

3EM Office

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To: thirdear@iafrica.com
Subject: US-Africa Project
Date: 23 September 1997 07:50

(From Alan Brody)

Dave,

Thanks for the notes. I really enjoyed Pieter Dirk Uys' tape and I would definitely like to see him at Brooklyn Academy of Music (or wherever) in NY. I would certainly do a review on him for Juluka and probably Naspers in SA (Beeld etc.)

I would be very interested in how and for that matter, how much of his humor translates over here.

I also read the Jeremy Taylor book. Very interesting. It left me wanting to know more. Perhaps I will work on an email interview. I'd want to know more about his dark years, how he grasped the SA vernacular so well--and why. Was there a British equivalent to his career in exile. How does he compare Kenya to SA?

About a musical show....

You should probably know that the Lion King is about to open up here and it has already received strong reviews. It is also largely sold out.

This is not typical Disney nor is it really for kids.

The director was hired from avant garde theater and this all about nouveau primitivism. This is not your typical Disney big hunter with a camera at the Serengeti.

My basic idea is something like this: We develop a concept, assemble the pieces in SA, try it out in parts, get it all together and then bring in US producers to evaluate and bid on the show.

There is no way I can guarantee a sponsor. I can only guess at what might make them interested. One very big thing will be the success of the Lion King and the assembling of the SA communities as guaranteed seatbuyers (a distinct possibility with the right performers).

I have been toying with a couple of ideas and they are all very Americentric: one that seems so obvious is just this, an uninformed but well-heeled and well-connected American producer is inspired by the "new Africa" and for that matter, the success of the Lion King and goes to South Africa to look for a show to bring back to New York to make a killing. He wants something that captures the real story of South Africa: the scope of its history, its struggle and its real culture. He also wants to make Americans feel good about themselves. He has a black American partner. When he gets to South Africa he finds that it is more complicated than he imagined: there are more stories than he thought, there is NO one culture and he finds the different groups are competing for his attention. To satisfy all his constituencies and American sensibilities he brings back this one show which is a sly parody of what Americans expect.....

The other idea is not that different except that in this case, somebody comes up with the bright idea of using South Africa as a vehicle of an African-American neo-colonialism in which successful black Americans imagine themselves reinventing Africa in the image they have evolved in the US.

My preference is for the first although it may not be an entirely bad idea too incorporate that idea into the agenda of the black partner.

I can think of several subthemes to tie this together and in some respects has a little bit of the Soound of Music in it, if you think about the show-within-a-show concept.

Here are couple of title ideas:

Cape to Coney
Kwela New York
Hello Africa
Mandela Blues
Johannesburg--New York
The Boat Back....
The Sun Dance

I could go on...

If you're interested I would go on to do a 4 or 5 page treatment with some song ideas.

Keep in mind my friends--whom we never got to introduce you to Mbuyiselo and Ntomb'khona--are heavily involved in the Lion King.

Regards,

Alan Brody