

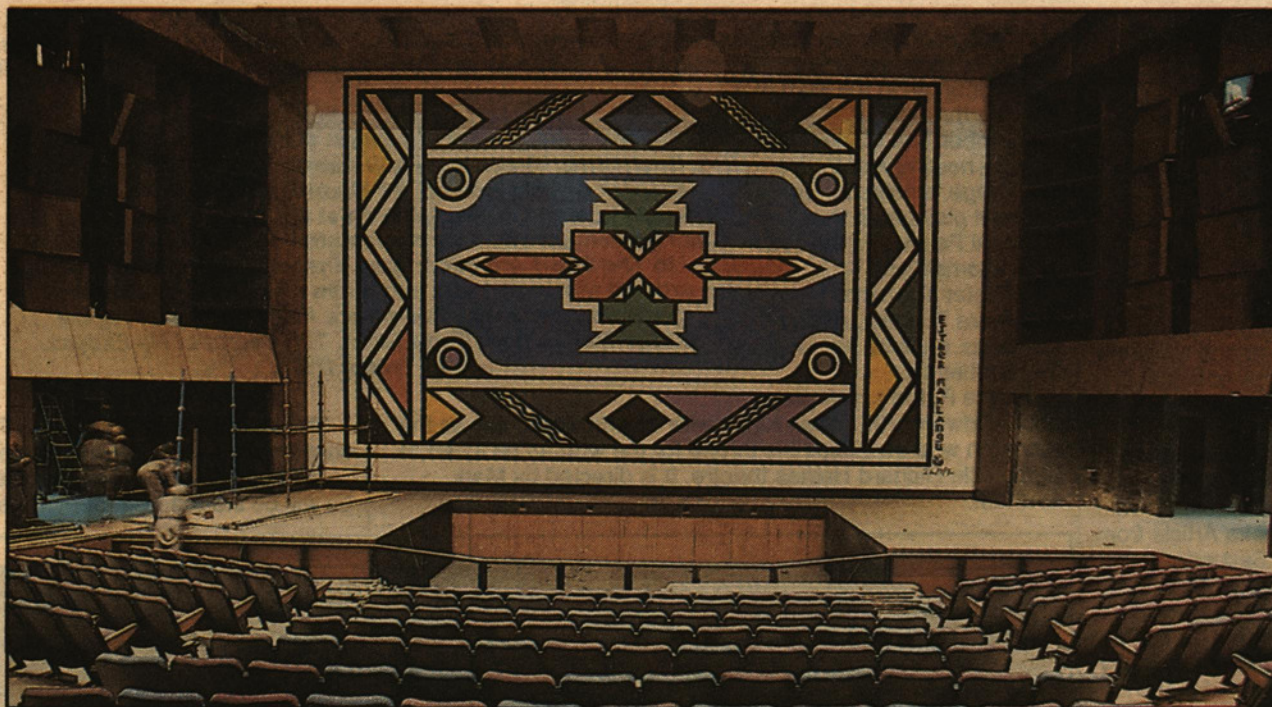
# New Civic ... arts for all

**WHEN** the new Civic Theatre opens in September, it will give the city of Johannesburg an entertainment and cultural complex of international stature.

The theatre will be launched with the prime objective of being accessible, a place which "belongs" to all of the people of Johannesburg and its environs. As a vibrant new cultural force in the city, the spirit of the new Civic is reflected in its line-up of inaugural productions designed to appeal on all levels.

The new Civic, which is being compared to the Barbican in London and the Lincoln Centre in New York, comprises four performance venues, foyers and state-of-the-art stage facilities in which a host of activities will be presented. The Civic will host anything from dance theatre, a Broadway musical, opera, ballet, pantomime, educational programmes for youth and workshop theatre to cabaret, exhibitions and product launches.

After five years in the dark, the controversial R132-million complex will show its new face to the world in September and will, it is hoped, live up to that part of its mission which says it will "provide worthy servants for the performing arts".



**ALL DRESSED UP AND READY TO SHOW...** The Civic Theatre's main auditorium can seat up to 1085 people. The dramatic Ndebele-style fire curtain was designed by artist Esther Mahlangu.

Civic executive director Micheal Grobbelaar and the Board of Governors of the Johannesburg Civic Theatre Association have given their assurance that the new Civic will be fully representative with participation by the widest spectrum of the community. To this end, a Joint Working Group (JWG) has been formed representing various

performing arts organizers, among them Christopher Till (Johannesburg's Director of Culture), members of the Board of Governors,

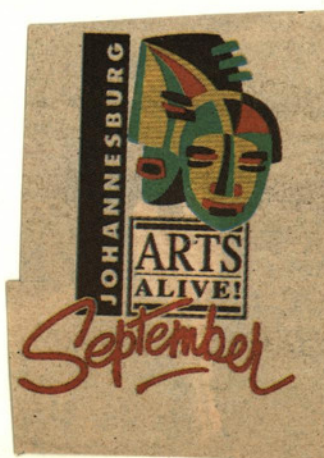
the Civic has in the cultural life of the city, ultimately putting in place a representative Board of Trustees and ensuring that the city is in touch with the transition process taking place in South Africa.

The new theatre complex comprises:

## **Main auditorium**

The showpiece of the theatre is undoubtedly the main auditorium, which retains its original shape out front, but has been entirely refurbished and can seat 985 or 1,085 people, depending on the positioning of the orchestra pit, which has been redesigned to accommodate 100 musicians. For acoustic reasons the ceiling has been raised by 3m.

A specially commissioned work by acclaimed Ndebele







including Cecil Bass (chairman of the Recreation and Culture Committee), and representatives of

PAWE (Performing Arts Workers' Equity), SAMA (South African Musician's Alliance) ACAC (Association

of Community Arts Centres (ACAC) and Dorkay House. The JWG will formulate a view on the role and position

artist Ester Mahlangu forms the fire curtain in front of the stage, creating a visual focus from the auditorium. The combined stage area is the size of half a rugby field and is at least as high as a 10-storey building. Everything is fully mechanised and computer-controlled, enabling all scene changes to be directed at the touch of a button from a control panel 11m above the stage.

#### Restaurants

A "five star" restaurant overlooking the city, a buffet and a light refreshment venue — open day and night — are being planned.

#### Function rooms

Five quality function rooms cum VIP dining rooms are being sold on a "timeshare" basis to the corporate sector.

#### Dressing rooms

There are eight "star" dressing rooms, five of which have en suite facilities (the big names require this!) and an additional eight dressing rooms catering for 160 artists.

#### The Tesson Theatre

This theatre, with its own entrance and foyer, seats approximately 200 and boasts a sprung-floor for ballet or modern dance productions on a smaller scale. It can double as space for theatre-in-the-round, supper theatre, experimental theatre or a rehearsal venue.

#### Pieter Roos Theatre

This venue has been upgraded into a performance venue for cabaret and drama, seating about 120.

#### Youth Theatre

This little theatre, which seats 160, is the most versatile of all. Together with its adjacent studio, it can be used for puppet theatre, chamber music, cabaret and children's shows. Its presence reflects the commitment of the Theatre's management to providing facilities for youth and developing audiences of the future.