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DEPARTEMENT VAN GEMEENSKAPSBOU
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENTKantoor van die—Office of the
STREEKVERTEENWOORDIGER
REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

Privaatsak/Private Bag X9027

CAPE TOWN

8000

The Director
Mr. H.L. Stern
Masque Theatre
"Shalvah"
Beach Road
MUIZENBERG
7945

1980 -03- 14

Sir

PROCLAMATION R228 OF 1973 : APPLICATION FOR AN OPEN CONCESSION:
MASQUE THEATRE, MAIN ROAD, MUIZENBERG (WHITE AREA)

With reference to your letter HLS/RF dated 9 January 1980 I have to inform you that an ^{open} concession has been granted to you for Coloureds, Indians, Chinese and Blacks to occupy the Masque Theatre, Muizenberg together with Whites on the occasion of live shows on condition; that -

1. the open concession will not apply to mixed appearances on stage; and
2. the open concession be withdrawable at the Minister's discretion.

Yours faithfully

REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

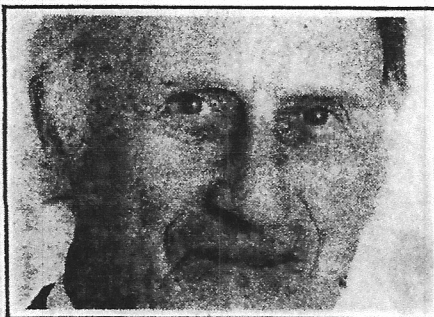
25 years of the Masque

THIS year the Masque Theatre at Mui-zenberg reaches its silver jubilee, and during those 25 years it has made a notable contribution to the success and advancement of amateur theatre.

Originally a roller-skating rink, and afterwards a bowling alley which went out of business, the building was unused for a considerable time until Mr H L (Bertie) Stern — a man whose interest in amateur theatre was widely known — bought the building and converted it into an intimate theatre which became the focal point of a theatre club, which it remains to this day.

Bertie Stern, who had been a stalwart supporter of the South Peninsula Dramatic Society, had seen the need for a theatre which could be used by amateur groups who were having to rely on hiring halls, most of which were unsuitable for stage presentations. The South Peninsula Dramatic Society became the Masque Theatre Players, and the new venue began to be used extensively by various amateur groups.

The theatre has the advantage of not being too far out of town for a large number of the non-professional com-



Mr Bertie Stern

panies in suburban Cape Town, and, although it has been primarily used by amateurs, there have been many productions there by established professional bodies.

In time it became obvious that alterations to the stage and backstage were required. The proscenium arch needed to be raised and widened. This meant raising the roof over the stage and other alterations. For a time Bertie had hassles with the Cape Town city authorities

over building regulations, fire regulations and by-laws. Persistence eventually got everything settled, the alterations were made, and it became possible to stage shows which would have been impossible without them.

The theatre is not a commercial undertaking. It was intended as a non-profit amenity for amateur theatre. In fact one suspects that it has probably been necessary for Bertie to put his hand into his pocket many times in order to keep the theatre going. Certainly it is his hobby — if one can call owning a theatre a hobby.

Equally certain it is true that no amateur society has been out of pocket through using the Masque for its productions.

More and more societies are now using the Masque because of the high cost of hiring halls which are less suitable for theatrical productions. This is a good thing since it would be a tragic loss to Cape Town's amateurs if it became necessary to close the theatre through lack of support.

GEOFFREY TANSLEY

Nov 1970

Our Man Of The Month

This month we have selected the Director of The Masque Theatre as our 'Man of the Month'. Bertie, who is a legal man, has done much more for our area than is generally known. Before the war, as a Scouter, he made our local Scouts a real force in the Gordon's Shield Competition.

Grown men all over the Republic remember Sandpiper for his keen interest in Youth during the pre-war days. During the war he was a Commissioned Officer in our famous Cape Town regiment, "The Dukes".

When he purchased the old Bowling Alley in the Main Road, Muizenberg, for a Theatre, everyone said, "Poor old Bertie's gone nuts". However over the years, through sheer hard work and organising ability, he has made the Masque Theatre into our finest local amenity. As the years have gone by The Masque has gone from strength and to-day it has become an integral part of the local scene.

Profits from this theatre have benefited innumerable charities. Bertie is also a Past President of the Muizenberg Hebrew Congregation and is its present treasurer. Oh, I forgot! — without the great help and assistance of his wife, Matilda, I doubt if Bertie would have achieved so much, particularly in regard to The Masque.

The 'Muizenberg NEWS' salutes Bertie and Matilda.

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sense of fun transferred into 1968's prize winning radio play. It was a delightful script written by a master craftsman. He deserves success. His stage play "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead" was a smash hit in the West End and on Broadway.

Masque raises the roof and stages 'The Arcadians'

MOST people hereabouts who are interested in the theatre know that the power behind the Masque Theatre at Muizenberg is Mr. H. L. (Bertie) Stern. More than 10 years ago he acquired a disused bowling alley and converted it into the little theatre that has become a focal point for amateur players—and occasionally for professionals.

The conversion job was difficult enough in itself, but there were further difficulties because of the regulations which govern buildings used for public entertainment. One by one the problems were overcome, and the theatre was opened.

It had, however, limitations which made it difficult, if not impossible, to stage certain productions. The structure of the building, as it was, brought the ceiling over the stage very low, without any fly space at all. The proscenium was also not wide enough, and provision of adequate front lighting was a major problem. The stage had, nevertheless, plenty of depth.

Almost from the outset Bertie Stern has had dreams of raising the roof over the stage, making the proscenium wider and installing a flexible, electronically-controlled lighting system.

WAY CLEAR

About six months ago he saw his way clear, and the order went out to architect and builder. Bertie went overseas on holiday and left the job in the hands of those who were to do it.

On Saturday night the theatre reopened with "The Arcadians", presented by the Masque Theatre Players.

Most of the players in this presentation are youthful, as is the producer, Alastair Shelden. The production would have been better for much more rehearsal since many of those taking part are inexperienced.

Vocally, especially with regard to the chorus-work, the show would have gained had the singers been trained in part-singing. A skilled chorus-master is vital for a show of this type.

IN UNISON

As it was, almost without exception, the numbers were sung in unison. A pity; since the vocal parts are well-written in the score, and the music lends itself to good treatment.

I would have liked, too, for there to have been a conductor to keep the players and the small orchestra together.



Bertie Stern

But the show does well on the comedy side. Michael Herbert is very good in the part of Simplicitas—the man around whom the script revolves. Excellent comedy, too, comes from Embra Human as the wife of the man Simplicitas used to be before Father Time brought him to Arcadia.

SLOW SONG

Robert Holmes is also well-cast as Peter Doodly the lugubrious jockey, but he spoiled his one song "I've Gotter Motter" (I've got a motto) by taking it at a snail's pace which all but killed it.

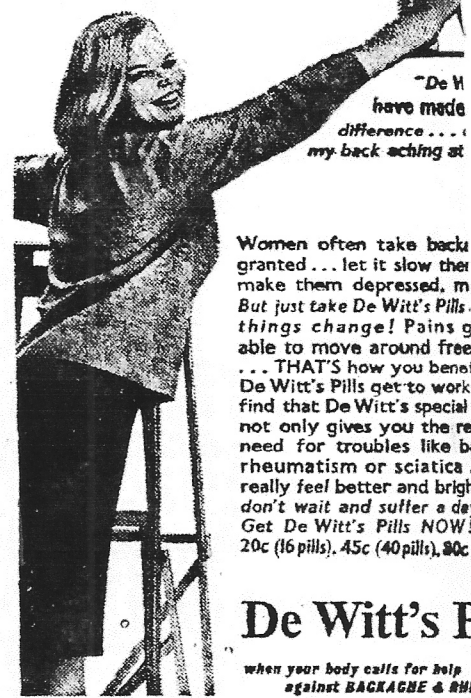
Vocally strong, and with a good stage personality is Ron Fenton who doubles the roles of Father Time and that of Sir George Paddock.

I liked Ilona Berman, cast as Eileen Cavanaugh, who caught the spirit and brogue of her part admirably. Avril Bee—a little nervous—plays Sombra, and Vanessa Barling is pleasantly cast as Chrysaea. These two are the principal Arcadian girls.

The cast is large, so it is

CLIVE SCOTT, who will be remembered for his playing of Prosser in "Uproar in the House", is to appear in another farce, "Flat Spin", which opens at the Lahia on Wednesday. With him will be Paul Chapman, Geoffrey Lumsden and the rest of the "Uproar" team.

BACKACHE



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Theatre left in trust — for R1

THE Masque Theatre — the late Bertie Stern's baby — is growing up at last. Big-hearted Bertie has left in trust his cosy 160-seat Muizenberg Main Road theatre to four theatrical societies for their use — at an annual rental of R1.

But there is no more Bertie in the background to pay the bills. It's up to the societies to make the theatre pay.

It's going to call for enthusiasm, planning and a campaign to build up audiences, but it is a challenge the four societies — Fish Hoek, Muizenberg (Mads), Sons of England and Constantiaberg — are determined to meet.

Celia Musikanth, who is in charge of publicity for the newly formed Masque Management Board, explained just how philanthropic Bertie Stern had been.

"We would submit to him details of our production costs for sets, costumes, photographs and royalties which were hefty — sometimes R1 000 for five nights. He reimbursed us for all expenses, plus whatever profit he felt he could afford to give us from



BERTIE STERN

the box office. It was very rare that we ever lost money."

Although the four theatre groups felt sure that Bertie Stern's death in September would not mean the final curtain at the Masque which he had built, loved and supported for so many years, it was only at the end of last year that they heard the new conditions under which they could continue to stage plays there.

"We were told at the first meeting of the Board of Trustees that Bertie had left the theatre in trust to us on condition that in any

two consecutive years there had to be a minimum of six productions mounted.

"It's a wonderful gesture. When he was alive we were already putting on 12 shows a year, so he knew that six was within our reach."

Under the new arrangement each society not only has to fund its production costs, but pay to the Masque Management Board between R1 700 and R1 800 for the hire of the theatre for three weeks and a levy on ticket sales and membership.

"This will be used to help finance annual running expenses."

The bottom line is that for the Masque to continue, there must be a minimum of 100 people in the house each night for the societies to cover their costs. Which calls for the utmost False Bay and Southern Suburbs support.

Few communities can boast this marvellous round-the-corner and down-the-road theatre facility. So there's a real glow about the future.

Fiona Chisholm

200 at funeral of Masque Theatre's Bertie Stern

□ His kindness touched many over the years

GLYN SPAANS

BERTIE Stern, one of Cape Town's leading theatre personalities, has died, aged 89.

At his funeral a crowd of more than 200 — many from far afield — gathered to pay their final respects to a man whose kindness and consideration over the years touched many.

Bertie Stern will probably be mainly remembered as the owner of the Masque Theatre, that stone-faced building so familiar to us in Main Road, Muizenberg.

The theatre, previously Cape Town's first bowling alley, has been the home of several amateur dramatic societies and over the years the numbers of enthusiastic members who passed through its doors and also performed on its stage

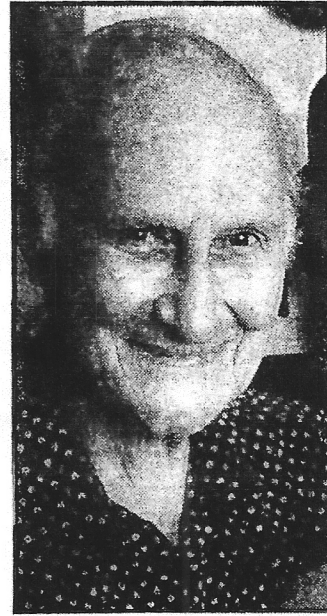
can be counted in hundreds.

Many have acquired fame on higher and even different levels, and one recalls the names of Yvonne Bryceland, Percy Sieff, Alec Bell, Athol Fugard, Lionel Sher and Clive Keegan.

The chairman of the Muizenberg Amateur Dramatic Society (MADS), Celia Musikanth, mentioned that it was Bertie Stern's advice she first sought when deciding to join an amateur society as a teenager.

And it was Bertie Stern who, at a very advanced stage in his life, obtained his BA at the same time as Celia's 20-year-old son Alain three years ago.

Activity in the Masque Theatre will halt temporarily as a token of respect for the former SACS pupil, UCT graduate and business leader.



Bertie Stern ... final respects.

Monument to Bertie Stern

The Masque Theatre turns 30 this year and to honour Bertie Stern, who has owned the theatre all these years, there will be a dinner and entertainment on January 27 at the Muizenberg Pavilion. Bertie spoke to JILL FLETCHER about the Masque.



Bertie Stern

IF he had no other monument, the Masque Theatre on the Main Road, Muizenberg would be enough for Bertie Stern. He bought it 30 years ago, the clapped-out remains of a night-club, which had been a bowling alley, a roller-skating rink, and before that a garage.

With the help of a builder and an architect, Bertie hammered the derelict building into a theatre ("every nail in the wrong place

but proved uncomfortable, and were replaced singly at a cost of £5 each. They're still there.

Bertie Stern is in his 84th year, but he is still a man who makes plans. In December '87 he received his BA from UCT (he's been a lawyer all his working life), and this year he hopes to return to university...

But back we go to the early days of the

to set up in the wings. This was subsequently given to the CODS, but destroyed in the fire which burnt out their Phoenix Theatre at Camps Bay (now Pieter Toerien's The Theatre on the Bay).

The Masque's new lighting equipment was operated from the back of the theatre. One of those "spots" was recently exhibited at a Nico Malan Open Day under the label "antique"!

The first production in the new theatre on January 1958 was *Sorry, Wrong Number!* presented by the South Peninsula Dramatic Society, and *The Bespoke Overcoat*, directed by Bertie with Alec Bell in the lead. From its inception the theatre had a club membership which quickly rose to 1300, and weekend audiences were literally packed in the aisles. "If we'd had chande-

fell to 300, but has risen again to 500. The initial 50c a year membership fee has risen to R5, and rates have soared to R200 a month, but "my policy has always been that no one who plays at the Masque loses," Bertie says.

"With expenses paid, there's always something over for charity. Charities have benefited enormously from the Masque over the years."

Although today it's known as a theatre for amateurs, many a well-known professional has trodden its boards — names of famous people like Yvonne Bryceland, Athol Fugard, Neil McCarthy, Gillian Garlick, Percy Sieff and Zoe Randall.

For years the smooth running of the theatre was helped by Vera Lamude's tea-ladies, while Bertie's loyal partner and wife, Tilly, served in the box office. Today Pam Ross runs



● Bertie 'The Masque' Stern.

Bertie's kept Masque alive for 29 years

Anyone who knows the Masque will also know the name Bertie Stern. It is not simply that this name is synonymous with the Muizenberg theatre, but that for the 26 years it has been functioning as such, Bertie Stern has been the Masque.

BERTIE STERN bought the then broken down, derelict hole 29 years ago and converted it into the theatre which, for more than a quarter century, has boasted practically one show every month!

That it has done so, without the avuncular financial pats on the back that keep the Baxters and the Nico Malans ticking over, is entirely thanks to probably the last person who would admit it — Mr Bertie Stern.

Now he is in his 80s and he has handed over the reins, but not the purse strings, of theatre management to the chairman of the Bergvleit Dramatic Society, Pam Ross.

Not for the reasons one might expect, though. Lightening his theatrical load is not

part of a general wind down. It is only so that he can devote more time to the BA degree he began at UCT last year!

After all, majoring in Cultural History and Religious Studies, as well as handling a course in German, is not something one takes lightly. And certainly not when working as a consultant attorney at the same time and serving on more committees, including the support committee for the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra, than one cares to remember.

It is Mr Stern's love for theatre "in every form, and particularly amateur theatre", that has fuelled one of the Cape's best known venues for amateur dramatics through good times and bad.

Now all he wants in return is that "people appreciate what has been done there, and appreciate the show."

Pavilion controversy

Continued from page 1

for the proposed scheme was the greatest undeveloped coastal site in the Peninsula and that anything done to it should be related to the beach and to the majority of people who frequented the beach.

Neither squash courts, bowling alleys nor gymnasiums fell in this category, he felt.

He said the future value of the site was incalculable and that the greatest prudence should be exercised with regard to its development, which should be by the council. Whatever happened there, he stressed, should remain under public control.

Granting a 60-year lease was unacceptable. "In 10 years time how much will this site be worth? The people in this area will be stuck with something we are committing them to take.

"This is public property and is the council's responsibility to develop. If there is no money now it should be left until there is."

Another member of the executive, who preferred not to be named, agreed that other members were having "an intelligent rethink" on the issue and that there were still "very

definite doubts" among executive members as to its desirability.

The chairman of the executive, Mrs J Gibbs, said the executive's "yes" decision was conditional on stringent safeguards, including the need for an environmental impact study, which had been presented to the council.

She said the development would help create a village square and that from the time the pavilion was built "seeds were sown for further extensions."

Executive members had had ample opportunity to voice their objections to the scheme, but that after three meetings on the issue, including one which was addressed by the architect, Mr G Parker, the majority was still in favour.

School fete

MUIZENBERG High School does its bit for charity tomorrow, when it holds a mini-fete in its grounds in Dover Road from 3 pm to 6 pm in conjunction with Youth Year.

Each class will run its own stall and the proceeds will go to a charity of its own choice.



● Pam Ross.

PERSONAL.

PLEA FOR AMATEUR ACTORS

Mr. H. L. (Bertie) Stern, well-known actor, producer and drama adjudicator, made an earnest plea for the continuance of drama production in Worcester on Thursday evening last week. Mr. Stern was the guest speaker at a dinner of the Worcester Dramatic Society.

Mr. Stern gave a very interesting and humorous talk on his own experiences of the stage, which dated back to

1916, when he acted with Marda Vanne. He reminded his listeners that the first Little Theatre in Cape Town — the Playhouse Theatre — had been on the same spot as the present Hofmeyr Theatre.

He also reminded them that Maynardville was not Cape Town's first open air theatre, since Shakespeare had been produced in the open air in the Gardens many years ago.

Mr. Stern impressed upon his listeners the importance of amateur play-acting and producing. He appealed for producers in Worcester — "if you can't produce a three-act play,

start with a one-act". He pointed out that there was no need for a producer to follow any one particular method of production. "There's no such thing as a producer's method", he said.

He recommended the staging of modern plays, or even play readings, and said that the amateur stage should now "grow up".

"The amateur theatre **MUST** go on", said Mr. Stern, and added that it was essential as far as the professional stage was concerned.

He gave these final words of advice to amateur actors: They should remember their lines, speak clearly, and be sure to make themselves heard. It was a discourtesy to their audiences, he added, for them not to know their lines.



Mr. Stern accepts a gift from Mrs. H. J. MacDonald, wife of the chairman of the Worcester Dramatic Society, after addressing the Society at a dinner on Thursday evening last week.