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“Refiguring the Archive”: Theatre makers and their use of Instagram as an experiential archive.

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Plagiarism Declaration

I, Keamogetswe Leburu, hereby declare that this research report is my own original work except for where explicitly indicated otherwise. This research report has been thoroughly referenced in accordance with the required referencing conventions. I understand that the University of the Witwatersrand may take disciplinary action should there be any indication of plagiarism. (Protocol Number: ANTH2024/04/02)

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Date: 2025/03/30

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Abstract

Conventional conceptualisations of the archive have been characterised by their entanglement with power and status which has resulted in an inherent exclusivity. Thus, the action of refiguring this selective repository requires a process of challenging barriers of access and the inclusion of histories and experiences of those who were otherwise excluded from the archive. This research explores how social media platforms, specifically Instagram are used to refigure conventions conceptualisations of archives. This research specifically focuses on how theatre makers in Johannesburg are actively creating and contributing to Peterson's (2002) concept of an experiential archive. Interviews with eight theatre practitioners were conducted between July 2024 and September 2024 to gain insights to their usage of Instagram and to understand the process involved in the preservation of the work. This research found that both theatre makers and audiences are crucial to the development of the experiential archive. Further, the processes involved during rehearsal allow for high engagement with the experiential archive. By sharing these proceedings through Instagram, audiences, and other theatre makers are allowed access to this knowledge. This research also explores the politics surrounding social media use, uncovering that the utilisation of Instagram does not ensure an impartial archive, however, theatre makers value its activeness in providing a means to reach wider audiences and funding opportunities.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Project overview

My research has emanated from my long-standing curiosity of how social media platforms could have an impact on the archive and archiving practices. This intrigue led to an interest of the politics inherent in the creation of an archive and consequently how repositories could be refigured. To further explore these interests, this research uncovers how an experiential archive is created and contributed to, in order to answer the question how do theatre makers in Johannesburg refigure conventional conceptions of archives through their use of Instagram? This research is intended to be a contribution to the broader project of the refiguration of the archive.

Living within this digital age, social media has become a prevalent aspect of everyday life. One such prominent media platform has been Instagram, a social media photography application that has garnered 7.3 million users in South Africa[1], making it the third most used social network after Facebook and YouTube[2]. Since its launch in October 2010 the application has undergone numerous changes and updates including the introduction of repository features such as story highlights and the archive function that allows users to hide posts from being viewed on their profile grids without deleting them[3]. By uploading images, written pieces and videos, users are able to create a space to share their interests and experiences with their followers and more publicly if they have public accounts. The shared content can be easily searched for and found therefore suggesting that there is a creation, preservation and sharing of knowledge within the application. With the rapid proliferation of images and content within the platform, I became interested in how the inclusion of archiving functions could impact the concept of the archive.

Derrida (1995, 9) states that the word 'archive' proceeds from the Greek term 'arkhe' which pertains to a place where things had commenced and where there was an authority that

[1]Statista. "South Africa: Number of Instagram Users 2024." Accessed January 20, 2025. https://www.statista.com/statistics/1029289/instagram-users-south-africa/.

[2] Statista. "Biggest Social Media Platforms by Users 2024." Accessed December 10, 2024. https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/.

[3] Sequin, Molly. 2017. "Everything You Need to Know about Using Instagram's Archive Feature." Mashable. September 3, 2017. https://mashable.com/article/how-to-use-instagram-archive.

commanded. The concept of the archive is further derived from the Greek 'aekheion' which refers to a house or physical address. It was within this place that official documents were stored and watched over by magistrates called the archons, who were also at liberty to interpret the filed material as law (Derrida 1995, 10). This organising and interpretation of these accounts encapsulate what Derrida (1995, 10) refers to as the archontic principle, as the documents were gathered and organised into a system that allowed for them to be identified and classified. This also ensured that the documents were not separated or located in an inaccessible place. The vast collections of documents were not only used for local governance but were also crucial in the developing and perpetuating sovereignty in colonised states.

Mbembe (2002) further characterises the archive as being founded upon status and power due to its entanglement with buildings and documents. Stored documents are given legitimacy when they are organised and kept within these physical buildings. By being deemed as legitimate, these records are made to be absolute truths and facts (Hamilton et al. 2002, 9). This suggests that the granting of 'officialdom' to specific documents results in the inevitable 'unarchivable' value given to documents that are not chosen for storage in these physical buildings. These archived documents are stripped of anything that could make them secular to obtain a status of secrecy (Mbembe 2002, 20). This limits the accessibility to these documents which means that they are not as easily available to the public even though they are kept in what are considered as public institutions. Ultimately, these repositories and their contents operated as part of tools used to rule and regulate societies (Featherstone 2006, 591).

Thus, it is evident that the process of archiving documents is grounded upon a process of judgement that determines which fragments are worthy and which are not, which get stored, and which align with the priorities of the dominant authority. However, the status of the archive, wholly determined by the materiality of being stored in physical buildings which are public institutions, and the complex process involved in its storage, is imaginary. This is not to say that this status has not had very real implications. The archive presents itself as carrying complete histories and events rather than fragments of history (Mbembe 2002, 21). These fragments are composed together to create the illusion of a complete story which results in neglecting to tell the stories that lie on the other side of power. This conventional archive falsely portrays itself as being objective however, it cannot be separated from the subjectivities of the dominant authority or the state (Mbembe 2002, 23). The state has a paradoxical relationship with archive as it requires the archive to establish and maintain itself, but the archive itself is a

threat. The selection process of the archive thus becomes greatly important as the state would officialise documents that are conducive to its priorities and further deny and destroy opposing fragments of history.

South Africa's divided and racialised history is reflected in the state of the archives (Peterson 2002, 29). This is due to the fact that the public South African archives have been monolingual which meant that they predominantly encompass the experiences and knowledge of the apartheid government (Peterson 2002, 31). Access to the archive was limited to marginalised people which resulted in a denial of important fragments of South African history that would be important contributions to the story composed by the archives. However, these fragments of knowledge are important as they provide insight of how the present and future are shaped by the past. They also help in understanding how personal and social identities have been shaped and continue to be shaped. Thus, it is important to consider how these otherwise ignored knowledges can be included. It is important to consider that the archive is dynamic and is constantly experiencing change (Hamilton et al 2002, 7). In understanding how archives have historically been constituted, I became interested of the larger discourse surrounding the politics of archiving and further how the possible ways in which the archive could be refigured. While the archive is dynamic and prone to constant change, refiguring the archive requires a thorough grasp of the dominant knowledges that have been prominent within them, the consequent barriers of access as well as looking into how these can be mitigated.

Peterson (2002, 31) suggests that a way to reconfigure the archive, is to extend the contents of what it can encompass to include cultural, sport and religious material. Such material can provide valuable knowledge about certain points in time and the events that occurred. However, because much of this information has been stored away in regular people's "suitcases and plastic bags under beds, in wardrobes and in ceilings", Peterson (2002, 31) calls for it to be brought to the public. The acknowledgement and display of such material all contributes to his concept of the 'experiential archive'. The contents of this experiential archive are not just contained in documents and records that are monolingual, but also exist within sport moments, songs, dances, religious songs, theatre etc. Peterson's (2002) particular interest in the theatre and how it's materials can be important contributions to the experiential archive have further guided my research interests towards the theatre to investigate the practical ways this is archived. This research is also founded upon the practices of Johannesburg based theatre practitioners and acknowledges the works of long-standing and established theatre makers such

as Warona Seane, Ntsieng Mokgoro, Omphile Molusi, Hlengiwe Lushaba Madlala, Monageng Motshabi, Masello Motana and Gha-makhulu Diniso. However, this research largely draws upon the theatrical and archival experiences of newer practitioners such as Lebohang Tswelapele, Bonani Ngamlane, Thembi Mathebula.

Methods

To uncover how theatre makers in Johannesburg refigure the archive, this research required an undertaking of various research methodologies namely participant observation, semi-structured interviews and social media ethnography. This section details my use of these ethnographic tools and the ethical considerations to ensure the safety and integrity of the participants and myself as a researcher.

Participant Observation and interviews

My research was centred on processes and practices of people who are involved in the making of theatre productions which included theatre makers, actresses, communication directors and drama workshop runners based in Johannesburg. Thus, I felt that it would be most useful to use participant observation which refers to the method of engaging with and studying participants' actions to understand how the participants make theatre (Iacono et al. 2009, 39). The specific sites for participant observation were dependant on the location of the participants. Participant observation is valuable as it allows for insight into more information that maybe was not shared during the interview (Murchison 2010, 87). This had led me to a methodist church in Melville, a studio rehearsal space in Braamfontein and an incubator for the arts. In these spaces was where I had become aware of just how the rehearsal process was a crucial part in creating and sharing knowledge stored within the scripts, bodies, past experiences and trained skills. Rather than just observing, I too became part of the rehearsals by joining in on warm up exercises and assisting when required in filming, audio-recording and staging. Within these sites I became part of the production team which resulted in acquiring deeper insight of the work that is done in the theatre. Participation observation being a crucial part of ethnography requires that I as a researcher become involved in the activities within the sites to better understand the different dynamics and complexities in action (Murchison 2010, 85). Through this, I was able to understand that within theatre productions, cast members take on more than the characters that they play on stage, but they also perform the roles of

photographer, videographer, social media manager, costume maker and stage manager. In using this approach to interact with the participants, it became apparent that the undertaking of multiple roles was a result of limited budgets and funding which prevented them from outsourcing these skills.

Through the months of June to September 2024, I had scheduled multiple semi-structured interviews with the participants to engage with them individually. Initially, I had intended on conducting in-person interviews according to a fixed interview schedule that I had created. However, I quickly learnt that the schedules of the participants did not neatly fit within the dates that I had hoped for. While they were eager for us to have conversations, as theatre makers their schedules are filled as they are busy with preparations for their upcoming productions or travelling. My initial interview schedule thus had to become flexible enough and align with their calendars. The interviews occurred while the participants were either in transit, on breaks during rehearsals or had found free times. Thus, much of the interviews were conducted through phone calls as this was the easiest way to have conversations in the pockets of time that the participants were available. I used a separate phone to record the conversations and had created a folder on this phone to keep them in one place. The interviews varied in length, spanning from thirty minutes to one hour. Due to the quantity, duration and amount of detail present in the interviews, the audio-recording assisted in allowing these responses to be easily accessible at any stage within the research period. These recordings were transcribed and coded for analysis. Audio-recordings are valuable as they also ensure that there is no valuable information that is lost during the interview as the participants' responses will be recorded verbatim (Weller 2014, 351). Audio-recordings were only used at the permission of the participants, which they had consented to prior to the interview. The participants were also at any point allowed to request that the audio-recordings be stopped should they have felt that they are uncomfortable.

For this research I had chosen to use semi structured interviews as they allowed for open-ended questions which provided rich answers that were valuable for later analysis (Weller 2014, 353). They created the space for a conversation where I as the researcher could probe on certain responses to acquire more information (Murchison 2010, 102). Due to the conversation-like nature of semi-structured interviews, the questions and content of the interview, while still aligned to the research, differed according to the flow of conversation with each participant, thus making detailed comparisons difficult to achieve (Weller 353, 2014). However, the basis

of the questions was grounded in trying to uncover how theatre makers understand their use of social media and the reasons behind why they upload their work on these platforms. The questions were also aimed at understanding whether archiving and preserving their work is important and how and whether social media provides them the access to do so.

Social media observation

Postill & Pink (2012, 125) state that there are two prominent methods used in establishing social media as valid sites of research namely large data set analysis and social network analysis. These means on their own are most effective for providing statistical data that can be used as foregrounding for ethnographic research. However, when they coupled with traditional ethnographical practices such as participant observation and interviews, they can provide insights into why, how and when participants use social media. This was taken into consideration for this research as I depended not only on the data that I had collected from the social media pages of the participants but also used responses from the interviews to validate what was observed. With permission, I was granted access to the Instagram page of *Hanging Pieces of Flesh,* which was informative to which features of the applications were used, these included feed posts, stories, highlights reels and live broadcasts. Through participant observation, I was able to observe how these features were used in real time and the interviews gave insights to why these tools were frequently considered.

Ethical Considerations

I have been in constant engagement with ethical considerations to ensure that I uphold the dignity, safety and comfort of the participants as well as myself. To do so, I made certain that there was full transparency with the participants about the research methods that were used. In maintaining that transparency, I ensured that I had the consent of the participants before utilising any of the research methods. I constantly emphasised with the participants that they were at any point allowed to state their discomfort and refusal to participate in the research. Before any interviews, observation and use of social media data the participants were issued with participant information sheets that detailed what the research is about and what their participation entailed. They were issued with consent forms in which they indicated their participation and permission for my chosen research methods that were used.

The participants were theatre makers in Johannesburg that are known thus it would be difficult to guarantee full anonymity during the data collection process and in the resulting reports.

Some of the participants were interviewed in public places and were thus easily identifiable. In the resulting reports it was difficult to not include their names or for the information provided to not make them easily recognisable thus it was important they were aware and consented before the research begun. The participants were at liberty to request that specific information not to be shared at any point during the research process. The participants were also able ask that certain data from their social media pages to not be used should they have experienced discomfort.

Chapter Outline

The remainder of this thesis will consist of four chapters, three of which are ethnographic chapters integrated with analysis and theory. The last chapter will be a concluding chapter. Chapter 2 explores how engagement with the experiential archive occurs mostly during the rehearsal process. This chapter will open with context that depicts the shifts in the conceptualisation of the archive and how this has led to the coining of the experiential archive. The chapter will also include analysis of ethnographic accounts of a table reading and rehearsals of a play. The analysis will show this engagement occurs and will convey how the continuous documentation process suggests that there is valuable knowledge created and shared that is worth capturing.

In the third chapter, I explore how the theatre's dependence on theatre makers and the presence of patrons is impacted by various factors that result in its limited access. In doing so, the chapter will illustrate the various attempts that have been made to mitigate these barriers by government, national theatre and theatre makers. Finally, it will detail how the use of Instagram has contributed to alleviating these restrictions thus ensuring that the theatre's experiential archive is crucial to the theatre's existence and how these measures taken by theatre makers through recording and uploading their processes on Instagram, acts as a means to providing access to that important repository.

The fourth chapter will explore how the experiential archive is a living and dynamic archive and continuously works to secure the future of the theatre and performing arts industry. Insights from participants will be used to illustrate how this dynamic archive works as marketing, through Instagram, to garner funding for productions as well as to reach wider audiences. Lastly, the chapter will delve into the politics of using Instagram as a repository for the

experiential archive and how its inherent subjectivities could pose a threat to the experiential archive.

Chapter 2: Rehearsals for Posterity

To reimagine the archive and create an experiential archive, there needs to be an understanding of how conventional archives have been conceptualised through history. By comprehending these notions of the archive, their entanglement with power, status and exclusion becomes more evident. These aspects have been at the forefront of creating the archive's inaccessibility which resulted in the barring of important knowledge and historical material. This chapter explores the understanding of traditional archives and how these have impacted archiving practices in South African theatre. Moreover, this chapter will explore how the experiential archive is brought forward during rehearsals and how theatre maker's use of Instagram ensures that this knowledge is preserved and shared, therefore refiguring conventional conceptions of the archive.

The archive and theatre in history

Conventional conceptions of the archive and its relationship with power have long been theorised in scholarship. Scholars such as Foucault (1969) have conceptualised the archive as a system in which documents and records are transformed into historical knowledge. Rather than just encompassing collections of material fragments of history from particular periods of time, the archive also consists of a selective process and a set of relations that grant documents officialdom. Therefore, the archive is not a physical place but rather a set of conditions that grant officialdom to chosen documents. By use of deductive reasoning, these fragments of history can be used to create historical knowledge of a specific period. The archive thus becomes the law of what can be said and what cannot be said. While this conceptualisation of the archive provides possible conditions for an archive, it is rigid and limits the archive to only these conditions.

Derrida (1995), contrasts Foucault's (1969) archive by conceptualising it as having an entanglement with power due to the physical space that it is in. Both conceptualisations state that the archive undertakes a process of selection to determine which documents are preserved, however Derrida's (1995) archive is more fluid and is susceptible to change depending on the state of its particular context. It takes the ever-changing nature of technology into consideration, acknowledging that its advancements can alter access to the archive and the

specific power that informs its selective nature. Therefore, the act of archiving is a dynamic process and not a static preservation of the past. Derrida (1995) interrogates the subjectivity involved in the creation of the archive which has shaped dominant representations of history and has excluded knowledge that did not align with those ruling narratives. This interrogation, however, does not propose solutions to how this entanglement that the archive has with power can be mediated but rather acts as a reflection. Understanding how the archive had been conceptualised provides insights which inform how the archive can be refigured.

By drawing on both Foucault (1969) and Derrida (1995), African scholars such as Mbembe (2002), have been able to theorise about the state of the archive within an African context. Similar to Foucault (1969), Mbembe (2002, 19) argues that much of the archive's status and power is founded upon the entanglement that documents have with being kept in a physical building. He compares the structure to a sepulchre that is filled with isles and columns in which fragments of history are buried (Mbembe 2002, 22). The burial involves a set of rituals that are performed continuously. These practices encompass the retrieving of a document which is then put through a system of codification and classification. This allows for the document's storage within other selected texts that have been organised according to themes, chronology or geography (Mbembe 2002, 19). When this occurs, the once secular document is placed under secrecy, making it inaccessible. It is the performance of this ritual that grants selected documents with officialdom. Although the contents of the archive cannot be expected to be a complete depository of a society's history, these fragments are put together in attempt to convey a coherent history (Mbembe 2002, 21). The pieces of history that are montaged together allow for the archive to give off the illusion of totality. Considering that the documents are no longer owned by their authors and belong to the state, and the state strives to cultivate an archive that supports its objectives, records are chosen in alignment with the state and its priorities. Therefore, not all documents are archivable. The relationship between the archive and the state is important as the state cannot exist without its archive. However, this entanglement becomes complex as the existence of the archive can be considered as a threat to the state (Mbembe 2002. 23).

South Africa's racialised and divided history, suggests that the archive has historically worked at the benefit of the apartheid government, thus the montage of fragments conveyed a story that erased the experiences of marginalised people. Using Foucault's (1969) argument, Hamilton et al. (2002) have also argued that the archives are founded upon a judgement that determines

what is included and excluded which is configured to a specific authority in power. The authors further state that the archive is constantly in a state of flux, meaning that it is subject to many changes. This is evident with the many technological advancements that have altered how an archive is created, used and preserved (Hamilton et al. 2002, 7). The authors are therefore concerned with acknowledging and challenging the exclusionary nature of the archive as a means to refigure the archive's entanglement with power. Similar to Peterson (2002), this would first require an interrogation of matters of access through an inquiry of how power underpins the judgement of the archive. This would also involve looking towards other forms of histories to archive such as the knowledge stored in neglected literature, art and dance (Hamilton 2002, 10).

Peterson (2002), states that due to South Africa's racialised and divided past, the process involved in refiguring of the archive is complex and would require multiple disciplines. To challenge a monolingual archive that had been long ruled by colonial and apartheid authorities which determined that Africans did not have a history and local legacies that were worth preserving, requires the uplifting of those same neglected knowledge systems. The monolingualism of the archives not only meant that English and Afrikaans were determined as archival languages, but it also meant that the histories and discourses of the white voices who held governance and privilege were prioritised (Peterson 2002, 32). Thus, Peterson (2002) argues that it is important to interrogate matters of access to the archive. Barriers to the archives present themselves geographically as the archive would be situated where not many are able to reach. They also materialise through low literacy rates as the archive's monolingualism can result in non-Afrikaans and non-English speakers not being able to read the material preserved (Peterson 2002, 32). By looking further than documents and records that had been stored for the priorities of the state, the archive should consider other spheres of knowledge such as culture, religion, and sports (Peterson 2002, 31). Due to their exclusion, much of these pieces of history have been preserved in the possession of ordinary people. These fragments have been preserved in people's "stubborn memories" as well as in their personal storage spaces such as wardrobes, under beds and in bags (Peterson 2002, 31). However, Peterson (2002) calls for these aspects of cultural, sport and religious history to be brought out into the public. Much of the 'un-officialised' material has been excluded from the archive on the basis that it can be found everywhere, however its denial has resulted in its erasure meaning that it is found nowhere (Peterson 2002, 32). Bringing these fragments of history forward contributes to the creation of an experiential archive.

In understanding how theatre can be part of the experiential archive, Peterson (2002) states that while there have been many plays by black playwrights such as Gibson Kente and Dukuza ka Macu, who have had a significant impact on theatre, their work is continuously disregarded or difficult to retrieve (Peterson 2002, 32). Gilbert (2007, 421) states that during apartheid, artforms such as poetry, music, dance and theatre were important in raising awareness and garnering support for the end of the regime. Different movements and political parties utilised the arts to convey their causes and ideals to wider audiences. For example, during the 1970s, The African National Congress organised international showings of *Mayibuye*, and *Amandla* cultural ensembles as a way to bring attention to the oppression experienced by black people under apartheid while also sharing the political party's values (Gilbert 2007, 424). The *Mayibuye Cultural Ensemble*, a grouping that was based in London, that showed almost 200 performances across Europe between the years of 1975 and 1980, consisted of poem recitals, the performances of political songs and dramatised conversations about the different aspects of the apartheid government (Gilbert 2007, 424). The *Amandla Cultural Ensemble,* consisting of dramatic segments and musical compositions, ran from 1978 to 1990 and showed in numerous countries across Africa (Gilbert 2007, 434). These projects coincided with the advent of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) which had greatly impacted how black theatre was created. Emerging in the late 1960s and gaining prominence in the 1970s, the movement called for the self-determination of black people and our liberation from white homogeny (Olga 2008, 39). Workshop theatre groups such as the Theatre Council of Natal (TECON), Peoples' Experimental Theatre (PET) and Music, Drama, Arts and Literature Institute (MDALI) aligned themselves with the BCM (Olga 2008, 40). These groups ensured that their plays depicted themes of black liberation through self-reliance and respect by organising and using our own resources and strategy (Olga 2008, 40). These workshop groups were however banned in 1977 simultaneously with the BCM. The productions that emanated from these movements, while significant in the struggle against Apartheid, had not been documented. The lack of preservation can be attributed to the banning of black theatrical works and the censorship that particularly targeted theatres in townships (Steadman 1985, 26). These plays reflect the harsh realities of oppression, discrimination and violence that occurred under the apartheid regime and were consequently disallowed. Productions in theatres such as the Market theatre also depicted these themes within their shows but were not put under the same level of censorship (Steadman 1985, 26). Keuris & Kruger (2013, 19) state that there is significantly easier access to an extensive archive of the works of American and English theatre makers and a select few

South African theatre makers such as Athol Fugard and Barney Simon. However, this is not the case for majority of the plays and productions that have existed. Without documentation and preservation of these productions, a gap in literary history is created thus making it difficult for students, researchers and patrons to retrieve valuable information about the plays (Keuris & Kruger 2013, 20). These items would be important in understanding how South African theatre's past has informed its current aesthetics, traditions, and themes (Peterson 2002, 32). However, because they have not been preserved, they are seen as not existing. Therefore, it would be important that these aspects be brought forward.

Being ephemeral in nature, theatre is often misunderstood as being too difficult to preserve as much of its essence exists within the present moment of the performance (Keuris & Kruger 2013, 20). Thus, archiving theatre is not a priority to both the practitioners and audience as they are enamoured within the moment of a performance rather than being focused on being able to look back on the process and output. However, documentation has been important to scholars, journalists and theatre educators. Referring to theatrical moments only through memory results in the risk of inaccuracy and being subject to reinterpretations that take away from the original intention of the play. Thus, the recording of these events ensures that the integrity of the moment is preserved as much as possible. The documentation process can then be considered as the final course of action when making theatre (Keuris & Kruger 2013, 22). This documentation does not only consider the written scripts or pragmatic information such as dates and show time but extends to material such as hairstyling, costuming and staging. These details give insights to the greater socio-economic and political contexts in which the plays exist making them valuable to creating and understanding a national identity (Kreuris & Kruger 2013, 23). Therefore, keeping an archive of theatre is significant for the preservation of important societal events. Although, South Africa has had a long history with theatre that can be traced back to performances of oral stories and traditional dances, not many of these practices were not recorded in writing. This unfortunately resulted in the prioritised documentation of white theatre and the neglect of important developments and events of black theatre (Hauptfleisch 2011, 171). The histories about theatre houses were mostly provided by private theatres such as the Market and Baxter theatres. These would be achieved through the personal and nostalgic interest of the theatre makers who would write about their experiences at these theatres. Information about the public theatres were not as extensive until the formation repertory organisations such as the National Theatre Organisation (NTO). These organisations employed systems and staff that would facilitate the process of archiving. It was in 1971 where

formal archiving was undertaken with the establishment of the National Documentation Centre for the Performing Arts that was founded by P.J. Nienaber and P.P.B. Breytenbach. Prior to this, much of theatre knowledge was kept by the theatre practitioners, making these fragments susceptible to damage and inaccessibility. The centre, which grew to be known as the South African Theatre Research and later moved to the Human Sciences Research Council, became the repository of important theatrical material such as scripts, correspondences, designs, and photographs for the next 18 years. Many other repositories were developed such as the National Afrikaans Literary Museum, National English Literary Museum and the National Drama Library which still operate and provide information in the present day (Keuris & Kruger 2013, 23). With the advancements of documenting theatrical events, came with the establishment of many centres between which the archived material would be moved with the justification that they would become more accessible. However, these movements were controversial as they were not proven to not be as available to the public. With the advent of socio-political and economic changes, the various centres were susceptible to redundancy as many of their collections were not updated and continued to reflect the priorities and values of the Apartheid state. Further, with the high volume of material, the databases used were not equipped enough to keep up with constant technological changes and requirements. Much of the content stored within these archives thus were moved to the National Archives. However, due to restructuring, much of the staff hired to manage these repositories were retrenched. The National Archives were thus too understaffed to undertake sufficient upkeep and updating. This has resulted in declining conditions and neglect of the material, making them too fragile or too damaged for easy access to the public. As forementioned, the archive is in a constant state of flux, acclimating or succumbing to the changes it is subjected to. Thus, the archives are extremely susceptible to damage especially when stored within physical buildings. This was evident with the wildfire that destroyed the J.W. Jagger Library at the University of Cape Town in 2021. The building was a repository of significant collections of historic material that was essential in shaping African Studies and the fire resulted in the destruction of those important fragments of history (Jethro & Karina 2024, 2).

Therefore, the decline of conditions and neglect within these National Archives could result in irreparable damage to important theatrical material from the past. Other repositories, such as the National Drama Library and LitNet have made attempts to broaden the scope of theatrical heritage and history that is preserved however they are not yet comprehensive as they are not organised and have not yet been translated into South Africa's official languages (Keuris &

Kruger 2013, 26). However, theatre has also been greatly helped by arts festivals, namely the National Arts Festival, the Klein Karoo Nasionale Kumstefess, and Aardklop, as they have collected material such as posters, newspaper articles and programmes as evidence of performances (Keuris & Kruger 2013, 27). Theatres such as The Baxter Theatre, have established their own archives that has record of every production that has been shown there (Keuris & Kruger 2013, 27). To understand how theatres create and organise their own repositories, I had asked Aroma Lebooa about her observations as a business administrator at the Windybrow theatre and company manager at the Kwasha Theatre in Johannesburg, to which she responded with:

> One thing I've realized is that this is something that the theatre started doing so long ago. They are making sure that they have photographs and that they have also archived press releases with their photographs because now there's a restaurant that they renovated today and they've put up all of these images and I remember I was looking through all of them on the walls and I was like wow these are pictures from like 1990s and it's a black and white picture and there's a description underneath it. So, I think that they've been very intentional about it. Funny enough, one of our business sectors, called the Market Photo Workshop, which I think that the Market Theatre teams are collaborating with to ensure that there's something with that archiving process. The Market Photo Workshop also has a storeroom where they just have a bunch of pictures and paintings, and artwork stored there you know. So, I guess it's also just about being intentional with archiving this stuff. I'm also trying to get into a thing with the productions we do, to make sure that we print out the posts because sure we'll have it online but we need to start printing them out share them and keep them here so even in however many years we'll come to Windybrow and you'll see all those productions from 10 years ago and it was great. So, I think it's about being intentional because yes, we're in this digital age and we can make use of that, but I think we can also stick to a whole taking a photo and you know just keeping that photo safe and secure.

Lebooa's perceptions of these archiving practices and experiences within these theatres suggest that these institutions value the preservation of their work and strive towards creating extensive collections of this material by documenting through various means. Lebooa's understanding of the theatre's efforts to display these collections within the premises implies that the theatres are also interested in making them more accessible to the public. However, the theatres do limit

what is shown to the public as much of their archive remains private. Archiving within theatre buildings however does not extend itself to independent practitioners. There has been a rise in platforms offering support to theatre practitioners to archive their work, however many of them have opted to archive their work themselves and create personal repositories. I had asked theatre maker Jefferson "J-Bobs" Tshabalala about the archiving processes undertaken at his productions to which he responded:

> Well, we archive either process either through writing or through podcasts through documenting processes and also through video. We archive rehearsals, we archive drafts of scripts. We archive the actual performances that we can always go back to it and see what needs tweaking or working… We have a digital repository that we share among several collaborators, and we also have a cloud and then we have physical drives where the work is.

Tshabalala's archival practices ensure that there his work is documented through different mediums to ensure longer preservation. However, the aspects are only accessible through a few means and with other cast members. This suggests that much of the archiving is not done for the public but for the means of the output. The theatre is characterised by a rehearsal process, making it an important part that is worthy of not only documentation but also of being shared. Tshabalala's emphasis on recording the rehearsal process is evidence that significant knowledge is exchanged and should also be shared to the public.

Rehearsals and the experiential archive

Rehearsals are an intrinsic part of producing theatrical performances and are a requirement in all theatrical work (Schechner 2003, 181). However, according to Batzofin & Muftić (2022, 227) there is not enough attention given to the process involved in the making of theatre and much of the focus is put towards the output which are the final performances. This suggests that significant knowledge is neglected because there is such valuable information shared within the rehearsals. Fundamentally, theatre is a space for the exchange and flow of ideas as well as for the transformation of ideas into words, songs and actions. This exercise mostly occurs within the rehearsal space as this is where the most collaboration and sharing would occur. Through this process theatrical works are constantly experiencing changes and shifts to adjust to the circumstance in which they will be performed. These adjustments can occur over

long periods of time when plays and scripts are adopted and revised through the visions of multiple directors.

This was evident in with the reimagining of *The Suit* (see Figure 1). I had been invited by Tshabalala to sit in on one of the production's first table readings. Originally written as a short story by Can Themba, the tale was first adapted for the stage by Mothobi Mutloatse and Barney Simon in 1994. *The Suit* is a story about a doting, newly wedded husband who unexpectedly uncovers the truth of his wife's infidelity. His wife's lover had left behind his suit after rushing to escape the husband's fury. The husband then uses the suit as a means to punish his wife. With this particular showing, a new script was being written based on the skeletons of the original story. The shifts and changes were done according to the visions of the new directors and playwrights who were also under the guidance of the older actor, Sello Maake Kancube who had been in the original showing.



Figure 1: Reissue of "The Suit" poster

Changes are also present within newer plays such as *Hanging Pieces of Flesh* (see Figure 2), an advocacy piece about the dangers of breast sweeping and genital mutilation written by Lebohang Tswelapele. Initially, the script was written and performed for a cast with seven members. The script had not undergone many changes when it was performed locally however, when it was invited to show at the Performance Studies International Conference in London, England, Tswelapele had to adapt the script to accommodate three actors due to financial constraints. Through these adjustments and shifts, it becomes evident that there is a tension that occurs between what the theatre maker initially intended to show and what ends up being performed (Schechner 2003, 181).

Early rehearsals are often disordered and incoherent due to the actors' need to try a variety of interpretations, script rewrites, and design changes. What helps to refine the disorganisation is the setting of a time frame in which the production must occur. Each rehearsal is then aimed at selecting the best interpretations and actions and making them as clear as possible so that they can be communicated and performed for an audience (Schechner 2003, 183). By the end of the rehearsal process, the actors and supporting members should have maximum clarity of their roles and cues. Thus, rehearsals are fundamental to the success of theatrical work.

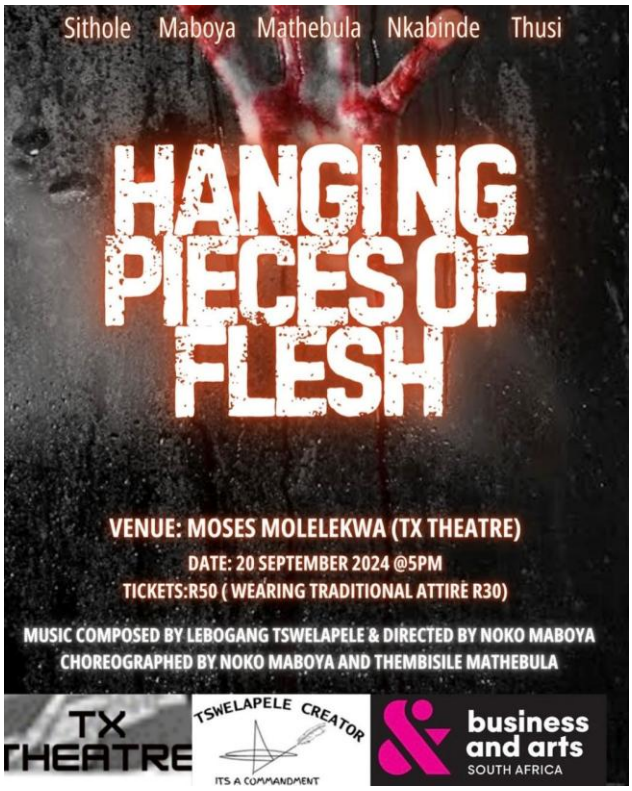


Figure 2: Poster of "Hanging Pieces of Flesh".

This exercise of repetition, clarification and action was evident during the preparation of *Hanging Pieces of Flesh.* The script had originally been written to stage with seven actors however due to funding constraints it had to be reimagined for three performers. The first rehearsal appeared disjointed as the cast was juggling between different stage positions and they were continuously making edits to the original script. Tswelapele, the writer and director of the play, was open to the suggestions that her eager cast members would make. One of the actresses, Mathebula, worked tirelessly to choreograph a dance piece that accompanied the monologue of a pivotal moment in the storyline. Using her contemporary dance training and following the pace in which her fellow castmate, Nkabinde performed the soliloquy, Mathebula was able to determine the tempo and movements required to effectively portray the emotions present in the speech. She tried different variations of a particular dance sequence with each run-through and was able to settle on a set choreography by the second day of rehearsals. Mathebula's dance composition was made possible through collaboration and by accessing the skills and knowledge within her body, thus contributing the experiential archive.

South African theatre making requires an environment where each member that is involved is considered as a "body of information" consisting of vast experiences, talents, learnt skills, point of views and memories which they bring to rehearsals (Batzofin & Muftić 2022, 229). Sharing and working through these various aspects can be considered as sifting through endless files of information. Tshabalala's invite to the table reading of *The Suit* illustrated how these bodies and files of information are brought to life. The table reading was held at the Melville Methodist Church. The quaint, church yard that sat on the corners of 4th street and 4th avenue consisted of two buildings namely a small church building and an adjacent hall. The session began early in the morning inside of the small hall with a warm-up session that consisted of various vocal, physical and facial exercises. These activities were structured to help with voice projection, loosening of muscle tension and embodiment (Senton et al. 2018, 132). With a cast of seven members, the four actors were responsible for leading the warm-up while the producer, writers and directors prepared the room at the back of the hall for the practice. One of the exercises, the rainbow meditation, consisted of a visualisation of the colours of the rainbows and associate them with specific emotions. This was followed with a Piccolomini vocal exercise aimed to improve pronunciation and concentration. These practices were important for unlocking the various skills required during the table reading for the actors to quickly adapt and embody their characters. This, I argue is a form of bodily knowledge that was shared amongst the cast (Underman 2022, 32).

After the warm-up session, the cast and I moved towards the room in which the play reading would be held. The room was narrow with a long table located in the middle. The room was lit by the sunlight that shone through the windows that sat on one of the walls. On the table were scripts and pens and a variety of snacks. I sat next to one of the actors who offered to share their script with me. Immediately the one of the directors, Mahlatsi Mokgonyana and the writer, Vus'umuzi Phakathi, informed the cast of the changes that had been implemented since their last session, while minor, this changed affected the narrator's monologue in the beginning of the play. Immediately as the cast began the run through, Peterson's (2002) notion of the experiential archive was brought to life. Firstly, I got to witness the various intricacies that go into creating a script as well as how characters are formed before they are staged. The actors were able to voice their opinions about what was written in the scripts but further than that they were able to provide historical accuracy of certain events and colloquialisms. This implied that there was not one authority that held power in the creative process. All parties were at liberty to contribute. With the original story itself being set in 1950s Sophia Town, it holds so much valuable information about the livelihoods of black people during apartheid, however with this re-imagining of the script, the actors provided further history which I saw as an archiving of past events. Furthermore, because, Kancube was part of the original 1994 stage adaptation, he was able to provide insights from the first showing even though in this production the story of *The Suit* was being conceived in a new way. This ensured that the essence of the original story and first adaptation was not completely lost in the present. Kancube's experiences of apartheid also allowed him to provide insights of some of the words written in the script. This informed how the actors portrayed the traits, emotions, and reactions of their characters. This was evident when one of the characters was detailing the numerous places he had visited in his travels as a musician.

One of these places was Pelindaba, a township in Hartebeespoort that remained in the development stages for a long period of time and eventually was abandoned[4]. Alex Sono, a younger actor who portrays the character, did not quite understand what sort of emotion was required in his delivery. However, Kancube was able to explain that Pelindaba was not an area one would want to go to so instead of simply listing the places he needed to put emphasis on the fact that he went there to give off the impression that his music has taken him to "the darkest

[4] "Preller-Rondawels, Pelindaba | South African History Online." n.d. Accessed March 23, 2025. https://www.sahistory.org.za/place/preller-rondawels-pelindaba.

corners of the earth". Kancube accessed this knowledge, not through records kept in physical buildings, rather he had retrieved it through memory and experiences (Gqola 2010). The script inspired the older actor to share this knowledge, therefore suggesting that it is an archive itself. Thus, the scripts themselves are archives. Bringing forward the scripts, empirical knowledge, theatrical skills and exercises suggest that rehearsals are where theatre makers engage with the experiential archive the most.

Table readings are usually the initial stage of rehearsals, making them the first place where the experiential archive is engaged. However, not much documentation occurs within this part but rather it begins with the actual enactments. Still keeping in mind that South African theatre is founded upon a specific form of theatre making, scripts, performers' own experiences and addressing social issues, the characters and storylines within the performance are a culmination of all these aspects which have undergone a process of transformation (Batzofin & Muftić 2022, 229). This was evident during the rehearsals of *Hanging Pieces of Flesh.* Written and directed by Tswelapele, the play was inspired by her upbringing in Makau in the Free State and her experiences as a student and theatre maker in Johannesburg. The play is centred around three women, whom of which are subject to genital mutilation due to cultural practices and societal expectations. The play also includes original songs that are sung in Sesotho that help to convey the difficult emotions and experiences that the characters face one of them being *Ba ntsosa phakela, ba nkgoga* (They wake me up early in the morning, they pull me). When I had asked Tswelapele about the significance of the song she said:

> It came from what I went through when I would get woken up in the morning for breast sweeping. Sometimes I would not want to participate in this because it hurts and mostly when they do this, they do it throughout the year. I would feel the pain the most in June because imagine lefeelo, a broom, against your breasts and they are hitting you so hard and you are cold just so that your breasts can go- can get smaller. So, the song is like me retelling like my experiences of waking up and engaging in the ritual.

Tswelapele was able to capture her experiences and transmute them into songs. This knowledge which otherwise is not commonly available has been brought out to the public in this way. During rehearsals, Tswelapele and her cast members, Nkabinde and Mathebula, would continuously practice singing the song to ensure that the emotions that arise, such as pain and coldness, are palpable through their voices, tone, and melody. By doing so, these difficult

feelings can be easily communicated to an audience. Traditional archives usually carry administrative documents that tend to neglect the real somatic experiences and feelings of the events recorded. Lepere (2021, 1) states that theatre creates a space in which black women can fully express, reflect upon and analyse their lives, struggles, joys and realities. The performance of songs is important in the creation of this space and knowledge and thus what Tswelapele achieves through composing these songs. This process encapsulates the action of transformation and occurs within the rehearsal space prior to performances. It is within this time wherein theatre makers document the creative flow and exchange of the forementioned aspects of theatre making.

Throughout the rehearsals, the cast ensured that there was a form of documentation that occurred at all times. The songs were captured on the cast members' phones through the voice memo applications. The warm-up sessions were livestreamed on the production's Instagram page and run-throughs were documented through video recordings. The cast required assistance with the video recordings of their run-throughs and had asked that I become their videographer. Batzofin & Muftić (2022, 231) had developed a methodology that would be helpful in objectively recording all that occurs within rehearsal spaces. While this technique was intended to improve the quality of theatrical research within practice spaces, this approach is useful in keeping me aware of my positionality as a researcher throughout the duration of their rehearsals. The methodology is made up of three steps namely consistency, presence and omission. Consistency refers to the capturer's awareness of their presence within the space and the consequent level of trust that the cast members have acquired for the documenter. By employing a high sense of self-awareness, the recorder allows for the cast to feel free in their decision making and idea exchange.

Furthermore, the cast and capturer are able to develop routines and familiarity that prevent distraction from the rehearsal. Upon arriving in the space, I worked towards garnering their trust and morale by warming up with them and having conversations with during their breaks. I was soon entrusted with the documentation of their run-throughs. This was rather significant as for much of the performance the characters were bare on the top half of their bodies. Immediately, I had to be aware of how my presence while capturing their performance would impact how comfortable they felt. It was required that I find the balance between engaging with the cast whilst not being too involved in their decision-making nor influence their actions. The final step is omission, this refers to the absolute absence of the documenter within the

recorded material. This means that neither the recorder's voice nor person can appear. As the videographer, I had to ensure that I remained still and quiet whilst recording to ensure that the best quality video was produced. The cast positioned me on the side of the four-cornered room to ensure that my movement was minimised and that I could capture the entirety of the space. The videos performed multiple functions for the production. They were used as reference to organise the staging and to make notes for any improvements and changes. More importantly, however, they provided content for the production's Instagram page. Nkabinde, who also tended to their social media accounts, used snippets of the videos to create reels that showed the progression of their rehearsals. Screenshots of the cast within the videos were then edited and uploaded to provide audience with information about the different characters as shown in Figures 3 to 5.

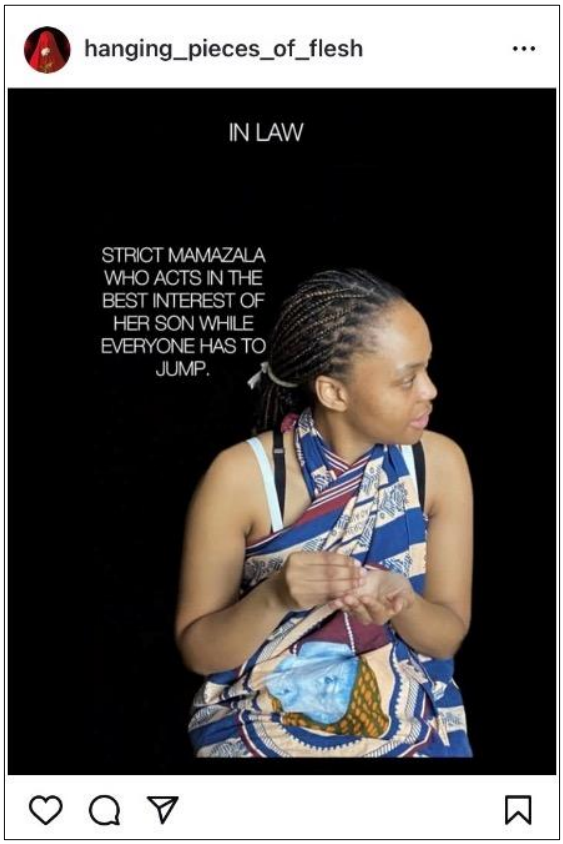


Figure 3: Screenshot of Nkabinde's character sketch as the in-law taken from Instagram

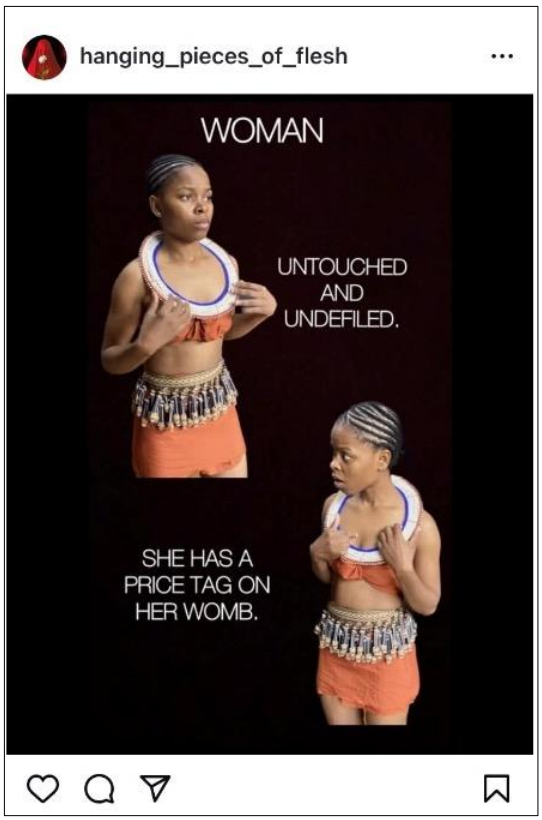


Figure 4: Screenshot of Mathebula's character sketch as Woman taken from Instagram

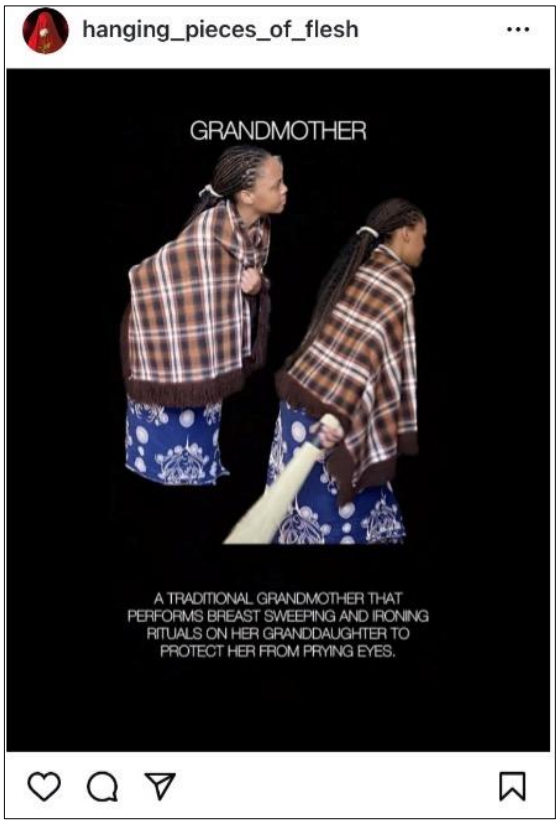


Figure 5: Screenshot of Nkabinde's character sketch as Grandmother taken from Instagram

The audio recordings of the songs were also used as background music for some of the videos that were uploaded. By documenting and keeping these moments, cast of *Hanging Pieces of Flesh* were actively building an archive of their work. For this reason, the archive becomes important not only for theatre makers but also for scholars, researchers and patrons. Theatre makers are thus also constantly involved in curation as it is them who gets to decide what, how and where material is recorded and stored. Instagram, therefore, acts as a repository for the different aspects of the experiential archive that come to life during the rehearsals and becomes a means for audiences to gain more access to this knowledge.

Conclusion

Conventional conceptions of the archive have long been entangled with power and exclusivity. This has manifested through its neglect of histories concerning marginalised people, its tendency to be monolingual and its inaccessibility. The exclusion of black theatre history was not passive as there was an active erasure through the enforcement of bans and censorship. Furthermore, the material within existing repositories faces the danger of inaccessibility due to inadequate adjustment to technological advancements and political changes. This has resulted in theatre houses preserving their own work. However, this has not addressed the challenges of accessibility. Peterson's (2002) notion of the experiential archive encourages that such knowledge be brought out into the public as that is how the traditional archive will truly be refigured. Through interaction with participants, it becomes evident that the experiential archive was engaged with more prominently during rehearsals and thus that is the knowledge that needs to be shared. Through capturing their process and uploading it onto their Instagram pages, theatre makers are refiguring conventional conceptions of the archive.

Chapter 3: Access to Admission

An important part of refiguring the archive is challenging the ways that access to its contents has been limited. While the preserved material is stored within what are considered as public institutions, there are restrictions to who can contribute to the archive and who can access what has been contributed. As forementioned in chapters one and two, the lack of upkeep has resulted in the deterioration of the records and documents kept within the archive, pushing them further into secrecy. Within theatre while there have been measures to archive theatrical events, there had been an intentional exclusion of the history of black theatre enforced through bans and censorship. The experiential archive, as mentioned encourages for this neglected material to be foregrounded. Furthermore, it calls for the expansion of the repository through the input of both theatre practitioners and audiences. However, this requires that theatre makers are able to produce and share works. It is also needed that there is constant interaction between audiences and the playwrights. Unfortunately, such collaboration is often met with challenges which makes it difficult to occur. It thus becomes of importance to find means to alleviate these challenges; one such way is through the use of Instagram.

This chapter intends to convey that the constant action taken by theatre practitioners and audiences to engage with the experiential archive created and found within the theatre is a means of refiguring the archive. Thus, this chapter will explore the various difficulties experienced by established and aspiring theatre makers in creating theatrical works which ultimately disrupts their ability to participate in the making of the experiential archive. This chapter also explores the various factors that have influenced the increasing decline in audience attendance and how institutions have attempted to reduce the effects of these aspects. Furthermore, this chapter critically analyse the effectiveness of Instagram in minimising these challenges and provision of access to the experiential archive.

The access of theatre makers

South Africa's history of slavery, colonialism and apartheid resulted in the establishment of theatres that were prominently reserved for white people which consequently limited black people's engagement and contribution to the theatre and its archive. (Meersman 2007, 292). For this reason, black theatre practitioners were left with minimal resources and had to function within the margins to produce significant works that were mostly centred around protest and consciousness such as the *Mayibuye Cultural Ensemble* and the works of theatre groups such

as TECON, PET and MDALI. Due to the harsh enforcement of censorship during the apartheid regime, many playwrights and artists were forced into exile or banned from performing. It was for this reason that black theatre makers during the 1970s created and participated in open theatre (Magogodi 2023,19). This form of theatre making takes inspiration from the principles of guerilla theatre which encourage the staging of performances within any public space and at any time (Magogodi 2023, 19). It also uses the aesthetics of ritual drama, which refer to plays that use mythology to reflect the events of reality. More importantly, open theatre challenged the need for theatre to be within the enclosed walls of theatre houses. Open theatre became a way for playwrights to show their work and express their ideals without requiring the funding of Performing Arts Councils that sought out to support white theatre practitioners whose plays were more aligned with the values of the state. This suggests that open theatre became means for black theatre practitioners to actively create and contribute their own experiential archive. By exhibiting their values, stories and experiences through these performances, knowledge that would not be included in the archive was shared with audiences.

The rise of democracy in the country, however, promised for a more inclusive and expansive approach to the arts, speech and expression (Meersman 2007, 293). The Bill of Rights entitles all people living in South Africa the right to freely express themselves which also encourages the freedom of artistic creativity. In doing so, the new government intended to acknowledge the significance of the arts not only in the struggle for end apartheid but also to society at large. In attempts to archive this, larger theatres such the State Theatre in central Pretoria and the Civic theatre, later named the Joburg Theatre Complex[5] in Braamfontein were promised to be more open to all people more particularly those who had been historically excluded. Considering that these buildings are state and municipal entities this seemed to be a promise of access to opportunities for all artists to apply for residencies and funding that enabled them to put on performances.

Furthermore, national policies were drawn up to support the growth of the arts. One such policy, The White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage, was established to enable accessibility for people of all languages and cultural groups to acquire skills, aids and systems that promote the practice and sharing of their art. This gave assurance that within all geographical areas in

[5] "Johannesburg Civic Theatre | South African History Online." n.d. Accessed March 27, 2025. https://sahistory.org.za/place/johannesburg-civic-theatre.

South Africa, all peoples would be granted the right to education and participation in the arts. Approved in 1996, the government had intended for this policy to signify an acknowledgment of the social and economic contributions of the arts (Venter 2016, 38). Unfortunately, the government's high regard remains within the development of policies rather as opposed to evoking real change. This was evident with the merging of the arts with sports under the same ministry[6]. Due to its failure to fulfil its objectives, this policy has since undergone multiple policy reviews in the years of 2006 and 2013 and 2015. The reviewing process in 2015 resulted in a revised White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage which was accepted in 2019 by Cabinet. (National Theatre and Dance Policy 2023, 4). The revisions of the policy were undertaken to address the lack of follow-through in implementing the various initiatives that were proposed (Meersman 2007, 296). Thus, another approach was considered, namely the National Theatre and Dance Policy of 2022. This notion was developed to overcome social and economic inequalities and disparities that force theatre and dance practitioners to migrate towards the metros where there is more opportunity. The policy seeks to advance access to opportunities within all the nine provinces of South Africa which ensures that theatre and dance practitioners are able to have lucrative and successful careers within these fields. This strategy promises to address the inequalities and issues concerning, geographical location, race, the economic gap, gender and disabilities. This is an important aspect as it attempts to reinforce and reacknowledge that these disciplines are significant and invaluable because they create spaces for the expression of "culture religion and education among other rights" (National Theatre and Dance Policy 2023, 4). This particular policy has been created in accordance with the revised White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage which was endorsed by Parliament in 2019. The national policy was published and accepted by Cabinet in August 2023.

Unfortunately, however, this new version has not evoked much change either as the continuation of historical disparities still makes it difficult to access and participate in the theatre and its archive. The failures of government to provide sufficient support were highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic. The theatre was greatly impacted by the advent of the virus and consequent lockdown. Many theatre practitioners were left without work as playhouses were closed and disrupted their performances. The Department of Sport, Arts and

[6] "Whither the Arts in South Africa's Permanent Crisis? The Flawed Logic of Singling out Nathi Mthethwa – The Mail & Guardian." n.d. Accessed March 27, 2025. https://mg.co.za/friday/2021-03-14-whither-the-arts-in-south-africas-permanent-crisis-the-flawed-logic-of-singling-out-nathi-mthethwa/.

Culture established a relief fund that amounted to R150 million to assist performers, artists and athletes maintain their livelihoods during lockdown[7]. Furthermore, the Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme (PESP) availed R665 million to alleviate artists' financial burdens to which R300 million was allocated to the National Arts Council to enable job creation and retention. However, due to the delayed processing of applications and the mismanaging of funds, many artists were left without benefitting from these subsidies. During our conversation, Bonani Ngamlane, an ambitious young theatre maker, expresses the difficulties that he experiences in acquiring the support that these policies and initiatives promised:

> There's a lot that can be improved because even with my journey and my experience there's a lot that has been improved but one of the things that I always advocate for is for that the gap between community theatre and the actual mainstream of the theatre. I think that that gap needs to be closed and most theatre practitioners and funders need to work on that because we find it so hard…also the opportunities created for these youngsters is very limited, because last year I was actually funded by the Western Cape [local government] to do an acting workshop where I'm from and I really saw that actually nothing has changed with the opportunities that are offered to us and also I have been talking with this other guy and I was telling him uk'ba we need more programs for kids that are coming from disadvantaged backgrounds such as townships and villages to give them the opportunity. Because if you want to study drama, you actually have to come from the Eastern Cape and go to an audition at the Wits University School of Arts and you get there and you have not been in an audition before because you have never got the training for how to do an audition, you understand. So, we need more programmes to go to these places and actually train them on how to do auditions. And also, this thing of now you have to pay to go to Jo'burg and do an audition and you have never been here before, so where will you stay? And who will actually make sure that you are good? So, we need more programmes like that.

[7] "Measuring the Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis on the Cultural and Creative Industries in South Africa One Year on | Document Library." n.d. Accessed March 27, 2025. https://www.southafricanculturalobservatory.org.za/download/comments/803/1aa48fc4880bb0c9b8a3bf979d3b917e/Measuring+the+impact+of+the+COVID-19+Crisis+on+the+Cultural+and+Creative+Industries+in+South+Africa+One+year+on.

Evident in Ngamlane's response, practical action has not been taken in implementing these policies enough to produce meaningful changes. Historical disparities and unequal opportunities are still prevalent, and the development of theatre still remains minimal within previously disadvantaged areas, which force aspiring theatre makers to move towards the metropolitans to access these resources and opportunities. Growing up in Samora Machel, a township in Cape Town, Ngamlane was exposed to the performing arts through community theatre that was offered within the area. However, this was still met with difficulties as they were self-funded which suggests that they had limited resources to provide optimum support for the local youth. Moreover, the shortcomings of these policies also reveal the gaps and challenges that young people in historically disadvantaged communities face in the pursuit of a career in the arts. Ngamlane's response also implies that the limited opportunities dedicated to the development of theatre in previously disadvantaged areas, centre mainstream ways of experiencing theatre. Magogodi (2023, 214) states that the misconception that theatre can only be experienced within the confines of conventional theatre buildings is a "colonial miseducation". Furthermore, the various safety precautions, hazards and restrictions within these buildings can be hinderance to creativity. However, there is a certain freedom that comes with working outside of those conventions which can elevate the storytelling and experience of a production. In our conversation, Ngamlane reflects on his desire to present his future plays outside of mainstream theatre houses:

> I want to stage a play in the village in a hut, understand and to also break this thing of a theatre needs to be a building that is institutionalized and that a theatre needs its history. The theatre can be in any other place and other space. As creatives and as people that have been in the industry, you would know how to, especially if you studied cultural policy management. You will actually know how to find ways of actually making spaces to become very consumable for anyone to consume art. We've been planning to stage these plays in local houses and in a hut. Just any hut in the Eastern Cape and just put life there and invite all of them because elderly people are actually dying without actually watching plays. So, it's about reaching those gaps and that's what I think needs to be done.

Ngamlane suggests that by thinking outside of the enclosed spaces of theatre buildings and working with the environments that are already available, theatre would become more accessible to audiences who would otherwise not be able to reach the playhouses in the

metropolitans. Similarly to open theatre during apartheid, Ngamlane's response suggests that there is opportunity for accessing the theatre that is not confined by rigidity therefore allowing for an experiential archive to be created. When more audiences are able to reach theatrical performances, they can further contribute to it, therefore challenging the conventional conception of the archive. However, in saying that elders will pass before they get to experience the theatre posits the storytelling and performance within the theatre above that of elders. This disregards and undermines the idea that elders are institutions of knowledge (Magoqwana 2018, 85). Elders carry vast knowledge that is passed down through generations thus they are not quite able to die (Magoqwana 2018, 85). In his response he reinforces the colonial idea that elders, especially grandmothers are unproductive bodies (Magoqwana 2018, 78). He also implies that the knowledge on how to do so is acquired through his experience within the theatre space and his university education. However, while these aspects have equipped him with the necessary skills, it is insinuated that the lack of government support and funding is still a hinderance to achieving his wish for a theatre that is everywhere. The acquisition of extensive portfolios, education and training, which should begin during earlier schooling is also impacted by historic disparities and limited opportunities and state intervention.

In 2002, the dramatic arts were introduced in school curriculums firstly, as a subject choice available to pupils in grades 10 to 12 and it was also included as one of the eight core learning areas for lower grades R to 9 under the arts and culture umbrella. The addition of dramatic arts in the educational system had greatly increased younger demographics' participation in and exposure to the dramatic and performing arts (Venter 2016, 44). However, in most cases the educators who facilitate these activities do not have an educational background within the arts nor see them as priorities within the syllabus. Therefore, making it difficult for students who wish to pursue the arts to be fully equipped with the skills required to do so. The Department of Basic Education has reported that only 12.12% of high schools in South Africa offer arts subjects to the end of matric resulting in only 4.5% of students having the adequate training to potentially qualify for the arts at a tertiary level[8]. These limitations to sufficient early training are contributing factors to the barriers of access to the theatre and its repositories of knowledge. Moreover, the pursuit of theatre studies at a higher level also poses challenges concerning

[8] "Arts-Rich Schools – Arts in the Curriculum | ASSITEJ South Africa." n.d. Accessed March 7, 2025. https://assitej.org.za/arts-rich-schools-arts-in-the-curriculum/.

entrance, tuition, funding and accommodation which make it even more difficult to gain entrance to participating in the theatre as an aspiring practitioner.

As careers within the theatre sector are traditionally cultivated through years of training, legitimacy is acquired through formal qualifications and comprehensive portfolios (Venter 2015). Therefore, most theatre makers are required to have university degrees and experience to be granted opportunities, however, acquiring such credentials can be quite difficult. Apartheid enforced a multitude of economic and social inequalities, although much transformation occurred since its end in 1994, the echoes of those disparities are present in the current day especially in the higher education system (Adonis & Silinda 2021, 74). In attempts to diminish inequalities within the sector, changes to legislations and the introduction of funding frameworks such as the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) have been implemented. However, these activities are not as effective in alleviating disparities due to poor implementation and a lack of infrastructure within these institutions (Adonis & Silinda 2021, 75). Funding for NSFAS is allocated within in the Department of Higher Education budget. With the various responsibilities that the department is obliged to undertake such as infrastructure maintenance, providing financial support to faculties and acquiring academic resources, there is a limited amount allocated for NSFAS (Yende 2024, 4). The scheme's financial pressures are further exacerbated because of the current corruption that is happening within NSFAS (Yende 2024, 8). These aspects have had a ripple-effect on students' ability to access to funding. Firstly, administrative difficulties have made the process of applying for NSFAS quite difficult. Furthermore, the systems put in place are often times are delayed in paying for accommodation, allowances and tuition in time. This disrupts the livelihoods of students and their university experience. While a financial aid such as NSFAS has been important for creating a significant increase in access for students from previously marginalised backgrounds, the number of graduations still remains low. This results in an increase of drop-out rates. Due to challenges with funding, language, communication and writing, historically disadvantaged students are faced with difficulties to complete their studies. Student movements such as #Feesmustfall, #Rhodesmustfall and #Asinamali have protested against the increment of tuition fees, registration issues, and lack of funding for the disadvantaged students and the missing middle have arisen in response to the prevalence of inequalities within universities, however, not much has changed as it is still difficult for students to access and complete their higher education (Adonis & Silinda 2021, 78). In conversations with the participants, it was evident that establishing a career within theatre is best achieved by receiving an education

through an institution that offers training in dramatic arts. While the participants had completed their studies within these institutions, they had shared much of the difficulties experienced within trying to gain that formal training.

The shortfalls within the higher education sector could be mitigated by an increase in public support, the creation of meaningful opportunities for black students and an appreciation of the humanities and arts (Badat 2024, 7). The post-apartheid government has shown favour towards the pursuit of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) related careers to ensure job security in an unstable economy (Boonzaier & Mncwango 2024, 1). Organisations such as the National Institution for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS) actively work to bridge the gap of opportunities offered to postgraduate students who are interested in pursuing studies and careers in the social sciences and humanities through fellowship programmes, scholarships and projects. However, there is an overwhelming push for STEM which has resulted not only in the undermining of the humanities, social sciences and arts but in the lack of opportunities created by governments and private sectors. During our conversation about the state of the theatre in South Africa, Nkabinde passionately voice similar sentiments by acknowledging how the emphasis on STEM has resulted in a growing undermining of the performing arts:

> Yes, there is creative arts and drama in schools but is it really taken seriously is the question. You see if they take it serious the same way they take iSTEM like science math and everything like that serious then I think that the coming generation would take theatre seriously nabo because they'd learn it from a young age from school and then they would grow with it by the time they done with school- or even like when they're still in school they will learn about it and things will change maybe then theatre would be taken seriously. And like there'll be more things that people do in the theatre space with the government included, with the government helping them and not just like turning a blind eye because more than anything, the government only uses the creative and cultural industries which is like the industry as a whole for like the economic benefits. I mean obviously we bring in money with our you know yeah with the events mhlampe we host or anything like that we bring in money like we kind of boost the economy in a way so for them.

Nkabinde's response also suggests that the dismissal of the arts does a disservice to the South Africa's economy, this is true due to the arts contribution of 3% to South Africa's economic production[9]. While lucrative, the government does not work towards stimulating its growth and this can be an outcome of the leadership. The appointment of minsters for the arts is often misaligned as the position would be allocated to politicians who lack a relevant portfolio (Meersman 2007, 299). This is the outcome of political deals, and the arts are not led with the required dedication, skill and knowledge. Ultimately, this continuous ignorance of the arts, humanities and social sciences result in the lack of opportunities to advance into careers related to their studies. Thus, many students who choose to study these disciplines are left with uncertainty after completing their degrees. Within the theatre, it is no different. Due to a lack of government support, funding, declining theatre attendance, theatre makers often face challenges in sustaining themselves with only theatre. When I had asked Tswelapele about her future plans within the theatre she responded with a laugh:

> Yoh! The theatre doesn't have money so I'm trying to branch out. I'm branching out to film and television. I'm doing also short course for TV script writing because in theatre, eish, being a graduate is not enough. You have to have people that know you and people that can put you on … so now I am going into television, I feel like television is safe. I feel like theatre is radical and television is safe and I'm gonna branch there and then when I have money, I will go back to theatre.

Tswelapele's view of the television and film industry as safe can be understood in terms of financial and job security. In 2024 the production of South African films has contributed approximately R3 billion to the economy, has acquired R2.5 billion through foreign investment and has created 26 000 jobs within the year[10]. However, the safety of working within the space are precarious due to potential exploitation, discrimination and sexual harassment[11]. The

[9] "Explore the Economic Mapping of the Cultural and Creative Industries in South Africa 2022 Capstone Report." n.d. Accessed March 28, 2025. https://www.southafricanculturalobservatory.org.za/cci-mapping-study-2022.

[10] "SA's Film Industry Attracts over R5bn Foreign Investment Boosting Tourism." n.d. Bizcommunity. Accessed March 29, 2025. https://www.bizcommunity.com/article/sas-film-industry-attracts-over-r5bn-foreign-investment-boosting-tourism-922474a.

[11] "Women Battle in Lights, Camera, Sexism Industry – The Mail & Guardian." n.d. Accessed March 29, 2025. https://mg.co.za/friday/2024-12-17-women-battle-in-lights-camera-sexism-industry/.

contemplation of a career within film and television to supplement the one within theatre is also reflected in my conversation with Nkabinde. While she shares similar sentiments as Tswelapele, she does acknowledge the potential difficulties that she could face in pursuit of work within that space.:

> I could say I'd pursue theatre and all of that but looking at it, how many people come watch theatre like on a daily if the shows? I don't think theatre is supported in that way here in our country so yes I would be doing things but would it keep me like alive like surviving in terms of like you know finances and everything that I need to pay for in order to survive as a person. So, yes, I would do theatre but also like venture into film but also with film getting into the industry as a whole lot and it's like a process on its own. It's either you find an agency that's good enough that's not going to exploit you or you just have connections in the back going into the industry so it's a tough one so I mean I am also my 4th year of studying and it's my last year I really don't know what I'm gonna do after this. I initially do not have a plan especially in terms of like theatre and the entertainment industry as a whole because I mean I literally don't know where to start but I have to have a Plan B even if it's not theatre I will do it so that I'm doing something, I'm not just sitting at home then as I'm doing that thing I go into looking into my career as an artist or like you know something like that so in terms of like next year and doing theatre maybe I will, maybe I will not maybe will venture into something so that I'm just stable then when I'm doing that thing ezo kwenza ukuthi ngibe stable I will look into theatre until when I find my ground and be stable and you know hit the ground running

Nkabinde's reply suggests that participating within the film and television space will be almost as difficult as maintaining a career within theatre. She implies that she could potentially encounter gatekeeping and exploitation. In 2022 study about the exclusion of black women, the youth and people living with disabilities from acquiring meaningful ownership in film and TV, it was reported that 53% of the 1000 respondents had obtained jobs through referrals[12]. Furthermore, the participants also shared that it has been difficult for them to be hired within departments that are not headed by black people. This suggests that a degree or diploma

[12] "Report: Black Women, Young People Still Excluded from Meaningful Ownership in Film and TV." n.d. Bizcommunity. Accessed March 29, 2025. https://www.bizcommunity.com/Article/196/97/231498.html.

qualification is most likely to be enough to find work within film and television. This implies that many who aspire to work in the space are restricted from doing so. Nkabinde's response is also reflective of the anxiety that arises among university students regarding their career prospects. The instability of the theatre industry, caused by declining interest and lack of state support exacerbates this fear. While it is alarming that people who have studied theatrical studies will likely pursue alternative of earning a living that are not necessarily adjacent to the discipline, it could be argued that this alternative sustenance is essential for the theatre to survive in its current state. The theatre only exists through the work of those who make theatre. Thus, although it is not preferred to be forced to consider other fields or positions, the return to creating theatre, once the practitioners have found stability, is at the benefit of theatre's continuity. By considering other aspects, theatre makers still ensure that the sector and its experiential archive are kept alive. During our conversation, Lebooa mentioned that while she had initially intended to pursue a career as an actor, she had decided to change her path as she realised that she did not have the passion required to continue striving for that career. She was able to pivot through her studies in Cultural Policy and Management (CPM), a course centred around understanding the different business, policy and administrative aspects of the creative sector[13]. Through this degree she has worked in administrative and managerial positions at various theatres. By working at these places, she realised that while there are a variety of opportunities for young people who want to work within the performing arts, they are not privy to information and connections that would be helpful in kickstarting their careers. Considering the initial challenges in acquiring a higher education, as well as the difficulties posed after obtaining the required qualifications, there runs a risk of many young people existing within the margins of the theatre.

With the advent of social media however, these aspiring theatre makers have found means to be more visible, acquire more information and make the necessary connections. Applications such as Instagram and Tik Tok have allowed for aspiring thespians to mitigate barriers to access. By showcasing their talents on these social media platforms by uploading videos of skits and monologues, they open themselves up to possible opportunities that they otherwise would not have been privy to. Further, when established theatre makers upload their rehearsal processes, they are sharing knowledge that would be useful in understanding the principles of

[13] "Cultural Policy and Management - Wits University." n.d. Accessed February 1, 2025. https://www.wits.ac.za/wsoa/cultural-policy-and-management/.

making theatre. As already mentioned, rehearsals are the point in which theatre makers are at the height of engagement with the experiential archive, therefore, through sharing this knowledge through their social media, they are providing admission opportunities to those who previously would not be granted entrance.

To fund the arts, there has to be a collaboration between the public and private sectors however, the South African performing arts and theatre industries are subject to immense financial difficulty due to tight competition with other industries, a decline in government funding and a decline in theatre attendance (Mishan & Prangley 2014, 2). The decreased support from the government is mostly due to their prioritisation of more demanding social matters (Mishan & Langley 2014, 4). In 2024 the state budget prioritised social services such as education and healthcare, infrastructure improvement and the promotion of economic growth[14]. This is not to say that there is no money allocated for the theatre however, because there are limited funds, there is a scramble for the little that is given. It is important for the performing arts industry to grow as it is a great contributor to job creation and economic growth. Further, the growth of creative industries at large including the theatre gives rise to the creation of artistic works and social development. There is opportunity for the private sector to support the theatre however, the prevalence of state funding inadvertently results in the crowding-out of funding from the private entities[15]. Crowding-out refers to a situation of increased government expenditure reduces or eliminates the private sector's spending[16]. The increment of public funding is unsustainable as it disrupts economic growth because it reduces the opportunity for private entities to invest. While, in a South Africa context the possibility of crowding out is unlikely, the private sector does not perceive the funding of the arts as beneficial[17].

Black audiences are interested in seeing stories that reflect their lives, experiences and current realities. While there have been many portrayals of significant events throughout time, evident in the existence of verbatim theatre, which portrays and dramatises testimonies and oral

[14] The 2024 Budget Review
[15] "Measuring Private Sector Support for the CCI | Document Library." n.d. Accessed March 30, 2025. https://www.southafricanculturalobservatory.org.za/document-detail/706.

[16] "What Is the Crowding Out Effect Economic Theory?" n.d. Investopedia. Accessed March 30, 2025. https://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/crowdingouteffect.asp.

[17] "Measuring Private Sector Support for the CCI | Document Library." n.d. Accessed March 30, 2025. https://www.southafricanculturalobservatory.org.za/document-detail/706.

histories and theatre for social change which addresses societal issues, the more sensitive plots are not funded. Tswelapele's *Hanging Pieces of Flesh,* is an advocacy piece that speaks to the physical, psychological and social implications of breast sweeping and genital mutilation. The play aims to challenge the policing of women's bodies and bring awareness to the dangers that they encounter not just in her hometown of Makau in the Free State, but also on a bigger scale. In our conversation she mentioned how she struggles to acquire funding to show her production especially from the government:

> There's a lot of censorship in terms of when you want funding. You get people who want you to portray certain messages and sometimes they take out your agency. Especially for me who does advocacy work obviously I cannot go to the government and say hey uh can I please have money so that I can put out a play that criticises how you run the country, obviously they would not give it to me.

Tswelapele's words show that while her piece reflects the lived experience of many women in South Africa, by virtue of doing so it challenges governmental leadership and intervention which consequently results in her not getting funding. Many theatres work towards attracting a larger attendance of black audiences and do so by collaborating with black theatre makers however this is difficult to do.

State support and funding is essential to the survival of the South African theatre industry. There have been organisations such as the National Arts Council (NAC), Business and Arts South Africa (BASA), National Lottery and the Arts and Culture Trust (ACT) that have been involved in sponsoring theatre. While these bodies have been significant in providing funds for theatre, there are still difficulties experienced when money is acquired from them. The hardships include time-sensitive funding, strict terms and conditions under which funding is awarded and the need for secondary sponsorship (Venter 2016, 42). With the private sector, businesses do not have organised art programmes even though they have incorporated the arts as part of their corporate social investment (CSI) initiatives. These companies' CSI frameworks further only fund projects that have a Section 18A certificate which states that the organisation also acquires a specified scale of educational benefit (Venter 2016, 43). Such a requirement for first-time theatre practitioners who have not had a record of funding or are not creating for educational purposes do not become a priority for potential sponsors. Difficulties for aspiring

practitioners are further exacerbated by theatres choosing to show productions from renowned and already established theatre makers to increase ticket sales (Venter 2016, 44).

However, places such as The Centre for the Less Good Idea in Maboneng actively work to assist in showcasing plays that might not fulfil the requirements need to obtain funding. The Centre emphasises the significance of process, pushing the notion that the exchange of flow of ideas during the making of the theatre is invaluable. Founded in 2016 by William Kentridge and Bronwyn Lace, the incubator for the arts is an environment that is "committed to creating and supporting experimental, collaborative and cross-disciplinary arts projects"[18]. Athena Mazarakis, a multi-hyphenate performer, educator and practitioner, acts as the Momenteur of the in-house SO Academy. During our conversation, I had asked about her role to which she described as a facilitator of the creative process of the workshops. Here, theatre makers are welcome to approach the space with just an idea or the desire to create something. The practitioners are encouraged to play around with concepts and ideas in hopes that they will develop into a body of work. The academy also facilitates mentorship programmes between established theatre makers and aspiring practitioners. This allows for a continuous creation, exchange and flow of knowledge which equips the newer artists for their future within the theatre and performance arts but also emphasises the importance of the wisdom of an older generation who have been deemed redundant in the mainstream. Usually, when applying for funding, theatre makers are required to produce proposals that stipulate the exact details of their plays and costs. The Centre, however, allows for those details to develop within the Centre, meaning that the space and access to its resources do not require a comprehensive proposal. During our conversation, I had asked Mazarakis about how this process occurs, to which she responded:

> I mean it expresses itself in many ways and this might sound like the kind of convoluted way around to make the point but part of why the Centre was created was created was to give artists the space to explore that which they could not explore in other places where there wasn't other spaces where you have to have a particular proposal or you have to write a funding proposal and then to the funder you have to take your

[18] "The Centre for the Less Good Idea Is an Interdisciplinary Incubator Space for the Arts Based in Maboneng, Johannesburg." n.d. The Centre for the Less Good Idea Is an Interdisciplinary Incubator Space for the Arts Based in Maboneng, Johannesburg. Accessed January 28, 2025. https://lessgoodidea.com.

> checkboxes like is this about social cohesion, is it about nation building, is it about women, children or people with disabilities. We don't expect any of that. We want people to come and try things they've always wanted to try. So those proposal processes that are expected from government institutes or spaces want you to deal with those things on national building, the big national narratives in the world. We don't and yet in my mind the work that comes out of here is sometimes even more socially and politically astute and engaging and provocative and that for me is because people are working from themselves and it's not going I have an idea here in my head it's the good idea about who will make a piece about racism but to come and go I'll bring my lived experience on the floor yeah and then the work is inevitably about that. About identity, race, gender whatever that might be, but it is always socially and politically very grounded because we always bring our histories across the floor.

Mazarakis's response suggests that by providing a space in which these theatre makers can produce, they inadvertently fulfil the requirements that funders look for. It is within this environment that important and informative bodies of work can arise. This is achieved by providing access. The experiential archive thrives on collecting personal histories, events, memories and experiences. However, through these various restrictions such as lack of state support, challenges in the education system and unobtainable resources, the experiential archive is pushed out of reach. The Centre mediates this difficulty through its practices. The Centre's name encapsulates the mission as they challenge the understanding that a good idea is one that is fully developed by providing a space for early and imperfect concepts to exist and they focus and encourage its development. David Mann, the writer and communications manager, is responsible for the documentation of the events that occur within the space. While the Centre does have a website that details the events and productions that occurred under a season, he also uses Instagram as a tool to store this information. The Centre brings forward Peterson's (2002) experiential archive as well as Schechner's (2003) view of rehearsals. Firstly, the Centre encourages that rehearsals be as disorganised and fragmented as they can be to allow a limitless flow and exchange of ideas and knowledge. Through this the practitioners create a story to share with audiences. The entire process is documented and uploaded for audiences to access resulting in access to the experiential archive, ultimately refiguring conventional conceptions of the archive. The work done by the Centre for the Less Good Idea shows how, if access to resources such as rehearsal space and funding ensure the existence and continuation

of the experiential archive. Their use of Instagram is evidence of how audiences are also supposed to access the archive.

The access of the audience

A fundamental part of theatre is the presence of an audience because there is an inherent connection that occurs between the performers and spectators which is understood as collaborative (Allen & Laine 2018, 598 and Mark & Smith 2022, 551). In understanding how the interaction between performers and audiences is pedagogical, Allen & Laine (2018, 600) argue that theatre-making is a form of creating knowledge. This process can occur through three approaches namely, watching, confronting and creating a community of knowledge with audiences. The action of watching with spectators requires the practitioner to attempt to perceive their work from the perspective of their patrons (Allen & Laine 2018, 603). This exercise is undertaken at any stage whether it be during rehearsals or performances. The stage in which it occurs also determines whether the theatre maker observes an imaginative audience or a real audience. Theatre makers use the audience's imagined or physical presence for their decision making by separating themselves from their work and viewing it as someone seeing it for the first time. This disrupts the inherent familiarity that they have with the work. This provides important insights that potentially improve the staging, script and overall performance (Allen & Laine 2018, 603). This action of watching was evident during the rehearsals of *Hanging Pieces of Flesh.* Tswelapele and her cast members were constantly considering the experience of the audience. The play occurs within two spaces, the beginning happens on outside of the performance building while the rest is enacted on the inside. This movement connects to the ideal of working beyond the restrictions of an enclosed space but also integrating movement. The addition of movement contrasts the usual experience that audiences have within theatre because instead of being seated throughout the entire performance, they are as active as the cast. Thus, during run-throughs, they made sure to consider the audience's positioning and used that as a guide that determine their actions and movements. Moreover, they consulted the videos to better grasp how spectators would receive their actions and also to determine whether their vocal projections, movements and props were effective in conveying the message of the play. During the COVID-19 pandemic, audiences and theatre makers interacted virtually due to the lockdown restrictions (Lepere et al. 2021, 49). Practitioners can also choose to sit with audiences during shows to understand the contrasts between the audience's emotional responses and their own. This process of listening to the audience allows

the theatre makers to also gauge the changes in energy amongst the crowd, taking note how this could affect the reception and interpretation of the work. In some instances, the theatre makers can position the audience as adversaries that they are in partial conflict with (Allen & Laine 2018, 604). It is the existence of differences and disagreements that can result in a space for learning, reflection and change. This suggests that the spectator is an intellectual and at equal standing with the practitioners. While equal, the audience and performers undertake different roles at different moments. Both get to understand the timing and functions through a "shared language that could be verbal, or physical, actual or fictional" (Allen & Laine 2018, 606). This is what creates a community. For this reason, theatre makers do not consider performances as the sharing of fully developed works but rather as a part of the process. The audience is an integral part of the creative process of theatre-making consequently resulting in their contribution to the experiential archive. This collaboration between the theatre makers and audiences contrasts conventional conceptions of the archives as they were constituted by a select few without input from the public. However, this is affected due to an increasing decline in theatre attendance which could be attributed to multiple aspects such as the effects of historical inequalities and an unstable economy.

Pre-1994, during the Apartheid, the performing arts and music were a useful tool in garnering support for the fight against the oppressive regime. The works produced during the time were used to bring awareness to the harm and oppression experienced by black people, encouraging people to "awaken their political consciousness" and to inspire the audience to mobilise (Mishan & Prangley 2014, 15). The intention of the work was for it to be revolutionary which meant that it was not necessarily meant to only provide entertainment. While essential during the struggle, this framing of theatre has been carried over post-1994. In conversations with participants, majority of them voiced that there is a collective apathy towards the theatre, in our discussion Tshabalala states:

> It's not something that is viewed as a populist genre. So, it's not something that's very popular. It's not something that many people consume … because we still hold on to very Eurocentric ways of what good quality theater is. So, it hasn't really found the way in which it can resonate with the ordinary South African, the everyday South African. So, it's almost as if it's made for people to have either an exposure to Eurocentric buildings and worlds or an affinity to it. But recently, there's been a big increase in indigenous language shows in methods that are African and approach in stories that

> speak more about our day-to-day living, challenges and stories and that obviously works currently.

In his response, Tshabalala implies that mainstream theatre has shown productions that were unrelatable to the South African majority thus resulting in their disinterest of attending these shows. Tshabalala's own objective is to amplify the stories and experiences of black people within these playhouses to which he has made significant work in doing so. However, these perceptions of the theatre persist and thus maintain the level of disinterest among the public. During our conversation, Nkabinde made mention of how she has observed that most people, especially black people, have come to understand theatre as a luxury as well. Higher incomes make it easier to afford luxuries such as theatre tickets as there is more disposable income to spend on leisure activities (Willis & Snowball 2009).

In 2024, the effects of inflation were felt by all South Africans. Increased by many factors such as petrol prices, import and export parities, fluctuating exchange rates, citizens saw an increase in fuel costs, household expenses such as electricity that saw an increment of 12.72% [19]and food prices (Investec 2025, 1). The country's unemployment rate stands at 33.5%, largely impacting women and the youth. The economic gap continues with the poverty rate being estimated as 62.6% as of 2023[20]. Minimum wage for workers who work for 19 days is R4192.16. The cost of tickets, which are already reduced prove to still be too high, making them less of a priority to most South Africans. During our conversation, Tshabalala made mention of the exact costs incurred during a standard outing at the theatre:

> Theatre tickets are still quite costly and a night out at the theatre is very expensive so you're looking at an average of like, especially on weekends at a mainline theatre, people are spending anywhere between R150 and R250 sometimes R300. If there's two people going out that's R600. If those people are having drinks that's another R800 to R900. If those people are having to eat there the night is going into over R1000 for two people just consume a piece of work and have a decent evening out so considering that

[19] "The Cost of Living Reality for South Africa." n.d. Accessed February 10, 2025. https://businesstech.co.za/news/lifestyle/767157/the-cost-of-living-reality-for-south-africa/.

[20] "WorldBank - South African Economy." n.d. Text/HTML. World Bank. Accessed February 10, 2025. https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/southafrica/overview.

> we are in the kind of country where people are surviving on a grant of R350, asking them to part with the ticket for R350 is different. So, the spending of the theatre goer is a little bit different to the majority of the country so I think that's what are the sociopolitical conditions that determine what theatre consumption look like.

Moreover, the decline in attendance to the theatre is due to other factors such as more entertaining competition, a challenging economy, an aging market as well as the emergence of the Covid-19 epidemic (Wessels et al. 2023, 75). There is little control over these influences however, there have been initiatives created to mitigate these issues. The South African State theatre did introduce a streaming platform, SAST TV, in which users could pay a fee to have access to various productions that have shown at the theatre. SAST TV was first introduced during the lockdown of the Covid-19 epidemic and has been reintroduced in 2024. The streaming platform offers two packages, with the first being a pay per view fee in which audiences pay R49 for each production that they would be interested in watching. The second option is a monthly subscription of R79 that can be cancelled at any point[21]. The State theatre's streaming platform can be understood as a means to measure up to the competition of other available platforms such as Netflix and Showmax as well as mediate the costs the incur for audiences when they physically attend these showings. However, it does beg the question of whether the essence of the theatre will be lost as audiences view the productions remotely. Would this create a future for theatre that is primarily online? Lepere et al. (2021, 49) state that the architecture of a theatre building provides performers with frames for staging. Moreover, audiences engage with one part of the stage at a time when watching a live performance. With digitising the theatre, audiences are able observe the entire stage through their devices. This means that theatre practitioners have to adapt to performing and interacting with the frames of a camera. This can be considered as a benefit to actor as they acquire more skills however for theatre makers who do not show their productions at the State theatre, they could potentially be negatively impacted as this could further decrease attendance to their productions. The views on this varied amongst the participants. Tswelapele voiced her apprehensiveness by saying:

> Yoh, I feel like first of all theatre is present you have to be there, I feel like that's what separates it from television. Theatre is something to be enjoyed in the moment, it's

[21] "Pricing." n.d. *SAST TV* (blog). Accessed Feb 28, 2025. https://www.statetheatre.co.za/tvchannel/pricing/.

> ephemeral. You have to give it- you are sort of a co-performer with the artists, you have to give them the energy and then they give you back. And the enjoyment or entertainment depends on you too. If now you're not going to be a supportive audience, the actors are going to do the work but you are not going to enjoy… So, I feel like I don't know, it doesn't work for us for theatre people.

Tswealpele's word reflect Allen & Laine's (2018) sentiments that the audience are in a collaborative relationship with the performers. Although a streaming platform extends the audiences' imagined presences, the lack of their physical attendance could be detrimental to theatre makers' understandings of how their productions are received. It could disturb the three-step process of knowledge creation through the theatre. However, the use of Instagram can be seen as means to mediate this as it can act as a means of connection to audiences. This would be a channel for the theatre makers to understand spectator responses and reactions. Nkabinde had expressed the value of the theatre use of these digital platforms saying that they are evidence of the theatre keeping up with technological advancements and ultimately ensure the presence of an audience. The ephemeral nature of the archive that Tswelapele describes reiterates the importance of archiving as the audience's experiences can be preserved for later access. Furthermore, the knowledge shared between audience and the theatre practitioners does not exist only within the confines of the theatre moment and buildings, but it is open can be located anywhere.

Conclusion

Access to the theatre has been greatly impacted by historical inequalities, lack of support from the public and private sectors, failed initiatives, a culture of indifference towards the performance arts and economic insecurity. It has been established that both performers and audiences are crucial in the making of an experiential archive and their absence poses a risk not only to the repository but also to the continuation of the theatre. While there have been attempts to mitigate these restrictions from the government, it has mostly been the efforts of theatre makers that have helped the most. The use of Instagram has not only granted audiences entry to rehearsals, but it has also allowed them another means of providing theatre makers with feedback that inform their output. Moreover, Instagram has acted as a hub of information, networks and communication about potential opportunities that otherwise would not be as available. An important aspect of refiguring the archive was to address the barriers to access,

and theatre makers are actively doing so not only through social media but also through the creation of idea spaces, self-funding.

Chapter 4: An archive active for the theatre

Hall (2001, 89) states that to constitute an archive, it must not become a place that carries only 'dead' records, documents and works but it should be an archive that is living and active. Hall's assertion is reminiscent of Mbembe's (2002, 22) argument that traditional archives resemble sepulchres or burial sites due to the way that archiving practices bury fragments of history into secrecy, making them inaccessible to the public. By observing how theatre makers engage with the experiential archive during rehearsals, upload the knowledge onto their Instagrams, both to preserve it and enable entry to audiences, the practitioners are challenging conventional conceptions of the archive. Furthermore, theatre makers are continuously working outside of the enclosure of physical and institutional buildings. As forementioned in chapters two and three, the collaboration between audiences and theatre practitioners is important in creating the experiential archive. Thus, it is essential that they are able to have access to it. By continuing to contribute to it, through developing new shows and taking in the experiences of audiences, the archive consequently expands. Further, in ensuring that the experiential archive is an inclusive repository, I argue that it becomes a boundless archive as there is no limit to the different experiences and knowledge that is included (Hall 2001, 92).

Peterson's (2002) experiential archive within theatre not only becomes a repository for theatrical material, but it also works to extend the theatre's existence. As these collections of knowledge are shared through social media, further alleviating the barriers of access to the theatre, they are also creating opportunities in the future. Therefore, the theatre's existence is founded upon the presence of such an archive and the access to it. This chapter explores how the theatrical material that is uploaded onto Instagram by theatre makers simultaneously becomes a way for them to market themselves, which suggests that works as an active repository. Moreover, the chapter also analyses the politics of using Instagram as a repository of the experiential archive.

The archive acting as marketing

Rawlins (2021, 197) states that "Instagram operates as an interstitial archive" meaning that it acts as the gap or in-between space in which events and experiences are located. This not only works as evidence of the past but also as information for future action. For theatre practitioners in South Africa, social media has become a repository that showcase their work and talents. As

it continues to be one of the biggest social media platforms, Instagram, has also become a great form of marketing due to the high levels of engagement (Purba et al. 2020, 85). This suggests that there is an inherent dual activity occurring within the application. Instagram offers analytic tools that are useful in monitoring and analysing the amount of traffic posts have attracted (Rahayu et al 2025, 573). However, these are available to users should they classify their accounts as businesses. For accounts that do not categorise themselves as businesses, engagement can be measured by observing the amount of likes on a feed post, the number of views under a story post and the volume of comments underneath posts (Surjono 2024, 596). While theatre makers engage with the experiential archive during rehearsals and audiences contribute during performances, the documentation of these aspects on Instagram suggest that the platform is a tool for these processes to occur. In scholarship however, there has been a lack of interest into how Instagram has impacted the work of emerging theatre makers. Xaba et al (2021) have prominently explored Instagram's impact for visual artists, and practitioners of creative disciplines at large. Taking these scholars and the conversations that I have had with participants into consideration, it is evident that Instagram has provided practitioners with the ability to reach a more people to promote their work and receive the exposure that they need. During our conversation, Tshabalala described that the correct use of social media has been essential in developing an audience for his shows and how it can be useful for other theatre makers:

> I think social media is a very powerful tool, obviously when you use it well and when you are strategic around it, I think it could do very well to bring an interest about theatre and not just theatre shows but also what theatre going could be like. I think social media could be used to galvanise a young audience to go to the theatre. And because social media is a big beacon of content, not all shows can be played so sketch shows, comedy shows, live shows can be recognised. Social media can really do very well to get people into theatre buildings so that those people who are there can be converted into watching other kinds of theatrical entertainment…my entire database and audience is predominantly gathered on online so I put out content online that is either call out, calls to action, asking people to share their ideas, share their locations and where they would want to see our shows, share if they would be interested in buying tickets. So, it's an integral part of how I sell and market my events.

The value of a platform such as Instagram is evident within Tshabalala's response as it suggests that it can actively work to ensure the growth of the industry. As forementioned, the decline in theatre attendance is partly due to the apathy felt towards theatre. Social media can be understood as type of collective wisdom as it is able to generate large amounts of information and data in real time due to its use by large communities of people (Baldin et al. 2022, 200). Users are able to share their thoughts, feelings and opinions about any experiences especially about theatre productions that they have attended.

In understanding the impact that social media has on theatre making, Baldin et al (2022, 217) state that the number of likes under a post made in relation to ticket sales has a positive influence on the number of tickets that are sold. Therefore, suggesting that social media is an effective way to increase ticket sales. A way to establish a strong presence at the theatre would be to capture the interest of younger audiences. Much of Instagram's user-base comprises of millennials and younger generations. Thus, in uploading their works onto Instagram, the archive that they are creating is actively working to improve attendance to the theatre. The mere existence of the experiential archive within the theatre ensures that there is future for the performance arts. This archive and repository operate as a diligent tool for the theatre. This is also true for when theatre makers who wish to acquire funding. When applying for financial support, it helps to have evidence of prior projects to assure sponsors that their investment would be used wisely. Moreover, it can encourage organisations or people in their personal capacity to offer resources that would be beneficial during the development of productions. Tswelapele expressed similar sentiments in response to my question about why Instagram is an important part of her process:

> But also, it's for me to keep archives of my work, I cannot say that oh I've done this and that but there's no proof and also, eventually when you're applying for funding, they're going to want to see the rehearsal process and most of them want to see the audience and performances.

The platform mediates the challenges of exclusion from spaces, lack of funding and promotion, and the high fees that come with showcasing their work within established institutions. The historic systematic exclusion of previously marginalised people from economic participation has resulted in a lack of their representation within the creative economy. This research has focused largely on black theatre and how its inclusion contributes to an experiential archive.

Black theatre is important as it is centred around the lives of black people and aims to guide them to their liberation (Coleman 1971, 32). In capturing and conveying the stories of black people who have been marginalised, the theatre preserves these histories and events which have been historically neglected by the conventional archive. Woodie King JR. (1967) argues that claiming popular white theatre productions are the true representation of theatre results in the erasure of black communities and their stories. This suggests that the standard of performance, aesthetic and training are grounded in whiteness which therefore produces plays that are far removed from the stories of black people (King jr. 1967, 36). However, there have been many productions created within black theatre that have been meaningful and accurate representations of black communities. These are the productions that should be uplifted as they are depictions of the passions and images of black people (King jr. 1967, 36). Tshabalala, through his work, as a writer, director, performer and independent producer, has been able to achieve this as he mentions during our conversation that his biggest accomplishment is creating works in which black people can see parts of themselves and their histories. He has been intentional in ensuring that his productions such as *The Suit* and *Poet-o-type*, portray black people in ways that orthodox media does not. Mainstream media can often rely on misconstrued representations of black people that tend to be monolithic. These portrayals which depict black people as unproductive, untidy, noisy and criminal, can be traced back to the advent of imperialism, colonialism and apartheid (Talbot & Durrheim 2012, 477). Therefore, Tshabalala's work aims to challenge these stereotypes and depict the variedness of black people and their stories through storytelling. This suggests that black theatre acts as a repository of black people's histories, experiences and current realities. It is also important to consider that black theatre makes these fragments of history accessible to those who are unable to read because it enables immediate interpretation (Ukala 2001, 29). Therefore, the archiving of black theatre is important for the preservation of the knowledge potent within scripts, costumes, aesthetics, and staging. Furthermore, black theatre makers have been producing their works from the margins due to the exclusion of their stories, experiences and voices from the mainstream (Ukala 2001, 29). This becomes problematic as creative and cultural expression are essential to knowledge creation and skills development within the creative economy (Venter 2015).

Venter (2015) argues that young people who are interested in pursuing creative careers have used their mobile phones to display their talents and propel them into the creative economy. Ngamlane's use of Instagram in his practice has been a way for him to gain traction for the

productions that he is in the process of developing. This becomes an intentional process that occurs at different points:

> If I am in the rehearsal process, as soon as I secure placement and I know the dates from the theatre, that's where the actual documentation starts because we will make the announcement of the play coming and where it's going to be staged with information about the date and time whatsoever, but also I think marketing is what drives the archiving the most because if I start with documenting the rehearsal process because in most cases as a director and producer you need to know that you are working with individuals and the individuals have actually their own following or maybe there are people that actually like their work so I always use this strategy of, in certain not all rehearsals. I also tell my team that in this rehearsal that we are going to invite maybe a friend with a quality iPhone to document our rehearsal process. So that is how we start documenting those rehearsals. It's just for people to actually know ukuba there is a play that is happening and for people to start talking about it and just keeping the momentum. And then the second stage would be the dress rehearsals, where the actors are wearing their costumes, we document that and we post it to show that actually there's this show. That is where people are actually starting to buy the tickets, then there is a technical rehearsal where we do the same thing. And also with marketing, I always with my productions, when I am doing marketing, I am most of the time announcing my cast. I don't like using a professional headshot, I like taking headshots of them in their specific character. So, on the dress rehearsal, and technical rehearsal, that is where we can actually take good pictures and videos because during performances flash is not allowed, but during rehearsals you can get good quality photos because it's your own space and you can use flash.

In his response above, Ngamlane conveys the importance of photographs and visual content as they are used to garner attention for upcoming shows. He describes the process of gathering the material as a strategy, implying that it requires thorough planning so that he is able to acquire the resources that he does not have such as smartphones that have high resolution cameras. These actions Moreover, in our conversation he mentions that this the same material which he archives on his Instagram page for the prospects of future opportunities:

> You take that then you keep that then also post production so you actually can actually take time to maybe like put the videos together or the photos together and then keep them and then I'll post them or actually keep them on the drive and so that also helps you when you're you are applying for funds because they do require your media ‘yabo and also when you are applying, you are sending a proposal to these theatres they also require on the proposal they do require media to actually see if the production was there

The concept of archiving marketing material is not a new concept as posters of productions are often preserved as evidence that it had taken place (Diamond 2012, 60). Posters are valuable as their visuals provide insights the collective aesthetics and experiences of their time. However, their functionality was limited to act as proof of a theatre maker’s portfolio meaning that it accounts for the past. While uploaded material on the theatre makers’ Instagrams are testament to the practitioner’s work it is also beneficial in the future. The advertisement of upcoming showings is not only targeted towards patrons but also potential sponsors. Tswelapele mentioned that social media had been quite helpful in raising funding for expenses that had arose in preparation for their trip to London. As they were mostly self-funded, they had to find ways to acquire enough money for accommodation, food and travel:

> It’s very important because we need to show that we are in rehearsal because we are still missing funding, we don’t have funding for food and accommodation so we’re like maybe if people see the work that you’re doing then the might see that okay these people are not going to chow our money, they’re gonna use it.

While the participants had expressed that they have not faced many challenges with using social media, there are artists who could potentially face challenges of access to social media due to not having smartphones or internet connection and being censored on the platform. Similarly, the quantifying of engagement while useful for marketing, can become quite distressing for users as they could experience disappointment or worry when their preferred level of engagement is not achieved (Purba et al. 2020, 85). Popularity can be measured through various metrics such as the rate of engagement, ‘like’ growth and inherent image popularity (Purba et al. 2020, 86).

As an application, Instagram offers a plethora of features such as feed posts, stories, reels and live broadcasts[22]. These have gradually been introduced as the platform progressed and the popularity of certain tool have changed through time based on the needs and interests of users. Initially, Instagram relied on the uploading of photos that would appear on the users' feeds. These posts would also be kept under users' profiles grid. Recently, the profile grid has been redesigned from being square-like to now displaying the posts in a rectangular shape to mimic that of reels[23]. Tswelapele had mentioned that she had found grid posts most effective as they were beneficial in permanently holding material concerning characters, information about the play and the build up to performances as shown in Figure 6.

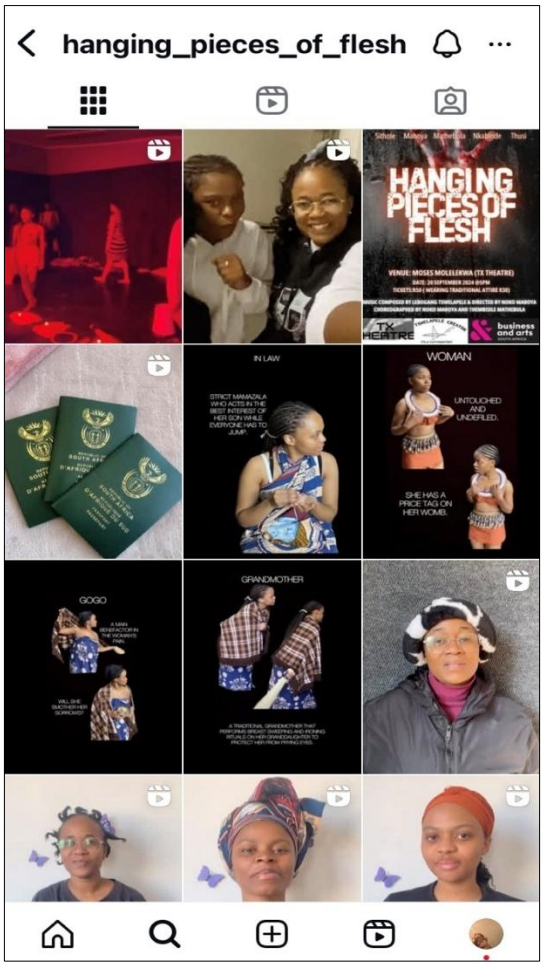


Figure 6: Screenshot of the "Hanging Pieces of Flesh" Instagram profile grid which shows the Various posts that Nkabinde has uploaded.

[22] "Instagram Key Features: Posts, Stories, Reels, Live and Shop." n.d. Accessed March 28, 2025. https://www.ashokcharan.com/Marketing-Analytics/~ig-instagram-key-features.php#gsc.tab=0.

[23] "What's New on Instagram in 2025: New Features and Updates." 2025. NapoleonCat. February 21, 2025. https://napoleoncat.com/blog/instagram-new-features-and-updates/.

Due to funding restraints, the cast of *Hanging Pieces of Flesh,* undertook multiple responsibilities as they did not have the means to outsource assistance. For this reason, Nkabinde began to tend to the play's social media. To balance her obligations with her focus in rehearsals, Nkabinde would document the relevant material during the scenes that she was not a part of and would upload the photos and videos after practices. She would also ensure that warm-up sessions were livestreamed though the broadcasting feature on Instagram. In our discussion I got to understand which features are the most useful for the production:

> I used reels. So with the reels I just put like videos of us you know during our warm up, videos of us rehearsing with our different costumes, maybe videos of us walking to the wardrobe to get costume or going to the workshop to create costumes. I wanted people to see that in theatre you know like you're not just the performer you do everything you get your own costume you create your own set so as you see how hard we worked to get to be we got. In terms of *Hanging Pieces of Flesh,* I also used stories, and I would post on the Instagram feed. Then I would collaborate with the option, we can collaborate with people, and I would collaborate with both Lebo and Thembi then also if they accept the collaboration it shows in their feed and then obviously people look at it and it links them back to the actual page ye-hanging you know. I would post on the story and like put a trending song in the background or put new reel so that people see because also sometimes people don't see things on their feed they see it on the story then when they see it on the story they click on the post and then I've also tagged Thembi, Lebo and I so that we all also posted on our stories you know so that people can also see it click it take them straight to the page they see the videos.

Through Nkabinde's response, it is evident that to best communicate information and allow access in the rehearsal process, where the experiential archive is engaged with the most, reels were the most effective. Reels were introduced in August in 2020 as a bid to compete with the video-based content application, Tik Tok. Initially, reels were 15 seconds long and have since been developed to be as long as three minutes. Thus, they are a valuable way to share the knowledge created within the rehearsal process. Although not mentioned in this response, I had observed that the cast would also share their rehearsal process through live broadcasts which their followers could watch in real time. These can also be posted on a user's main feed for followers to watch at another time or repetitively. Another important aspect, that reflects the inherent connection between practitioners and audiences are the collaborative features such as

tags, mentions and commenting. Ngamlane has described that for him audience engagement has been important for marketing as the audience can share information about the shows with their networks which results in a larger reach:

> You can actually see ukuba who and who are taking videos in the audience and those are the most important ones. So, we take notes of those people and that also helps because when they are posting maybe on Instagram, they actually mention you or tag you in those photos and you can create a folder on Instagram like on the highlight stories

Further, should these posts be kept on the audience's feed posts, these contribute to the archiving of the show. This is another way in which spectators also play a role in the making of the experiential archive

Instagram as the experiential archive's repository

Geismar (2017) states that conventional conceptions of the archive are altered by contemporary understandings and practices. Through use of archival language and framing to understand social media platforms such as Instagram, there can be space created for the development of an analytic perspective that can assist in making meaning of images through a new institutional gaze. Through this archival lens, the proliferation of photographs within the network can provide insight into the various epistemologies, values, social and expressions of society within a particular time (Geismar 2012, 331). Social media platforms are spaces for the performance of social roles which can be accessed and reviewed at leisure because of the platforms' feature of searchability. (Zhao et al. 2013). These enactments provide digital artifacts which give insight into the sociality that existed within specific places and periods of time. Social media contradicts the conventional archival process and characteristics such as preservation and being controlled by the state however this work conceptualises the archive as a metaphor that is used in the digital age (Geismar 2017, 331). The appearance of images within this Instagram archive is a fleeting process as posts appear momentarily on the user's feed and are replaced with more images. Further, the search for specific pictures differs with each user and not all images will be found due to deletion or changes within privacy settings. This shows the emergence of a public culture that is characterised by dynamism and contingency. Tshabalala reflects these sentiments by expressing:

> I consider social media a very big digital archive, but I also consider actual archiving as a crucial component to keeping the workspace. Right now, I think that social media is a part of it in terms of like archiving it was like difficult before to get material things like audience responses but not just for archiving but for the actual performances as well because for example we can see that maybe fifth row doesn't translate well on screen

Positioning Instagram as a form of archive, however, does not alleviate it from having barrier to access. The network was purchased by Facebook in 2012 thus implying that the company controls and owns the content that is uploaded. The terms and conditions determined by the company do the job of selecting what is within or excluded from this archive. Further, the use of this archive is determined by the access to smart phones and internet connection, the ability to afford data and censorship.

The laws that moderate social media platforms are referred to as community guidelines (Are 2022, 2006). While heavily entrenched into these applications, there is a difficulty in differentiating between harmful content, informative content and expressive content. Thus, images and videos that could be for the interest of the public or are portrayals of artistic vision are often conflated with disturbing material. These in-platform guidelines are imposed through human moderators who are paid to sift through content and decide on their appropriateness. The are also enforced through the platform's algorithm. This becomes concerning as there has not been an overt stipulation of what informs those algorithms, which prevents any input from stakeholders about what content can remain online (Are 2022, 2006). Therefore, these community guidelines are considered as ambiguous and contradictory. A consequence of any violation to the guidelines is shadowbanning which is a "cross-moderation moderation technique" that has been implemented by social media platforms that hide the usernames of affected accounts from appearing in searches (Are 2022, 2002). In previous years, Instagram enforced their shadowbans by concealing images and videos that were regarded as inappropriate. The shadowbanning of content meant that creators on the app were not able to grow their pages as they would not be able to reach new audiences. Users, when shadowbanned, are not informed and are left to decipher whether their accounts have been affected or if they are garnering as much engagement. Censorship on Instagram often reflects the inequalities and marginalisation offline and consequently would mostly affect artists, sex workers, activists, the LGBTQIA+ community, people of colour, and more prominently women (Are 2022, 2003).

This becomes challenging when creators are dependent on the visibility that the platform allows for them especially should it be a means of making a living. When rehearsing and performing, the cast of *Hanging Pieces of Flesh* leave the top half of their bodies bare revealing their breasts. While this is a crucial part to depicting the experiences of their characters and challenging stigmas and the sexualisation of women's breasts, they cannot upload material onto Instagram while doing so. Much of the content, especially when concerning the characters do not show their breasts. This is done to avoid infringing the community guidelines on Instagram as this could affect their ability to continue using the application as well as their repository and marketing efforts. Therefore, while the experiential archive looks to do away with the hierarchies and power dynamics present in the traditional archive, there is a tension with the inherent subjectivities that run on Instagram.

Focusing on the implications of an internet archive, Barros (2016) states that the emergence of the internet has changed understandings and practices of the archive and archiving. The storage of knowledge on the internet has meant that a document can be retrieved by more people at the same time. Organising and classifying these documents online has also made it easier for them to be found (Barros 2016, 614). However, the scholar remains suspicious of the potential barriers of access to the internet archive. The conventional archive's entanglement with power can reappear on the web as it is implied that hierarchies of knowledge are still present on the internet (Barros 2016, 615). The presence of these hierarchies implies that there is still a judgment of exclusion and inclusion. This selectivity would determine how history is recorded, organised and what may be archived. While with the conventional archive, much of this judgement was guided by the priorities of the state, internet archives could be considered as being subject to the changes and terms and conditions of the larger database that they are stored under. Often, the knowledge within the internet archives is stored behind paywalls and institutions, meaning that the access to this knowledge is not unlimited. The platform is limited in that the algorithm determines what the user might see and what it does not (Xaba et al. 2021, 88). This suggests that although social media platforms can be advantageous for artists, their agency is restricted. A network such as Instagram, which is owned by Facebook means that the company owns and determines what data is shown on the platform. Thus, users are subjected to the terms and conditions of the network's owners which further determines the algorithm. Therefore, the power lies with the corporate companies and not with the user.

Conclusion

Through the use of Instagram, theatre makers have been able to create an experiential archive that is active in propelling their careers forward. While uploading material onto the platform has become a way for the practitioners to preserve their work and rehearsal processes, it simultaneously markets them to audiences and potential funding and sponsor opportunities. When theatre practitioners are able to archive their work, grow their audiences generate more funds that go towards the making of theatre, they are working together to ensure the future survival of the discipline. This contrasts the conventional archive as its material acted as evidence of the past and only considered the voices and selection of historically dominant figures. Therefore, theatre makers refigure these traditions through a living archive that considers various voices. While there are challenges posed in its use, theatre makers still find Instagram most useful in this process.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The action of refiguring the archive requires that issues the concern access and the historical epistemologies that have underpinned traditional are addressed and challenged. By uncovering the process and practices that theatre makers in Johannesburg employ in the development of theatrical work, it became evident that the practitioners are engaging with knowledge that has previously been neglected. Through their use of Instagram, theatre makers have found another way to uplift the invaluable knowledge that had been pushed to the margins.

Chapter 2 unpacked how optimum engagement with the experiential archive occurs during rehearsals. By contextualising the history of the archive, it depicted the various shifts that occurred in its conceptualisation. In understanding the monolithic nature of the archive and the barriers to entry that surround it, Peterson's (2002) notion of the experiential archive enables us to imagine a repository that brings the knowledge that reflects the histories, experiences and realities of previously marginalised people. Further, it encourages the envisioning of preserved material as being more than official records and documents. This extends itself to song, movement, memories and skills. During rehearsals, theatre practitioners bring forth their embodied knowledge to interpret and enact their scripts. Initially this process is disorganised and chaotic due to the abundant knowledge that is exchanged. However, through interaction, and engagement with each other and audiences, this becomes a coherent reservoir that is portrayed on stages. The value of what is shared is validated through the continuous documentation that occurs during rehearsals. This suggests that Instagram is one of the ways that the theatre's experiential archive is preserved. Further, in sharing it with audiences and enabling them to access it through their profiles, theatre makers are refiguring the conventional conceptions of the archive.

The third chapter explored how the theatre's experiential archive is dependent on the presence and participation of both the practitioners and audiences. However, due to the long-standing implications of South Africa's history with colonialism and apartheid, there are significant challenges in being able to easily engage with the experiential archive of the theatre. The lack of support from the public and private sectors, failed initiatives, a culture of indifference towards the performance arts and economic insecurity have greatly impacted access to the theatre's experiential archive. While there have been attempts to reduce these blockages, it has still taken much effort for theatre makers to overcome them. The use of Instagram has not only

granted audiences and other theatre makers entry to the experiential archive, but it has also become a space in idea and creative exchange can occur. Moreover, Instagram has acted as a hub of information, networks and communication about potential opportunities that otherwise would not be as available. An important aspect of refiguring the archive was to address the barriers to access, and theatre makers are actively doing so not only through social media but also through the creation of idea spaces.

The fourth chapter explored the idea that the experiential archive is a living and dynamic archive that continuously works to secure the future of the theatre and performing arts. While uploading material onto the platform has become a way for the practitioners to preserve their work and rehearsal processes, it moonlights as a marketing tool. In doing so, it acts a tool that assists practitioner in acquiring resources. The ability for theatre practitioners to archive their work, grow their audiences and generate more funds are put towards the making of theatre, it is collaborating to ensure the future survival of the space. Traditional archives, while actively working to enforce the values of oppressive states, are reformed with the experiential archive. Therefore, theatre makers refigure these traditions through a living archive that considers various voices. It is important however to consider that Instagram as a repository is not value-laden and theatre makers are still subject to the hierarchies and biases that are inherent to the platform. Despite this, however, theatre makers still find ways to make use of the social media platform to aid in their success and that of the theatre.

Therefore, the refiguration of the archive does not begin with the use of Instagram but rather, theatre makers are constantly engaging, contributing and uplifting the invaluable knowledge that is within the experiential archive. By acknowledging that material and presenting it on stages where the public can experience it is in itself a reconstruction of traditional archives. Instagram becomes the space in which the experiential archive exists for access and use by all.

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UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

Anthropology Ethics Committee

Constituted under the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical)

Clearance Certificate

Protocol Number:	ANTH2024/04/02
Project Title:	*Re-collection: Understanding how theatre makers in Johannesburg refigure the archives through Instagram and contribute to the experiential archive*
Investigator's Name:	Ms Keamogetswe Leburu (2331571)
Department:	Anthropology
Date Reviewed:	19 April 2024
Decision of Committee:	Approved Unconditionally
Risk Level:	Minimal Risk
Date of Approval:	21 May 2024
Expiry Date:	22 May 2025
Issue Date of Certificate:	23 May 2024

Chairperson: _____

Professor Julia Hornberger

CC supervisor: Kholeka Shange

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and ONE COPY returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

_____ _____

Student Signature **Date 05/24/2024**