritual enactments also contributes to the ways in which the act can be read. If theatre spaces are to be used as sites of traditional performances then these spaces need to be reviewed. Until these spaces are “adapted to the expressive and semantic intentions of colonized peoples, such spaces exist primarily in the dominant society’s history” (1996:158) and whatever is performed within the traditional theatre space will be subsumed by a dominant western mode of viewing and understanding.

Proscenium arch theatres are often viewed as “anathema to any kind of post-colonial drama, not only because they were elitist but also because they fostered performance paradigms that were often foreign to the local culture” (1996:156-57). Thus by situating *The Studio* project within a community recreation centre, that is not governed by elitist signifiers but rather by signifiers of inclusivity and unity, the organizers are attempting to create an arena where everyone feels welcome. Yet this is contradicted by the creation of a proscenium arch theatre space within the Recreation Centre because it places a potentially dominant western mode of viewing onto any performance within that space.

The Recreation Centre is situated in the former 'Coloured' (a racial marker indicating people of mixed race) area of Grahamstown and was a space created to bring the community together. It is a multi-purpose venue that is open to the public. It is encoded as an inclusive building with community building overtones. The NAF uses this venue for *The Studio Project* which was designed to create a “cross pollination of cultural experiences between festival visitors and the

township-based artists and cultural practitioners”<sup>14</sup>. *The Studio Project* was placed in the Recreation Centre because it is a venue placed at the edge of the residential/'white' Grahamstown and the coloured area which is between the previously white suburbs and the black township. Thus *The Studio Project* has been placed in a space that is seen as inclusive and liminal. It is between two areas of land and thought, and as such has the potential to create a bridge between the two parts of Grahamstown.

The Guy Butler Theatre is situated in the 1820 Settlers Monument which is a large and dominant landmark overlooking Grahamstown. The theatre is named after the late Professor Guy Butler, who was an academic, author and poet. He lectured at Rhodes University and was the driving force behind the building of the Monument. The 1820 Settlers Monument was opened on 13 July, 1974. It was created to commemorate the significance of the 1820 settlers in South Africa, and was also meant to honour the legacy of their hardships and struggles. The 1820 Settlers Monument is said to embody the beliefs of: freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of association, as well as embodying the promotion of the English language, art, literature, poetry and music<sup>15</sup>. The Monument is under the umbrella of the Grahamstown Foundation and the charter of the foundation is “to enrich the educational and cultural life of the people of South Africa” (*Ibid*), the

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<sup>14</sup> Rhodes University Communications Division. 2012. Rhodes University Online.

<sup>15</sup> Grahamstown Foundation Media Representative. 2011. The Grahamstown Foundation website.

monument was also rededicated in 1996 as a monument for the people of South Africa, an all-inclusive space for the pursuit of English and unity.

The Rhodes University Music Department is situated in Beethoven House on the St Peter's campus. The concert venue for the music students is the Beethoven Room and this is the venue used by the NAF. Beethoven House is built in an 1820s architectural style. The building and the room used for performances is named after the German composer and pianist Ludwig von Beethoven. Finally the Great Hall is situated on the Rhodes University Campus. It has a bronze statue of a 20<sup>th</sup> century soldier directly in front of the entrance. This hall is used for various events throughout the year; as a venue for the NAF it has been transformed into a traditional proscenium arch stage and into installation type spaces.

Each of these venues has a history steeped in the colonial and apartheid history of South Africa. In South Africa, where space was segregated for decades and areas were demarcated racially, one cannot ignore that the location and architecture of a venue is encoded with this history. None of the venues mentioned in this research were built in post apartheid South Africa, and as such they are politically charged spaces. Each of these buildings can be defined in terms of 'whiteness' in the following ways: The Recreation Centre was made by the Grahamstown Municipality to provide a cultural venue for the Coloured people of Grahamstown; the Guy Butler Theatre is named after a white man and is situated within a building commemorating white colonisers of the Eastern Cape; The Beethoven room is in a building that is architecturally in a British colonial style, it is

on a campus that is named after Cecil John Rhodes, a coloniser and imperialist, and it is named after a German classical musician and composer; the Great Hall, was the centre of the Rhodes University campus, while the statue signifies a colonial past.

Space is symbolic, and as much as each of these venues actively participates in the New Democratic South Africa they cannot escape their political past, no matter what is done they will always have the capacity to signify domination and subjugation. The use of these venues for the showcasing of traditional AmaXhosa performance could be a way of de-colonising these spaces. However, because each venue chose to use a proscenium arch style stage this potential for deconstruction is limited. The proscenium arch stage adds another western colonial paradigm on top of the political architecture of the venues.

The design of a proscenium arch theatre is such that there is little, if any, connection between the audience and the performers. This connection is linked to proximity between performers and audience as well as referring to a “greater sense of self-awareness on the part of the audience” (Pierre, 1968:147). This self-awareness arises because the spectators can see each other and this allows for them to feel more like participants in a social act rather than mere observers. The proscenium arch is designed to separate and this separation also restricts the audience from responding to the action as they feel self-conscious about making a noise. Since they are in the dark and are treated as though they are not actually there they should not draw attention to themselves. Therefore, any vocal

responses to the action in the 'other' room, that is the stage, is viewed as a taboo and not often done, unless it is an applause and even that is usually done at the end of a scene or song, the designated time to respond.

In AmaXhosa rituals and dance/musical performances that are done outside of ritual acts, dancing, playing musical instruments and orating are not separated. An *intlombe* is not only the dancing aspect of a ritual, the women are asked to clap and sing when the dancing is initiated and the rest of the congregation join in once the dancing begins. The dancing also periodically stops for various members of the congregation to orate about the clan group, the ritual that is occurring or to praise the dancers. The combination of dancing and speaking is essential for the ritual act, “[s]peaking is itself referred to as propitiation and worship (*ukunqula*), and it is seen as absolutely necessary for the success of the ritual (McAllister, 1997:289), as it alerts the ancestors to the ritual taking place and draws them to the homestead, the speeches also alert the ancestors to the nature of the ritual. In every one of the performances being analysed in this research the audience participated in the performance taking place.

#### **4.4. Reconstruction of the traditional dance form**

The recontextualisation of AmaXhosa traditional dance is requiring certain changes to the fundamentals of the performance. The proscenium arch design enforces an unnatural element on the performances of AmaXhosa traditional dance and music. A circular design does not impose its form on what is happening

in the space, “its only function is to gather actors and spectators around the central point where the happening<sup>16</sup>” (Pierre, 1968:148) is occurring. The wall at the back of a proscenium arch stage is a large and dominant visual space in any performance. This space is more often than not decorated with a painted backdrop or lighting is designed to suit the mood of the performance and changes throughout the show. In the case of AmaXhosa traditional performances no backdrop should be required, however when a proscenium arch stage is used the blank wall dominates the action and the choreographer or director often feels compelled to hang a backdrop there or design lighting. However, this mostly detracts from the performance.

*The Eastern Cape Indigenous Orchestra, The Songs of the Amagcaleka and The Eastern Cape Ensemble* both used backdrops in their productions. The backdrop used in *The Eastern Cape Ensemble* was a painting of a mountain scene at night. It was various snowy mountain tops surrounded by mist and clouds. It is painted in a romantic style and was entirely incongruous with the performance and it would be difficult to see this as a referent to mountains found in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. It signified a European image of mountains and made me think of “The Sound of Music”. The opening image of this production was a series of simulated lightning bolts flashing across the stage, and throughout the

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<sup>16</sup> ‘Happening’ here is referring to the performance action

performance a smoke machine emitted smoke. Neither of these effects added positively to the show, in my view they reduced it to a spectacle.

The backdrop used in *The Eastern Cape Indigenous Orchestra, The Songs of the Amagcaleka* depicts a rural landscape with AmaXhosa men and women walking in and around huts. It was painted in an unrealistic style, but it was effective and did not detract from the action occurring on the stage as it was so clearly an interpretation of rural AmaXhosa life. In *The Studio production, Vumelani: Let Us Dance Together* and *Intersections: Swiss/Africa* no backdrops were used and all attention was focused solely on the action and the performers. In the setting of the homestead the natural backdrop of the hut and the landscape surrounding the homestead would be the scenery that encompasses the movement. The natural landscape of the inside and outside provide another layer of efficacy to the ritual. In this sense the homestead as a venue is more closely related to the Greek amphitheatres in that the landscape and the village surrounds the act and allows for everyone in the vicinity to be involved in the ritual. The boundary of the ritual is layered, in that it is partly bounded by the limits of the homestead because it is here that the ancestors are being drawn. However, the nature of the rituals are such that the community is involved and hence the boundary of the village is essentially the limit of the ritual space. In the case of rituals being held in suburban homes and settings this still applies as the inside and outside of the home itself creates the backdrop.

A very important aspect of the space used for AmaXhosa rituals is that traditionally it is a multi-purpose space (Kerr, 2007:34). The homestead is simultaneously a home, ancestral seat, and a ritually symbolic space. So it is a secular and sacred space, the space has the potential to switch from either of these modes within a normal day and a ritual act. Thus the homestead is a charged space and wholly connected to family and the community. The use of space within the AmaXhosa nation is of vital importance.

Since space is gendered in AmaXhosa society one must take into account changes that may occur, but are still hierarchical and gendered. So if there is an all-female gathering then the senior women will occupy the right hand side of the space being used and junior women will be situated on the left hand side. In this way the space is still hierarchical and gendered, because the senior women are being placed on a par with their male counterparts and thus they are still participants in the gendering of space.

In *Intersections: Swiss/Africa* there were 9 performers in total, four AmaXhosa women, one Xhosa male and four Swiss males. The Xhosa man was seated stage left while the women were stage right, the Swiss men were in the centre towards the back of the stage. The performers were arranged in a semi-circular fashion. Already the space orientation was shifted and the Xhosa man was placed on the left hand side of the stage, while the women were on the right. The hierarchy of the space then placed the women in a dominant position, however that was stage left and only applies to the performers, so from the audience's perspective the

Xhosa man was seated on the right and the women on the left. The space can be inverted in two ways then, so that either the man is on the right hand side or not. According to the differentiation of space in a Xhosa hut the spatial orientation of the space is delineated from the back of the hut, the *entla*, looking outwards. If we apply this reading to the proscenium arch stage then the upstage area, the area farthest from the audience would be equivalent to the *entla* in a hut. The audience is then situated in the doorway section of the hut and stage left becomes the *ikholo* and stage right is the *ekunene*. Thus, stage right closest to the apron of the stage is the highest ranked area of the proscenium arch stage. Centre stage would be associated with the hearth in the hut and thus a very symbolic and important area of the stage. Therefore, the Xhosa male in *Intersections: Swiss/Africa* had placed himself on the lowest ranked side of the stage from the performers perspective. But since this is a visual show the audience viewed him as being on their right hand side. The visual impact is more important than the actual practice of the gendered seating as the greatest impact was meant to be made on the audience. When the women danced they moved themselves towards the centre of the stage and symbolically towards the hearth.

Since it is difficult to enter the stage directly from the centre of the back wall, unless there is a curtain split down the middle and none of the performances being analysed had this, the performers cannot enter from the 'door' of the hut. Therefore the next highest ranked place to enter the arena from would be stage right.

In *The Eastern Cape Ensemble* production, the opening image, once the lightning had stopped, was of two people in the centre of the stage, a man and a woman dressed in traditional AmaXhosa clothing playing the *uhadi* (a traditional AmaXhosa instrument), the woman was singing. The man was positioned stage right the woman was stage left, so in terms of the stage the man was in the dominant position, while the audience perceives the woman as being on the right hand side of the man and if one has a knowledge of the AmaXhosa hierarchy of space this sets up an incongruous image from the outset of the production.

#### **4.5. Re-imagined circles, recreating a circle formation amongst the performers and audience**

Venues that are circular in design would be more apt for these performances. If theatres in the round are not easily available then they can be created within the venues. It would be just as easy to create a theatre in the round in some of these venues as it is to create a proscenium arch theatre. Jay Pather's transformation of the Rhodes University Great Hall for his production of *Body of Evidence* in 2009 indicates that it is entirely possible for these venues to be deconstructed and remade into an arena that is suited to the production at hand. I had initially thought an outside venue would be more suitable for the production of traditional AmaXhosa performances, however apparently “[all] outside places rank lower than places inside the hut” (McAllister, 2004:123), McAllister goes on, however, to mention that if there is not enough space within a hut then some of the action occurs outside. This is not ideal, but it is allowed.

Thus it is preferable for the productions to be placed in indoor venues and perhaps the venues might be manipulated and redefined so that they have a circular performance arena rather than a linear one. Or marquee's may be erected in the Botanical Gardens for the performances, thus satisfying the need for an indoor atmosphere and locating the performance within a more natural and neutral setting. Another reason for the aversion to holding a ritual outdoors is because the hut is regarded as the proper place for it, however “[i]f the homestead has only one hut ... and the beer-drink is fairly large, there is little alternative but for everyone to sit outside” (2004:124). The reason for the preference of the circular hut as a venue for the rituals is that the beams in the roof of the hut provide a means of separating the congregation into hierarchical groups. So the highest ranking person and group would be situated near the door on the right hand side and they will be allocated a space between beams so that they can relocate themselves easily after drinking beer or physically participating in the ritual. Once the ritual has to take place outside the dramatizing of distinctions becomes harder to visualise, because the symmetrical boundaries of the hut and the interiority of its locality are removed (McAllister, 2004).

I am aware that this need to dramatise hierarchy is not essential in a performance removed from its social function. However, if more attention were paid to the venue chosen for the performances, and the way in which the space could be altered to benefit the form of performance being held in the venue, then there would be less of an impact on the style of the performance. Possibly, up to

and in 2009, not enough attention had been given to the way in which space informs the reading of a show as well as how space impacts on the choreography or directing of an AmaXhosa traditional performance production.

The audience is not challenged at all to review their understanding of AmaXhosa culture in any way by placing these performances in a proscenium arch environment. The audience goes to a venue that is familiar to them, which signifies every other performance they have seen in a similar venue. In this sense, AmaXhosa culture is displayed for the audience, the audience is passively absorbing the actions on stage, clapping when pleased or compelled to and then leaving the venue to see another show or to comment on the one they have just seen. AmaXhosa culture is not being augmented in any way by placing it on these stages because a vital component of its composition is removed, which is the inclusivity of the action. The intimate audience-performer relationship is what defines AmaXhosa performance. The change in choreography required for the linear proscenium arch stage is affecting the incorporated memory of the AmaXhosa society and if the performing groups continue to rehearse their forms for these arena's then the traditional form will change as well as the incorporated, habit memory of the society.

## CHAPTER FIVE – INFERENCES

The staging of AmaXhosa culture on the stages of the NAF cannot escape the multiple shadows of the past and the present. This research has posited that traditional AmaXhosa dance is undergoing significant changes in style and performance. These changes stem from an altering of the habit memory of the AmaXhosa as a nation because of the performance of their private culture for public audiences. If the habit-memory of a society changes, the society changes, this research has not tried to analyse the direct changes occurring amongst the AmaXhosa, rather it has attempted to indicate that altering a significant part of the culture will affect the society. There are various factors at play when a habit-memory of a culture is altered, with the need for brevity the focus here has been on how the performance of AmaXhosa traditional dancing and singing on the stages of the NAF is contributing to the modification of AmaXhosa society.

Culture has often been used as a tool for furthering ideals in South Africa. During apartheid, culture was simultaneously used as a weapon in the struggle for freedom and as a tool for separating people into groups. Since the collapse of apartheid, culture has been placed at the forefront of the need to create a unified South Africa. Culture plays an integral role in nurturing a sense of community within a society and a country. Yet, the repositioning of culture as a commodity needs to be examined and action has to be taken to preserve the efficacy of AmaXhosa culture. Preserve is used here not in relation to solidifying, rather in a similar way to the Andalusian people in Spain, as their creation of the *Pena* club

system has allowed for two performance cultures to exist. The private culture of a society has to be given the space to develop and evolve according to the needs of that society in a private protected domain. A public culture is inevitable, and at this stage of exposure of AmaXhosa culture in South Africa it cannot be stopped, but awareness needs to be developed about the fragility of the private culture of a society.

Any performance of culture assists in shaping the future of the practice and culture in question, whether it is formally recognised as a ritual, or in the case of the AmaXhosa, if it is just a small gathering of people for an informal beer drink to celebrate a successful harvest. Accordingly, each performance of AmaXhosa culture in the NAF is aiding in the current formation of the culture. These performances structure the ways in which outsiders view AmaXhosa cultural practices; simultaneously they have a structuring effect in the way in which the performers view their culture. Therefore, if the performers begin to view their culture as a commodity and something that requires exuberance and vitality then this is the way in which future performances will be moulded. The majority of the AmaXhosa traditional dances are not originally vibrant, high leg kicking dances, they were and are grounded in the land and the history of the nation. These performances engender thought processes amongst audience members and performers alike and these concepts and thoughts are part of “a wider complex of moral and normative ideas concerning every day social relations and organizational principles” (McAllister, 2004:121). Thus the way in which these

performances are viewed are influenced by the wider socio-political context of South African culture.

The various clans, communities and groups within South Africa are undergoing constant transformations. In Turner's description of the transition process of a rite of passage the individual undergoes significant modifications and emerges a changed person,

The neophyte in liminality must be a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate, on which is inscribed the knowledge and wisdom of the group, in those respects that pertain to the new status. The ordeals and humiliations, often of a grossly physiological character, to which neophytes are submitted represent partly a destruction of the previous status and partly a tempering of their essence in order to prepare them to cope with their new responsibilities and restrain them in advance from abusing their new privileges. They have to be shown that in themselves they are clay or dust, mere matter, whose form is impressed upon them by society (Turner, 1969:103).

The passage from traditional efficacious AmaXhosa practices to neo-traditional and AmaXhosa inspired contemporary dance is being incited by the economic and political pressures of South Africa. The knowledge being inscribed on the practices of the AmaXhosa are an awareness of how to perform sanitised and exuberant acts on western style stages for short, easy to digest, periods. Every culture is formed by the environment surrounding them, which is why transition periods have been noticed and documented, but this does not imply the change is necessarily for the benefit of the society, merely that its occurrence is inevitable.

There is a dialogue that is created between the different forms of dancing emerging from AmaXhosa traditional dance. The traditional form provides the foundation for improvisation and playfulness. It is a platform for neo-traditional AmaXhosa dance to emerge from, this neo-traditional form is clearly located in the traditional form and it is possibly more accessible to outsiders in that it is created to tell a story and is actively trying to open itself up to an outside audience. This improvisation and playfulness has a natural progression towards contemporary AmaXhosa inspired dance, where the form is loosely based on the patterns and rhythms of AmaXhosa traditional dancing, but it is twice removed from the foundation and as such it has more in common with entertainment than with efficacious culture. The route from traditional dance to traditionally inspired contemporary dance is related to the crisis phase of liminality. The outcome of this crisis is potentially the loss of efficacious AmaXhosa performances and traditions. The new reified public version of AmaXhosa culture, created for festivals and tourist spectacles, may lose its emotional content and link to the past. It could stop being a vital part of the AmaXhosa people. The cultural practices may only be performed out of an attempt to connect with their past and not because they hold any value as a means of communicating with the shades and ancestors. If the habit-memory of the AmaXhosa is altered significantly, their culture could become a culture of objectification devoid of purpose and meaning. The public performances of the private culture has the potential to empty the rituals and actions of agency within the society, which will render these practices useless, they are at risk of becoming empty codes.

The relationship between the AmaXhosa and the NAF is beneficial for both parties as well as South Africans in general. Festivals provide a space for people to connect cross culturally. The NAF could be used as a space to reclaim and affirm ethnic identity as well as freedom of expression. The NAF provides a platform for the exposure of traditions and cultures to people who otherwise may never have experienced this, and this promotes a more unified and accepting country. The NAF, while positively contributing to the creation of a unified South African psyche is also contributing to the inscription of AmaXhosa culture. Once a society's history and cultural codes become inscribed, there is a tendency to think that there is no longer the need to understand the incorporated knowledge of a society. A traditional dance connects the performers of the present day with the performers of the past and the choreography is the element that links the society with their heritage and past, while the dancers remind the society of their present position in time. The habit-memory of a society is a crucial part of the way in which that society defines itself and its positioning amongst other societies and nations. If this incorporated habit-memory becomes fractured then the society, in this case the AmaXhosa, will become fractured. If the incorporated memory is no longer a deep muscle memory then the traditional actions of the society will lose a layer of efficacy. This loss will have an effect on the public performance forms of the society and the authentic nature of the performances will diminish.

The private traditional form of AmaXhosa practice could be irrevocably altered by the neo-traditional and AmaXhosa inspired dance forms. Careful measures

were taken in Spain to protect the flamenco and maintain a private form of the dance, whereas in India the *bharata natyam* has superseded the traditional form it originated from and is now thought of as one of the defining traditional dances of South India, yet it can only be traced back possibly 100 years and it has very little efficacious attributes. Nigerian dance still has the traditional form, however the neo-traditional and contemporary styles are rapidly dominating the Nigerian dance culture and eroding the traditional form. Adedayo Liadi is a contemporary Nigerian dancer who started his dance education with traditional Nigerian dance, after studying in Europe, he returned to Nigeria to introduce his new ideas on contemporary African dance. He believes that "...contemporary African dance can be defined as [a] re-structuring of our indigenous African dance and [a way of] bringing it into a contemporary framework through research, without [it] being misled" (Douglas, *et al*, 2006:105). Yet, why should traditional dance be brought into a contemporary framework and restructured? If one takes the approach that a traditional form needs to be restructured and modernised then it presupposes that there is a feeling that the original form needs to be improved. This 'improvement' and restructuring reduces the efficacy of the form and it lessens its value in the society. These forms were developed for the specific needs of a society, they were created to assist the community through liminal periods in their lives. Therefore, the restructuring of a traditional form, for reasons outside of efficacious actions or needs, implies a restructuring of the mind-set of a community or parts of the community. It also implies a definite shift away from the perceived need of these traditional acts to heal or help a society.

Since the public form of AmaXhosa traditional performance is now a part of AmaXhosa culture as well as South African culture, action needs to be taken to try and reduce the impact of the public on the private form. In order for solutions to be sought and implemented it is necessary to act on information. The NAF can change the venues for the performing groups. The venues currently used to showcase traditional performances are predominantly proscenium arch stages, which are western performance arenas and as such impose certain stylistic and choreographic changes onto the traditional form. Not only are changes in the form necessary, but these stages also engender a certain view of the performances and the clear separation of the audience from the performers also marks these productions as 'other', for both insiders and outsiders to the culture. The NAF is a powerful force in South African culture and it has the ability to consciously redirect the ways in which traditional performances are produced and showcased.

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## **Appendix**

### **A brief analysis of each performance.**

I documented all of the performances personally on a dvd camera. These are all available on the dvd which accompanies this thesis.

### **The Eastern Cape Ensemble spatial analysis**

There is a clear separation of the sexes in the first 15 minutes of the performance.

Opening image is of the musicians in a straight line along the apron of the stage. Two performers, a woman and a man in traditional clothing, move towards the centre of the stage and therefore closer to the 'hearth'. A smoke machine is used, perhaps to create an atmosphere of this being other worldly or removed from this era. The woman is stage left and the man is stage right. The lights are initially dim and there is a spot on the pair in the centre, then the lights come up to reveal four drummers along the apron of the stage, three women and one man. There is a woman stage right, two women in the centre and a man stage left. The drummers slowly move backwards and the pair in the centre who were singing begin to move backwards.

A group of male performers enter stage right and then seat themselves upstage, one man orates in isiXhosa, then another takes over, however there is never just one voice being heard as all the men are commenting on what is being said. It is as though a story is being told and everyone knows something about the story. Throughout this section percussion music is playing constantly, the musicians are seated along the back of the stage. The constant playing of music gives the impression of this being a film with bedding music.

A group of women enter stage left in a straight line. The men react and one man goes to upstage centre. The women progress in a straight line towards centre stage and then down towards the apron and the audience. One woman is covered in a blanket, which indicates that she is a bride to be, the group of women make a circle and surround the blanketed woman. The women are making a stomping/stamping motion all the while. There is a mixture of singing and orating throughout this section.

During the entrance of the women one man has been positioned on an elevated 'rock' stage left upstage. He is holding a stick and dressed in skins. The elevation and the clothes he is in signify importance, so he could be a chief.

One woman enters downstage left while a group of women enter stage right and move downstage left, the women are in a straight line. They are dressed in a mixture of traditional clothing and animal print material.

Another group of women enter stage left in opposition to a group who enter stage right. While more women enter stage right. All enter in straight lines.

Two groups of men enter stage right and go to centre stage. Two men enter stage left at the same time as three men enter stage right.

Now all the performers are on stage. The opening group image is: one man on the elevated 'rock' upstage left. A group of women stage right and stage left. A group of men centre stage, and the opening man and women duo are downstage centre. The majority of women are stage left and the majority of the men are centre stage or stage right. The man and woman downstage centre are positioned as such: the man is stage right and the woman is stage left. The dominant image is of the elevated man in traditional clothes and animal skins. All the performers are facing the audience.

The group begins to retreat and splits in two, a mixture of men and women, the man is no longer elevated on the rick. One man begins to perform centre stage, he is encouraged by all the performers.

Five male performers begin to dance centre stage, they are enacting a stick fight. This dance contains a lot of high kicks which is reminiscent of Zulu dancing and kicking. The men are in two straight lines facing the audience.

A group of female performers enter from upstage centre and begin to move towards the audience in a straight line. They are joined by a group of male performers, all the performers perform the low foot stomp and full body shaking movement that is unique to the AmaXhosa.

There are strings of tin bottle tops around the performers' ankles to accentuate the body shaking action. The men are in one line and the women are in another, they make two straight lines and pass through each other. The men make two straight lines and the women, including the blanketed woman, pass down the middle of the lines towards the audience. The women exit stage left while the men exit stage right.

The man who has been signified as the 'chief' figure in this performance orates and comes to centre stage. A woman begins to sing off stage and then enters, replacing the 'chief' centre stage, she is singing to the audience and moves towards stage left where a group of women and two men join her. They invite the audience to start clapping with them, which creates a sense that everyone is a part of this performance. The men and women separate and create two lines upstage, they are all singing. The women part in the middle allowing for the men to pass through the gap and move towards the audience in a linear pattern. The focus is on the audience, but the men dance towards all four sides of the stage, they are encouraged by the women constantly. The women merge with the men and they

all begin to dance in unison in one straight line. This line splits in two and goes to either side of the stage, they create a semi-circular image. Two men in full traditional clothing go to centre stage. They dance in unison and display intricate, skilled footwork. The two men are joined by three more. They all dance in unison in a straight line. This group splits in two and the women from the previous section join the men to form two circles which surround the two men who started this dance, then all the performers exit the stage.

A bushman inspired contemporary dance occurs now. They use the whole stage. I do not want to comment too much on this section as it had no connection to the display of AmaXhosa dance and culture.

Three women enter stage right in a straight line, two men join them from stage right. They are all dressed as Basotho's from Lesotho. They are wearing blankets and the traditional cone shaped straw hats worn by Basotho's. One man orates while the women go to the edges of the stage, two men dance in the centre of the stage. Then the women join the men and then four performers exit stage right and one man exits stage left.

There is now an empty stage, except for the musicians along the back of the stage. A female voice can be heard singing back stage. A single woman enters stage right and goes to centre stage. She enacts fetching water, while a man enters stage left, they enact a meeting scene. Another man enters stage left and two women enter stage left after him. The men act out a fight scene, one man is the clear victor and wins the girl. They do a courting dance, the two women join them and the defeated man. All six dance in a straight line, three women are facing the audience, one man is centre stage while the other two men are on either side of him facing the wings, all the men have sticks. The men and women begin to slowly make a circle, everyone is singing and clapping. The group slowly exits stage left, the women are first.

One woman enters stage left, she is orating. Two groups of women enter stage right and left. They perform in a straight line in unison. As they exit two men enter stage right and left, they are singing and they encourage the audience to clap. The two men perform in unison with sticks, the Zulu style high kick is part of their dance.

One woman enters, stage right, she is singing. A group of women enter stage right and left, they perform in a straight line. They exit stage right and left.

Five men enter stage right in a straight line. They are carrying sticks. They begin by facing the audience and then they face stage right with their profile towards the audience. They exit stage left.

Five men enter stage right with sticks and dance in a straight line in unison. Four women enter stage left and move through the men. The women ask the audience to clap with them. They perform in unison in a straight line. The men exit stage right and later two women exit stage right while two exit stage left.

Three women enter stage right. They perform the high Zulu kick. This group used the stage more by starting in a straight line and then moving diagonally across the stage upstage right to downstage left and then the reverse of this. This culminated in a straight line centre stage, the performers exited stage left.

Three women enter stage left, three men enter stage right, they are all carrying sticks. They are older performers. The six performers have their backs to the audience for a while and then they slowly turn and advance towards the audience. These performers turn their bodies so that everyone in the theatre, both the audience and the performers, are able to see them perform. They use the entire stage, but the sexes are always separated. They create a circle and allow their sticks to meet in the middle. They stay on the stage until the finale.

A group of women enter stage left, another group of women enter stage right and dance in a circle. The 'chief' is on the rock again. All the performers enter the stage from all sides of the stage. The performers form two straight lines and bow to the audience. The final image is of the musicians and the 'chief' on the rock in dim lighting.

### **Eastern Cape Indigenous Orchestra, Songs of the Amaqcaleka**

The lights come up on the performers on the stage. The musicians are lined up along the back of the stage and the performers are positioned along the edges in a semi-circular fashion. This image creates the image of a circle with the hearth in the centre.

There is an MC who introduces each song and gives a brief description about it. Her name is Nosipho. Nosipho speaks predominantly in English, however she does comment in IsiXhosa and the name of each song is said in IsiXhosa with a brief description of it in English. She speaks to the audience and asks them questions in IsiXhosa and waits for the response, then often answers in English. This creates a sense of inclusion and although English is the dominant language there is a sense that the two languages are forming a unit that includes as many people as possible.

All the women have sticks and all the performers are dressed in traditional clothing. There are four men in the production and the 2 who are performing, as in not with the fixed musicians at the back of the stage, are amongst the stage right group of performers.

There are four groups who are participating in this performance. The Masekhane Group, the Maseqonde Cultural Group, the Thandile Mandela Traditional Orchestra and a man who plays a unique African instrument.

The production has been separated into two sections. Section A is predominantly vocal, section B is predominantly instrumental.

### Section A:

The first song is sung when an initiate diviner, an *amaqira*, is given their diviner's blanket to wear.

Nosipho leads the singing and clapping, the *ombela*. A single woman, from the stage left group of performers, begins to move towards the centre of the stage, the 'hearth'. She only turns to face the audience once she is at the centre of the stage, which makes one think that this could be the symbolic entrance to the hut. Another woman joins her on her left hand side.

There is no sense of this song having choreographed movement attached to it. Various women enter and exit the performance area at random, seemingly as the desire takes them and as the music moves them. Each woman had a sense of being obliged to face the audience mostly, however they all turned to face and perform to the other performers as well and whenever they felt like doing so.

Emphasis seemed to be placed on the singing and not on movement as for a period of time the stage had no dancers on it and all focus was on the performers singing and clapping along the sides of the stage.

The second song is sung by traditional healers when ancestors have complained, the people of that home apologise and then the women dance to the music.

One woman opens the song and claps while she is singing, all the performers join her. Five women, from the stage left group of performers, begin to enter centre stage, they are in a straight line and are moving in unison, however they make a full circle and perform to all four sides of the stage, performing arena. They do not stay in the performing area for long and then exit.

A single man enters centre stage from the stage right group of performers, he dances in centre stage and faces the audience. He does a Zulu like high kick multiple times to the audience, the musicians and the stage right group of performers. Then he exits centre stage and rejoins the stage right group.

There is once again no emphasis on movement, as centre stage is predominantly without performers. Nosipho raises her hand to indicate that the

song should come to a close, implying that it could continue for an indeterminate period of time unless it is checked. This is a direct consequence of the relocation of the song/performance.

The third song is a celebration song sung by men and women between the ages of 35 to 75 years of age. A single female voice opens the song and then all join in with a distinct clapping rhythm, the first two songs had a similar regular clapping rhythm of one clap after another in regular timing, this song appears to rest upon the clapping rhythm of a single clap followed by three faster claps in a row, a small pause and then a single clap etc.

Three women from the stage left group of performers enter the performing arena, they move in a straight line along the downstage area and then up stage right and along the upstage area in a circular pattern, once centered they turn to face the audience, in a straight line. The woman in the middle of the line is clearly the leader and the two on either side of her are following the movement she initiates. It is an initiation and acceptance of movement that is occurring as the other two women are at least 3 seconds behind the middle woman and do not anticipate what she is going to do. It is an improvisation based on a set oeuvre of movement. They perform to all sides of the stage and as the middle is leading the improvisation the outside woman consistently has to turn her head to see what the next move is going to be. They return to their stage left group along the upstage area thus creating a full circle in their movement from entrance to exit, as though they were performing around a hearth and exiting the hut to go towards the byre.

One woman enters centre stage from the stage left group, rotates her body from the audience to the stage right group of performers, back to the audience and then returns to her original position stage left.

Once again the end of the song is indicated by a performer.

The fourth song is a prayer sung to the ancestors which is a plea to prevent people from suffering from HIV and AIDS. The main feature of this song is the inclusion of a distinctive IsiXhosa click sound, the overtones and undertones are produced by the various female voices in the orchestra. This song is accompanied by multiple drums and instruments, including two borrowed from other African cultures (as said by Nosipho).

A single female voice, with no clapping, opens the prayer, she is joined by the other performers after a period of time. There is a notable absence of clapping in this prayer song. The original female voice is recognisable throughout the prayer song as a solo commentary on the prayer song. The performers' sticks and feet are used to beat a regular rhythm on the floor contributing to the deep drums and kudu horn. The original female vocalist, and apparent leader of the prayer song, moves away from the stage left performing group and turns to face them, she is

not far from them, she has simply detached herself from the group to face them and it appears as though she did this to motivate them.

Four women enter centre stage from the stage left group of performers. They move slowly with a rhythmic stamp that is done in unison. They move across the downstage area up stage right, they briefly face and perform towards the stage left group of performers and then complete the circle by moving along the upstage area and back to their positions in stage left.

This appears to be the final act of the prayer song and it closes as they return to their positions.

The fifth song is sung on the initiation day of women, the name translates to "The Sun is Setting". It is sung by women while men are slaughtering goats as a symbol of the initiation. The song features a slow dignified movement by women who have authority on this day. The style of singing in this song is reminiscent of the Baroque era.

Nosipho begins the song with a solo, the rest of the performers join her. After a period of time two women from the stage left performing group slowly enter centre stage, they move slowly with a stamping motion that is in time to the rhythm set by the drum beat, they progress in a diagonal direction up stage left towards centre stage. Once they reach centre stage they briefly face the audience and then do the return journey to their starting positions in the same manner they entered the performance area.

The dance/movement was not the focus, it was necessary for the efficacy of the song though.

The sixth song is a song sung when a man and a woman, 18 years or older, hold an *Intlombe* – which is a dance contest, where they compete to see who the best dancer is. The song is dedicated to the winner of the contest.

The rhythm established by the performers is definite and regular, it consists of a single clap followed by the stamping of one foot. Every member of the orchestra is participating in this rhythm.

Three women from the stage left group of performers begin to break away from the group and steadily move across the downstage area up along the stage right area and then into centre stage, creating a circle within the stage. Their foot stamping follows the same rhythm set up at the beginning of the song. The foot rhythm is different, but the movement is the same as that done in the third song. It is the same women and the middle woman is the leader of the improvisation of movement. However, this time the middle woman moves forward towards the audience while the women on either side of her face each other and continue the

stamping rhythm, the middle woman moves rapidly and dips her body towards the floor as she approaches the audience, she wields her stick upwards and forwards and then pauses in a lunged position with her stick pointed towards the audience, as if she was playfully daring the audience to join her. She then turns and rejoins the two women. All three then begin to sidestep towards stage left and back to the group. All three women wielded their sticks around their bodies and this creates another area of focus, they held their sticks with two hands, as opposed to one just one hand used predominantly in this production. It added another spatial dimension to the movement. The women actually move towards the stage left group only to 'pick them up' and lead them off of the stage as this is the final song of the first half.

All the performers exit stage right.

### Section B

The first song is sung with young male initiates when they return from initiation school. Traditionally the stick fighting done by men would take place during this song or at this returning time.

A variety of instruments are used in this song, not all of which are of AmaXhosa origin.

There is no movement in this piece, the focus is on the instruments and the gentle vocals that accompany the music.

The second song is a praise song sung by a man to his woman, who has a dark complexion. All the instruments are used in this piece. There was no movement in this piece apart from a rhythmic stamp from all the performers along the edge of the stage. No performers entered the middle section of the stage to dance.

The third song is a young boys initiation song. There is no dancing in this piece.

### **Intersections: Swiss/Africa**

In *Intersections: Swiss/Africa* there were 9 performers in total, four AmaXhosa women, 1 Xhosa male and 4 Swiss males. All the performers entered from the back of the auditorium, (I use auditorium for lack of a better word as the Beethoven Room is a performance room and does not technically have an auditorium as such), the performers entered from behind all of the seated audience members and down the centre of the aisle towards the stage where they went to their seats, but did not sit down. The AmaXhosa women immediately started dancing in front of their chairs, facing the audience, everyone on stage was

clapping for the dancing women. The Swiss musicians seated themselves with their instruments and the Xhosa man made sure all the AmaXhosa instruments were in the right position. Once the dancing had stopped the Xhosa man made a comment in IsiXhosa that was replied to, in IsiXhosa, by someone in the audience. The Xhosa man was seated stage left while the women were stage right, the Swiss men were in the centre towards the back of the stage. The performers were arranged in a semi-circular fashion. So already the space orientation was shifted and the Xhosa man was placed on the left hand side of the stage, while the women were on the right. The hierarchy of the space then placed the women in a dominant position, however that was stage left and only applies to the performers, so from the audience's perspective the Xhosa man was seated on the right and the women on the left.

The show opened with the AmaXhosa women playing a traditional AmaXhosa instrument, the *uhadi*. This allows the first bit of attention to be placed on the AmaXhosa musical tradition before the collaboration begins. When the women danced they faced each other, moved in a circle or danced in a profile position more often than they faced the audience. The opening dialogue of instruments is between the *uhadi* and the cello.

The space can be inverted in two ways then so that either the man is on the right hand side or not. According to the differentiation of space in a Xhosa hut the spatial orientation of the space is delineated from the back of the hut, the *entla*, looking outwards. If we apply this reading to the proscenium arch stage then the upstage area, the area farthest from the audience would be equivalent to the *entla* in a hut. The audience is then situated in the doorway section of the hut and stage left becomes the *ikholo* and stage right is the *ekunene*. Thus stage right closest to the apron of the stage is the highest ranked area of the proscenium arch stage. Centre stage would be associated with the hearth in the hut and thus a very symbolic and important area of the stage. Therefore the Xhosa male in *Intersections: Swiss/Africa* had placed himself on the lowest ranked side of the stage from the performers perspective. But since this is a visual show the audience viewed him as being on their right hand side, ergo the visual impact is more important than the actual practice of the gendered seating as the greatest impact was meant to be made on the audience. When the women danced they moved themselves towards the centre of the stage and symbolically towards the hearth.

### **The Studio - Vumelani Let Us Dance Together**

*Vumelani Let Us Dance Together* had four dance groups performing in it. There was a soccer theme for the entire performance, as a celebration of the forthcoming 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup. There was an all-female performing group, consisting of mature women; a young, unisex, gumboot dancing, pantsula, neo-traditional dancing group; the AmaPhiko dance group which consists of unisex,

primary school AmaXhosa dancers and a young neo-traditional unisex dance group.

The show was opened by having all the performers on stage being given directions by the 'director' of the show. Then a single woman is left and she narrates something in IsiXhosa. An all-female, mature dancing group enters stage left and performs a series of neo-traditional AmaXhosa dances. They sang and orated throughout their dances. When their dances had concluded they seated themselves on a bench at the back of the stage and watched the next performing group.

The AmaPhiko dancers entered the stage and performed an AmaXhosa inspired contemporary dance. They sang and spoke throughout their dances. When they had finished everyone exited the stage.

Three gumboot dancers then entered and performed gumboot dancing. Gumboot dancing is a South African dance form and not specifically an AmaXhosa traditional form. In total there were six performers in this group and their dances were competitive and energetic.

The AmaPhiko group replaced the gumboot dancers with a tin can percussion contemporary dance. The dancers sang throughout the dance.

A young neo-traditional dance group then entered the stage, five girls and three boys. The boys had sticks and this could possibly have been reminiscent of the *umtshotsho woogasa* (*umtshotsho* of the young boys), however both boys and girls danced.

The AmaPhiko dancers then performed a contemporary dance to modern music that had no African tones or rhythyms. The gumboot dancing group followed them with a pantsula, fast paced foot work, style dance with soccer balls. These two daces formed part of the finale as each group then joined the stage and interacted with the soccer balls. The finale was with everyone on stage singing and dancing to the modern music with the soccer balls. The final dance was the pantsula style dancers doing an energetic fast paced dance with the soccer balls.

