

CLAIMING CULTURAL FESTIVALS: PLAYING FOR POWER AT THE *KLEIN KAROO NASIONALE KUNSTEFEEES (KKNK)*

Herman Kitshoff

University of Stellenbosch

Debates and issues surrounding race have plagued the Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees (KKNK) since its inception in 1995. Coloured communities, which comprise 65% of the Oudtshoorn region, have argued that the festival is too pro-white, too pro-Afrikaner, and thus too exclusive.¹ Festival organisers have been criticised for being racist for their apparent neglect in accepting coloured applications, while the festival format itself has come under severe scrutiny for being nothing more than a ‘boerebasaar’.² These issues, however, can also be seen as a mere symptom of a greater power play between various interest groups that vie for control of the festival, each with their own agenda and definition of the supposed role and character of the KKNK.

This paper will examine the direct and indirect claims that these focal groups lay on the KKNK, as well as the influences of their assertions on the KKNK. This will be done against the backdrop of ‘hallmark events’ in general, as the KKNK must be understood as a meaning-giving event with regards to South African culture. It is also vital to examine the current character and composition of white Afrikaners, as they are by far the dominant group of visitors to the KKNK, and have consequently significantly shaped the format and spirit of the festival.

The KKNK as a hallmark event

The annual amount of festivals in South Africa is estimated at more than 30. (Hauptfleisch, 2001: 169) Festivals seem to have taken root since 1995 in every community in which a feasible need of some sort has been identified. Other towns or communities host festivals that have a complete or partial connotation to their specific character. Examples are the 'Kalfie festival' in Hermanus, which is linked to the whale sightings at this coastal town, as well as the 'Oyster festival' in Knysna, and the 'Brandy festival' in Worcester, to name but a few.

Not all, however, are cultural festivals, nor do they adhere to the generally accepted characteristics of hallmark events, which stress that such events must be at least of substantial national significance. Many of them, too, are to be considered no more than 'celebratory business enterprises'. (Hauptfleisch, 2001: 169) Hallmark events have many facets and definitions, one being that of J.R.B. Ritchie:

'Major one-time or recurring events of limited duration, developed primarily to enhance the awareness, appeal and profitability of a tourism destination in the short and/or long term.' (Ritchie, 1984: 2)

Ritchie continues to stress the importance of the uniqueness of a particular event in guaranteeing the success thereof. When applying this point to the KKNK, it is clear that the festival's very focus on Afrikaans has become its fundamental recipe for accomplishment. Most studies, however, have viewed hallmark events solely as being large in scale, implying it to have significant international impact. Studies done on these events since the 1980's have pointed to, amongst other, festivals as being

considered hallmark events due to the relative impact they might have in their respective local setting. (Getz, 1984: 185) Hallmark events are then, most importantly, characterised and defined by its multi-level impact on the community and the environment, rather than by its nature.

Theorists of hallmark events differ on some aspects concerning the impact of hallmark events, but seem to have mostly agreed on the following identifiable points. (Goldblatt, 1996: 90) Firstly, hallmark events have a political impact, which could occur on a small scale, or have larger, perhaps national or even international ramifications. With regards the KKNK, its very definition as an Afrikaans festival is in itself a political statement. Attempts by the coloured community to gain greater access to the festival have obvious political undertones.

The second, economic impacts, relate to funding required for the festival, the prices of various tickets for various shows or forms of entertainment, as well as the impact the event has on the host community. Researchers have given much attention to these impact studies, as have prof. Melville Saayman, who has completed studies on the economic impact of the KKNK and Aardklop National Arts Festival. The impact of a hallmark event on the environment is a third consideration when dealing with national festivals such as the KKNK. Architectural changes also fall under this category, and include any structural adaptations brought about by the particular event or festival, permanent or temporary.

The final major point of interest regarding the impact of hallmark events, are the social and psychological affect the particular festival or event has on visitors, but

more importantly on the host community. The discussion will attempt to assess the impact of the KKNK on a range of interest groups, and will do this against the background of the contested nature of the event.

One Afrikaner?

Marlene le Roux of *Kunstekaap* had an extreme viewpoint on the proposed exclusivity of the Afrikaans cultural festivals. According to Le Roux, the festivals epitomise the post-1994 split of South African culture into so-called islands of ethnicity, which proves that there have been little sign of transformation in the performing arts since the demise of apartheid. (*Die Burger*, 3 April 2003: 13) Le Roux continues by saying that artists, productions, and audiences predominantly reflect a 'white culture', and that festivals are merely an extension of the Afrikaner culture, a culture that has changed little since 1994. She criticises productions of the performing arts for being ever too Eurocentric, and blames the government for mismanagement of cultural funding, as well as the department of arts and culture, who continue to fund Eurocentric state theatres. (*Die Burger*, 3 April 2003: 13)

In short: Le Roux supports a theoretical school that feels that 'white people' with their 'Afrikaner culture' are undermining South African culture. They are able to do this, as they have the economic power to literally make theatre speak their language. Anthony Wilson, actor and community theatre activist, supports a return to the systems of *Truk* and *Kruik*, as the current system of Arts councils that capacitate facilitation are, in his view, insufficient. (*Die Burger*, 3 April 2003: 14)

The apparent lack of multiculturalism at the KKNK has been a concern of organisers, the public, and artists alike, and has clouded the usually sunny April Oudsthoorn on more than one occasion. There is, on top of this, no reason not to be alarmed at the apparent lack of ethnic diversity at the KKNK, as 89% of visitors at the 2003 KKNK were white. (Saayman, 2003: 6)

But does a single, uniform white or Afrikaner cultural group truly exist? It would seem that both subtle and more obvious differences have incurred on white Afrikaners over the past 20 years, which have meaningfully manifested in the democratic South Africa. In this way liberal minded Afrikaners, known as the dissidents, fought on various levels to bring apartheid to an end during the 1980's, while other Afrikaners clung profusely to what remained of white political dominance. Contemporary discrepancies include likes and dislikes on a micro-cultural scale, as well as variations in perceptions of the Afrikaans language and the role of the Afrikaner in a post-apartheid South Africa.

If Afrikaners differ as to the proposed role and importance of Afrikaans, the recent language debate between the Afrikaans purists and the younger proponents of a more colloquial, albeit user friendly Afrikaans, or Engfrikaans, as it has been coined, highlights even more differences between Afrikaners, or Afrikaanses. The debate was formally set in motion by the book, *Daar's vis in die punch*, Jackie Nagtegaal's first novel. The 19 year old hails from Stellenbosch, and is part of a generation that mixes English words with a predominantly Afrikaans dialogue. Nagtegaal's book is a prime example of this.

According to historian prof. Hermann Giliomee's author of *The Afrikaners*, at least three different kinds of white, Afrikaans speaking South Africans can be distinguished.³ He believes that the Afrikaners can today be considered a composite group with a composite Afrikaans culture, with variations in the way they employ Afrikaans. Giliomee identifies the youth culture, the middle class Afrikaner, and the working class Afrikaner.

Aforementioned findings and theories might not be undisputable, but certainly questions the hasty generalisations imposed on Afrikaners and the Afrikaans language. The post-apartheid Afrikaner and Afrikaans speaker are anything but unchanged and static. They have become a dynamic, fluctuating group of South Africans, with different interests and outlooks on life in their country. They have come to need more than what a mere 'boereparty' has to offer, and it is therefore important to understand what meaning a festival like the KKNK gives to the lives of the local community and to the visitor.

Conceptualising the KKNK

The concept for a festival such as the KKNK was formulated in 1994, and was done by the then Nasionale Pers of Ton Vosloo in collaboration with Nic Barrow, who went on to become the first chairperson of the KKNK, and Andrew Marais, who became vice-chairperson in 1999. Nic Barrow is an established local businessman in Oudtshoorn, and has been at the helm of various projects to uplift the Oudtshoorn business community. The original idea, therefore, was to create an annual tourist attraction that could stimulate the economy of the Oudtshoorn region, as was done by the ostrich industry, which made Oudtshoorn one of the largest producers of ostrich

feathers for nearly 70 years.⁴ Nasionale Pers wanted desperately to enhance the Afrikaans language in a time of great concern and scepticism as to the future of the Afrikaner and his language in the wake of the new democratic regime and ANC governance. (*Die Burger*, 2 October 2000: 8)

The other main aim of this new festival would be the reaffirmation of the Afrikaans culture, and so the KKNK would be a festival primarily for all of those who spoke the Afrikaans language. This certainly turned out to be the case, as 93% of visitors in 2003 stated that Afrikaans was their first language. (Saayman, 2003: 18)

Oudtshoorn was chosen as the venue for this new development, because Afrikaans was considered to be the *lingua franca* of the region: Everyone spoke it, regardless of race or religion. The town is relatively small, which meant that attention would not be easily diverted from festival events, which might have been the case had the festival been held in a city.⁵ The festival is organised to coincide with the school and university holidays of the Western Cape during the first week of April, a time of relatively milder weather conditions in the Klein Karoo.

Because of Barrows' involvement in the conceptualisation- and planning process, Oudtshoorn was also earmarked for economic upliftment, as was Grahamstown with regards to the annual festival in that town. The KKNK's identity would be that of a summer festival, one which the whole family would be able to attend and enjoy. (*Rapport*, 5 March 1995: 20) Pieter Fourie, a member of the organising team and former festival director, summarised the organisers' intentions as follows: '*Die KKNK*

is nie 'n Afrikaanse fees nie, meer 'n fees vir Afrikaanses wat oorwegend, maar nie eksklusief, Afrikaans is.' (Rapport, 12 November 1995: 20)

The town of Oudtshoorn and its location in the Klein Karoo have always been aesthetically connected to the perceived romanticism of the Afrikaans language. As the hometown of the legendary Afrikaans writer, C.J. Langenhoven, it was easy for the Oudtshoorn festival to find a character and meaning that would serve the suggested post-apartheid needs of the Afrikaans language and its users. It is in this sense that the KKNK can be linked to other earlier celebratory festivals that have served as an emotional anchor and reaffirmation of solidarity of the Afrikaner, essentially based on the Afrikaans language.

One such example is the Langenhoven-centenary festival held in Oudtshoorn in 1973. It was chiefly organised by Sarah Goldblatt, Langenhoven's personal assistant, who wanted to strengthen Afrikaner esteem, as well as to resurge the Afrikaans language, of which she was understandably passionate. As with the KKNK, the Langenhoven-centenary seemingly came at a time of perceived disintegration of the Afrikaner and fear of the polarisation and even loss of the Afrikaans language. (Grundlingh and Sapire, 1989: 25)

In the same way, the KKNK has truly become the very symbol of the rebirth of the Afrikaner culture, supposedly free from its former association with apartheid. The specific role and legacy of the town of Oudtshoorn in this development is therefore fundamental. The Afrikaans language had found a new home, and the Afrikaans culture would rejuvenate itself.

The festival organisers thus emphasized the importance of the Afrikaans language as opposed to racial or ethnic focus, a retort that would become ever popular amongst supporters of the KKNK in the years to come. The organisers had hard evidence to prove that their festival was indeed succeeding, as 90% of visitors to the 1996 KKNK were Afrikaans speaking, as a study conducted by the Cape Town Technicon showed. (*Die Burger*, 30 April 1996: 13) As Andrew Marais commented: *'Mense gaan na Oudtshoorn om grotte en volstruise te sien, maar hulle gaan na die KKNK vir Afrikaans.'* (*Die Burger*, 30 April 1996: 13)

Developments at the KKNK since 1995

By its second year in 1996, the KKNK had become an overnight success story, despite a financial loss of R146 000 in 1995. (*Die Burger*, 30 April 1996: 13) Ticket sales had risen by 500% since the year before, and sponsors contributed R2 million to the festival in 1996.⁶ (*Die Burger*, 30 April 1996: 13) It was indeed predominantly a festival for Afrikaanses, with conservative minded visitors complaining about actors swearing on stage in plays that were too expensive. Despite this, the festival had grown into a celebration of the Afrikaans language, and was shaping to be more than a mere 'island resort' for desperate Afrikaans speaking culture fanatics.

The 1999 KKNK personified the festival's commitment to Afrikaans, as the supposed centenary of the language was celebrated. (*Rapport*, 21 March 1999: 1) The official theme of the festival was 'Afrikaans oor 'n honderd' (Afrikaans over 100), and much of the main program was dedicated to various highlights of the Afrikaans language over the past 100 years, the current state of the language, and at what lay ahead. The

new *lesingreeks* gave a much-needed injection for critical thought at the KKNK by addressing such themes as the origin of Afrikaans, the future of Afrikaans, and the choices Afrikaners have had to make throughout their history.⁷

Amidst protests by coloured groups complaining that the festival was still too 'white', the academic, Neville Alexander, mentioned that the KKNK had a responsibility to make the Afrikaans language acceptable to all groups within South Africa. However, Koos du Toit, secretary of the *Taakgroep vir die Bemagtiging van Afrikaans (TABEMA)*, felt that Afrikaans found itself in a 'loopgraafsituasie' after 1994 and that the language had in fact been on the receiving end of lingering misperceptions concerning its former attachment to the apartheid regime. Its only haven, according to Du Toit, was the Afrikaans cultural festivals such as the KKNK. (*Rapport*, 4 April 1999: 11)

If Afrikaans has in fact been marginalized since 1994, as is evident when one looks at current practises in radio, television, advertising, and appointments at predominantly Afrikaans universities, the question begs whether it is in fact possible, firstly, for speakers of the language to make it accessible to other groups, and, secondly, if a festival such as the KKNK can be blamed for providing Afrikaans speakers, white, black, or coloured, with a cultural home. This argument becomes even more relevant in the light of the government's detachment from the KKNK in April 1999, as they stopped all existing funding for this Afrikaans festival. (*Die Burger*, 5 April 1999: 6)

The KKNK's newly appointed chairperson for 2000, Jans Rautenbach, as well as the new vice-chairperson, Andrew Marais, certainly had their work cut out by the end of

1999, as sponsors would start to play an even greater role in the survival of the KKNK.

The organisers' answer to these problems was to lengthen the 2000 festival by one day (the KKNK was now held over eight days, as is still the case), while sponsors such as *Die Burger*, *Rapport*, *RadioSonderGrense*, and *Klipdrif*, became intensely involved in the erection of tents where free entertainment would be available to the public. As the ticket sales rose, so did the amount of 'passive festival goers'.⁸ The events that were most popular with the roughly 42 000 visitors per day, were eating in the tents, drinking in the tents, and listening to back-track-aided cover artists in the tents. The fact that the organisers introduced 23 new productions to its program did not seem to trouble the masses in the sponsored tents. But how could it, if a theatre production averaged almost R50, while admittance to a tent cost a tenth of the price? Was the KKNK plainly becoming a venue to revel, to indulge for a week in a supposed cultural environment and overdose on boerewors and beer until the following year? The organisers, at least, would beg to differ.

The *lesingreeks* gave intellectual stimulation on a range of topics, which varied from the African Renaissance to the future of Afrikaans. Speakers such as Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert, Willie Esterhuysen, Johan Degenaar and Deon Opperman were invited to convey their thoughts on a number of subjects and debates. (*Die Burger*, 1 April 2000: 12) The tents were, in all fairness, popular, but the KKNK served up variety to its visitors, and who minded if money was being spent on beer and boerewors if it meant that visitors brought near R6 million per year to the KKNK, of which the organisers injected roughly R4 million into the Oudtshoorn community? (*Rapport*, 28

November 1999: 16) A library had been built in Oudtshoorn thanks to the KKNK's book project, and the festival created over 600 temporary jobs each year. The festival was, apart from agriculture and tourism, the district's biggest financial asset.

The *lesingreeks* grew in status in 2001, as did the popular entertainment in the tents, which led art critic Gabriel Botma to conclude that visitors to the KKNK could be divided into the 'rondhangers' and the 'teatergangers'. He believed that the festival was getting too big, and thus too impersonal, which led to the alienation of festivalgoers. The language debate and the political future of Afrikaners were the major topics at the *lesingreeks* and otherwise, while cultural issues at the festival were being politicised more frequently. This was, however, done with a misplaced focus, as shown by the media's unbalanced coverage of an incident at the 2002 KKNK in which the entertainer Steve Hofmeyr physically attacked Jan-Jan Joubert, editor of the *Krit* newspaper, for fashion banter. The resulting debate dominated the festival's cultural commentary.

Young people, who comprise the largest group of visitors to the KKNK, were now starting to judge the KKNK for not representing other cultures, as well as for the 'boerebasaar' atmosphere at the festival.⁹ The initial naivety of visitors and artists was beginning to wear thin. The KKNK was posing even greater challenges to the organisers, as artists and the public found the infrastructure lacking in various respects, on top of which funding was becoming an ever growing concern. Many sponsors had seized their financial support for the festival, while state funding was being diverted to other areas such as health and housing. (*Beeld*, 10 February 1997: 6)

Staking claim: Conflict of interest at the KKNK

What had thus become apparent as early as 1997 was that there were and still are at least six major interest groups that have been rallying for control of the KKNK. They are, firstly, the festival organisers, who have to strike a key between the artistic, which is not necessarily entertaining, and entertainment, which is not necessarily artistic. The KKNK is categorised as an Article 21 company, and is overseen by a board of directors consisting of 12 members, each serving a three-year term. The chairman, currently David Piedt, serves a two-year term. The board operates primarily in a consultative capacity, and is responsible for electing the central organising committee. The permanent management team (as opposed to the non-permanent board of directors) consists of five members, each with his/her own sphere of influence. They fill the following portfolios: Managing director, marketing manager, financial manager, client service manager, and special projects and services manager.¹⁰ The organising committee is divided into several subgroups, each with its own sphere of influence, and each with a central coordinator in charge of the specific duties of each group. The KKNK is thus run as a business company, segmented into various levels of organisation.

The organisers have to rely on a number of sponsors, the second major interest group, who each feel the need to have their own say, as do *RadioSonderGrense*, *Die Burger*, *Rapport* and other major claim stackers who support the ‘free entertainment’ schemes.¹¹ Considering that an estimated 84% of festival goers attend the ‘paid performances’, on top of which 70% of visitors spend most of their time at these forms of entertainment, it certainly seems to be the people’s choice. Sponsors do have

a strong claim to ownership, as they attributed to R6.3 million of funding for the KKNK in 2003. (Saayman, 2003: 35)

The organisers have to provide the paying public, the third interest group, who are roughly 90% Afrikaans speaking, with what they want, namely Afrikaans theatre, Afrikaans music, and a supposed Afrikaans culture. They set out to create an Afrikaans festival, and feel obliged to stay true to this, often it seems to the extent that quality is lost. Marthinus Basson believes that the KKNK had become conservative and thus set on populist entertainment. This is why, according to him, the festival has artistically lost its cutting edge. But he directs the blame for this at the media too, saying that their focus should rather turn to discussions on stage and art, rather than to exhausted debates on the Afrikaner.¹²

The fourth interest group is the local community, to which the sentiments of the coloured visitors to the festival, which comprise roughly 9% of the total number visitors, can be added. (Saayman, 2003: 7) It is understood that the needs of the local community are entirely unique, but since the majority of the Oudtshoorn local community is coloured, the issues they bring to the KKNK, being that of the festivals' accessibility and critique on its character, are the same as that of other coloured visitors.

The roughly 1000 artists that attend the KKNK annually are the fifth group of significance, and have in recent years felt a need to voice their discontent with the organisers. They are especially concerned with the insufficient infrastructure in Oudtshoorn, so much so that the dramatist Deon Opperman wanted to launch an

alternative 'Pro-Fees' in George in 2003, which was to be held over the same dates as the KKNK. According to Opperman, the aim of this would be two-fold: Firstly to present the public with quality productions, and secondly to financially assist artists. He also felt that George was equipped with better facilities than Oudtshoorn. Above all, much of the focus has moved away from theatre's social commentary, and onto its financial feasibility. (Bain and Hauptfleisch, 2001: 12) Apartheid-era subsidies no longer exist to guarantee cash in the bank for artists, and they are to a great degree dependent on festivals for a future in the arts. (Bain and Hauptfleisch, 2001: 12) Festivals have become their bread and butter, especially in a country where an estimated 4% of the public are considered 'theatre goers'.¹³

The media, the final major group of consequence, have often come under the proverbial hammer for unfair and uninformed criticism of artists and festivals. According to Liza Albrecht, editor of *Krit*, there are two main misperceptions when it comes to the relationship between artists and festival organisers on the one hand, and the media on the other. Firstly, Albrecht believes the media to have no obligation toward artists to 'sell' their work for them. Credit should be given only where credit is due. The second misperception is directed at Afrikaans festivals such as the KKNK. In this regard, Albrecht believes that the organisers of Afrikaans festivals wrongly suggest that the Afrikaans media should give preference to these festivals above English festivals such as the Grahamstown National Arts Festival.¹⁴

Like Marthinus Basson, she does however recognise the lack of critical debate directed at theatre and other forms of art. Perhaps then, the media is to some extent to blame for the lack in challenging theatre and other forms of art at festivals, as they

have too easily fallen into the trap of tangential debates and critique, as was apparent in reviews in the written media on Breyten Breytenbach's controversial play, *Boklied*, which was performed at the 1998 KKNK. Contextually, the play was an existential commentary on man's fate, aimed at the Afrikaner, but with universal appeal and significance. *Boklied* dominated popular debate at the festival for all the wrong reasons. Rather than analysing the artistic merit of the text, the visually challenging directing, or the level of acting, the debate on *Boklied* was overwhelmed by the explicit nudity of the actors on stage.

But since the early 1990's, when state theatres were opened for all races, an unforeseen problem has developed in South African theatre. Theatre productions held in townships during the apartheid years, were now moving to state theatres in the major metropolitan areas, and therefore out of reach for many township and rural dwellers who could not afford even journeying to venues in the city, let alone meet the expenses of theatre. (Mda, 1996) With the onset of cultural festivals such as the KKNK in 1995, the rural population again came into contact with theatre.

Festivalgoers have for some reason been led to believe that theatre should be more affordable at festivals than at the theatres in the big city. Most visitors travel many kilometres to attend festivals, to get their yearly fix of culture.¹⁵ Many stay an extended period of time, and must pay for accommodation, meals, and more.¹⁶ They might feel that having merely journeyed to the festival; the festival should now compromise them by offering everything at below-average rates. Again, the friction between the different interest groups at festivals is evident. Who should adapt: the

visitor, or the festival? Additional tension arises as local communities understandably stake their claim on these festivals.

The KKNK have tried to cater for as broad a taste and means as possible. They have provided near free entertainment in the sponsored tents that are geographically situated in the heart of the festival (this centred geographical setting has changed for the 2004 KKNK), whilst simultaneously trying to present quality events, like the acclaimed *Mamma Medea* that was performed at the 2003 festival. This could, however, only be done in collaboration with Aardklop, as funds required for the production of this three hour long play exceeded R750 000. Nearly all of the eight runs of the play were performed in front of a half-empty SANW auditorium, on top of which many people left during the interval.

Why then, is the majority of the criticism directed solely at the KKNK, if there are festivals such as *Womad* in Benoni, the *Oppikoppi* music festival, as well as *Woodstock*, whose visitors are also predominantly white? Even the Grahamstown festival bears an overwhelming majority of white faces. Has the KKNK done nothing to eradicate negative sentiments?

Silencing the critics: Has the KKNK done enough?

The KKNK has thematically constantly focussed on the history and the future of Afrikaans, and on the history and future of the Afrikaner. The organisers have tried to do this while simultaneously attempting to please the masses, who journey to Oudtshoorn once a year to do what they could do anywhere else in the country, except at the KKNK they have the company of thousands like themselves. Oudtshoorn had

become a place where everything was done by Afrikaners, for Afrikaners, as many had known most of their lives. This was by no means considered a shameful retreat of a bitter people back in 1994, a time of great uncertainty for the Afrikaner, his culture, and his future. The Afrikaner sought a new cultural home, and Oudtshoorn was it.

According to R.D. Sack, this consequential multi-level identification with place is an absolutely natural phenomenon, especially with regards to cultural festivals. The very effect of cultural interaction and exchange is to create sameness, a familiarity about places. (Sack, 1997) It might even, according to Sack, allow the visitors to experience a sense of power when he/she is in control or feels in control of the environment. (Sack, 1997) When this argument is applied to the political loss of power that Afrikaners experienced in 1994, it makes sense. The KKNK had become more than a mere retreat for concerned culture lovers after 1994. It had become a place where the Afrikaner could again feel in control of his life, and this is also perhaps why the coloured community have launched such a furious appeal against the KKNK. They too wanted and needed 'property' in the wake of a new and uncertain political climate.

But the festival organisers knew that the KKNK brought with it an obligation to the town of Oudtshoorn, and especially to the surrounding communities. Festivals that have developed in more recent years, such as the *Woordfees* in Stellenbosch, specifically pledge to educate the host community, a feat undertaken under the banner of inclusivity.¹⁷ The KKNK have hence done much to uplift the Oudtshoorn region, as well as bring arts to those who were and still are without the means to partake in it. The so-called *Voorbrandfees* was started alongside the first KKNK in 1995, and

undertakes to bring the festival, or rather aspects of it, to some 15 communities within a 100 km range of Oudtshoorn. (Rapport, 2 November 1997: 26) The project has been sponsored by a number of companies and institutions such as *Boland Bank* and *Die Burger*.

The *Afrikaans Taal- en Kultuurvereniging* (ATKV) have also erected an amphitheatre in Oudtshoorn in 1998 in which free entertainment is presented at the KKNK. A similar project was undertaken in Potchefstroom, and services the Aardklop festival in the same fashion as it does the KKNK.¹⁸ Funds generated at the KKNK's bookstall, have made possible the undertaking of a literary centre in Oudtshoorn, and reaches out specifically to disadvantaged members of the local community. (*Die Burger*, 4 April 1998: 4) In 2000, a library was erected thanks to the KKNK's book project, while the greater effect of the KKNK has seen a financial injection of over R100 million to the Western Cape.

The KKNK also has a formal policy of community involvement, which includes the following: (Rapport, 26 May 2002: 12)

1. Entrepreneurial opportunities for schools, church groups, and other organisations.
2. The availability of professional assistance in abovementioned projects.
3. The reservation of a number of food- and other stalls for needy institutions.
4. Non-specialisation posts are filled according to the region's population demographics. 500 of these are filled annually.
5. Local artists are given the opportunity to perform on so-called free stages.

The organisers are constantly revising these schemes to attain optimum community involvement, but are under constant strain to balance quality and quantity. Again the problem of the previously discussed interest groups arises, as well as the problem of coping with their demands, while simultaneously prioritising these demands at the festival. The question, it seems, is not whether the KKNK has done enough, but rather for whom they've done what.

Conclusion

It would seem that much of the criticism against the KKNK has been aimed at its visitors, and not at the festival itself. Valid criticism on the KKNK comes from the artists, who feel that the infrastructure in Oudtshoorn is limited. They have other concerns too, such as the way in which the festival program is compiled. There are others who share Marthinus Basson's sentiments that the KKNK has become conservative and unchallenging, that it has abandoned its wishes to be a trend setting spectacle. The media is to blame for this as they have an obligation, not to glorify the festival, but to critically query and discuss the value of artistic productions at the festival. It is in this sense that their obligation stretches beyond the borders of the festival, and onto the greater span of South African art.

So too, perhaps, must festival organisers utilize precious projects such as the *lesingreeks* to stimulate debate that focuses on the arts, and generate workshops that analyse theatrical texts or the meaning of a particular piece of visual art. If they are honestly trying to establish an entirely inclusive character at the KKNK, why then do the majority of debates at the *lesingreeks* still focus on the history, the struggles, the place and the future of the Afrikaners? In this sense, the distress of the coloured

community is significant, as they are led to believe that they are welcome at this 'festival for everyone who speaks the Afrikaans language', but are unable to join the plight of the Afrikaner, around which the festival seems to pivot.

As long as the media, the visitors, and the organisers alike encourage the KKNK's exhausted focus on the Afrikaner, be it in a good light or a bad one, the proper concerns will daresay never substantially surface, especially not from amongst the current row between the various interest groups, whom are working counterproductively against one another for control of the festival. The KKNK has too easily and too conveniently become a platform for those with an agenda to announce their grievances, often in sheer opposition to other interest groups.

The KKNK is targeted for two specific reasons: Firstly, because of its stringent intent on promoting Afrikaans, and secondly, because of the misplaced focus of discourse at the festival.

These two points of debate work interchangeably, for if the focal point of critique on the festival remains on nonessential issues such as the supposed archaic Afrikaner culture of koeksisters, beer and boerewors, the true and most important aspect of the KKNK as a cultural festival will be lost, being that of the quality of its productions. Conversely, if assessment is not directed at the artistic merit of the festival, organisers will not be forced to scout for better quality, even if it means abandoning some Afrikaans entertainment, and casting their lines into international waters. Again funding poses a problem in this regard, and without government aid and cooperation between various festivals, national arts festivals like the KKNK might never be able to achieve prominence as trendsetters and international competitors.

Notes

1 Critics, who refer to the KKNK as being too pro-Afrikaner, generally refer to a supposed white, Afrikaans speaking culture dominating the festival. More militant critics also condemn what they consider to be the traditional practises of these Afrikaners, for example the consumption of boerewors, koeksisters, beer, and more. These assumptions are for the most part based on generalisations.

2 Afrikaners are in some instances colloquially referred to as 'boere', while their dominant numbers at the KKNK have caused sceptics to negatively refer to the festival as a 'boereparty' (party held by 'boers').

4 Interview with prof. Hermann Giliomee. 21 August 2003.

5 The Jewish community in Oudtshoorn were greatly involved in the ostrich industry, as well as in other local business practices. Their financial assistance and marketing expertise were fundamental in shaping the Oudtshoorn economy. G. Saron and L. Hotz (eds.): *The Jews in South Africa*, p. 121.

6 Interview with Marthinus Basson. 22 August 2003.

7 The main sponsors of the 1996 KKNK were; *Transnet, Mnet, Santam, Klein Karoo Koöp., KWV, The Dutch government, and Nasionale Pers.*

8 The *lesingreeks* is a forum where speakers are invited to comment on specific themes, and where the public are able to raise their views on these subjects.

8 Ticket sales for 1999 was 101 000, and rose to 115 000 for 2000, while 60% more people needed housing for the entire festival or part of it. *Rapport*. 2 April 2000, p. 2.

10 In 2003, 29% of festivalgoers were between the ages of 18 and 25, the largest age group at the festival. (Saayman, 2003: 6)

11 Information obtained from the KKNK's official website. <http://www.kknk.co.za>

12 The KKNK has nearly 30 sponsors, each with a different level and area of involvement.

12 Interview with Marthinus Basson. 22 August 2003.

13 'Media versus Feeste'. Discussion held by the organisers of *Die Woordfees* in Stellenbosch, 12 August 2003. In Great Britain, with a population of nearly 59 million, the local population recorded an average of 21 million annual visits to the theatre during the mid-nineties. This does not, however, mean that 21 million individuals visited the theatre, but is nevertheless an indication of South Africa's inferior theatre culture compared to that of Britain. Nightingale (1998: 3)

14 'Media versus Feeste'. Discussion held by the organisers of *Die Woordfees* in Stellenbosch, 12 August 2003.

15 More than 14% of visitors to the KKNK are from Gauteng. The rest predominantly reside from the Eastern Cape and the Western Cape. In M. Saayman. *Die ekonomiese impak van besoekers aan die Klein Karoo Nasionale Knustefees te Oudtshoorn, 2003*, p. 25.

16 The average KKNK visitor spends R671 per day, and stays an average of five days. In this time, R858 is spent on accommodation alone. In M. Saayman. *Die ekonomiese impak van besoekers aan die Klein Karoo Nasionale Knustefees te Oudtshoorn, 2003*, p. 7.

17 Interview with dr. Dorothea van Zyl, chairperson of the *Die Woordfees*. 4 March 2003.

18 The ATKV amphitheatre in Potchefstroom was formally opened at Aardklop 2003.

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