

EXIT SEASON OF VIOLENCE

THE season of violence is over.

Does that mean the season of simplistic, clichéd Verwoerdian horrors and indigenous stereotypes portrayed in theatres, art galleries and at poetry readings is over too?

For every complex Athol Fugard disposition on The South African Situation, there's a naive, often undramatic piece of agit-prop stomached by theatregoers with as little consumer militancy as Jackie Onassis at a boot sale.

The same is true of other art forms as well. Will it ever be possible, for example, for a scriptwriter to create a block of flats where South Africans of all shades live together without flinging the Freedom Charter and the AWB guide to Nazism at each other?

The recent reformist moves by President De Klerk may have caught various sectors of the creative community flat on their feet, but the relaxed political climate could also breathe fresh entertainment into our lives, say art chiefs.

Capab chief director George Loopuyt, Baxter director John Slemon, Community Arts Project chairman Mike van Graan, UCT drama department head Mavis Taylor and impresario-director Pieter Toerien are quick to warn, though, that it may take some time before the changes are seen.

WHILE some are cautiously optimistic that the cultural boycott might be adjusted, others believe it will remain in force until our political house is completely in order.

By TYRONE SEALE
Weekend Argus Reporter

On the cultural boycott John Slemon said: "It's too early to say what will happen. There's the Equity (actors') union who will decide, and that will probably only happen after consultation with the Mass Democratic Movement here.

"The boycott is still in force and until that's lifted, there'll be no immediate change.

"I don't see any dramatic change in the coming months, but let's see what happens in the coming years. If we keep moving fast on other fronts, we could see a change in theatre."

Capab chief director George Loopuyt does not expect dramatic changes, but hopes that internationally doors will begin to open.

"I certainly hope that the President's moves will draw a positive response.

"I don't believe that things will change all of a sudden. I know there are people who will not even contemplate talking to us in cultural terms until South Africa has one man one vote. I've been told that.

"But I think people might begin to make certain works available to us and that more and more artists will be prepared to come. We've already had one or two contacts from people saying they might consider coming here."

UCT drama chief Professor Mavis Taylor said: "I don't think there will be major

changes. The ANC will be very cautious about the (arts) boycott and I don't think we'll get the performing rights for all the things we want to do.

"I think it's going to take time."

Community Arts Project chairman Mike van Graan believes that even if the cultural boycott remains, the now unfettered international links of the ANC will benefit cultural organisations in South Africa.

"I think that cultural types within the ANC will be a lot more specialised about their thinking and understanding of the arts as an independent side of struggle.

"Their coming back will help to open many debates in the cultural arena and I think this will lead to more room for experimentation, both in content and form."

Pieter Toerien, a guru on the financial aspects of the arts, said: "Undoubtedly the President's speech is the best thing for theatre since venues were opened to all races.

"This must give everyone in the entertainment scene a rethink about our situation.

"I think even the progressive movement will have a rethink. They've been strongly principled, but I think people will acclimatise and things will swing into the favour of the country.

"The changes must make them go in new directions, because theatre, for example, mirrors life. F W (de Klerk) is creating a new South Africa with a new excitement that writers must reflect."

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