



FEDERATED UNION OF BLACK ARTS

FORUM

VOLUME 2 NUMBER 2

VIEW POINT:

Arts education, commonly confined to equipping would-be-artists in all art forms with the necessary skills and techniques, should also go out to meet the needs of the community at large.

There is a tremendous ignorance around us. There are parents who do not see merit in creative endeavours, there are entrepreneurs who are blind to the function of art in society; there are financiers who place little or no importance on arts funding; there are people who call themselves "artists" but do not know the implications; and so on. Within the South African context we remain an island unto ourselves. Art is an expression of a people. It is possibly the only thing we have that is a positive assertion of our being. We need to extol that.

Certainly, we should concern ourselves with the community, with making it aware of art and the need for art, of the artist and his role in society. If the artist is trained and the art consciousness of the community is not appraised in tandem then surely we would be creating gulfs not bridges. The question of arts training and community involvement seem bound together. The artist creates out of his community, for his community. Should the community, not be made more receptive to that call?

BENJY FRANCIS.

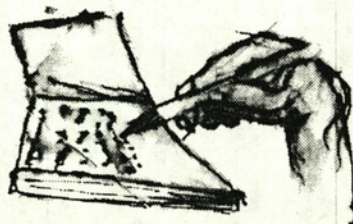
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING:

The first Annual General Meeting of Fuba will be held at the Fuba Centre on Saturday 24th May 1980 at 9 a.m. All members are expected to attend. Please note that only paid up members will be allowed to participate in the proceedings. Light lunch will be served thereafter.



CAMEO CONCERT:

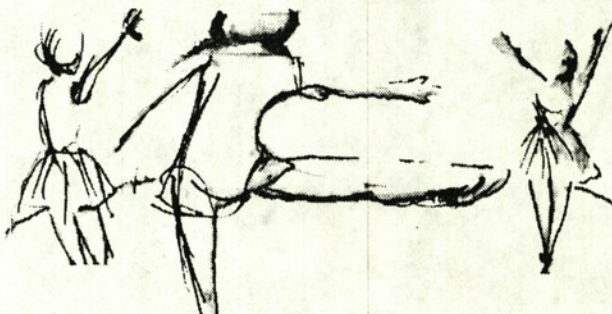
A programme featuring the work of Fuba students from all departments will be presented on Saturday 24th May 1980 at 2 p.m. at the Market Theatre. The concert will afford parents, sponsors, well-wishers and the public an opportunity of viewing the work of Fuba at first hand. After the concert there will be a get-together at the Fuba Centre over tea and snacks. Visitors will have a chance of chatting to students and staff.



CONTRACTS:

Contracts are a necessary instrument of business. Indeed a deal is only worth while if concluded with a contract. Having said that we must add that there are contracts and contracts. For this reason we urge members to cultivate the practice of consulting Fuba BEFORE they commit their signatures to contracts. In many cases binding clauses are irreversible. And it has been in such instances Fuba has been called upon to salvage the situation or extricate the artist. The possible we can attempt, the miraculous we daren't touch! Fuba shouldn't be seen as good only for exhuming dead bodies from graves.

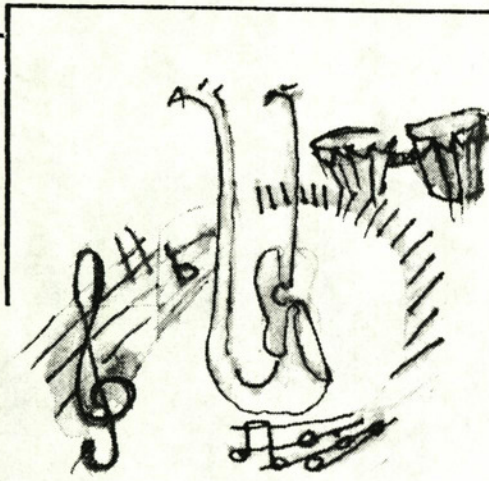
While at it we want to condemn those people who talk of exploitation but accept overseas contracts promising R24 a day and written in a language foreign to them.



DANCE STEPS into focus at FUBA

Fuba dance has grown considerably in strength. The children's dance group has swelled to over forty members. The eagerness of members is most stimulating. The children's dance group meets on Saturdays only from 10 a.m. to 11.30 a.m. The classes are conducted in two sessions because of the number and the range of ages.

The adult dance group meets four times a week and is being given a varied and demanding schedule of work by a dedicated staff. On Mondays classical ballet is taught by Gill Booth; on Wednesdays and Thursdays Robyn Orlin conducts modern dance; and on Saturdays Sylvia Glasser runs a project class. A jazz class with Sonja Mayo is planned for Tuesdays. These students have been with us for only a short while but already a nucleus of committed performers are emerging. With this kind of involvement a full-time dance course could evolve sooner than expected.



MUSIC CRITIQUE: — a four-part series beginning in this issue, on the local Black music scene.

There are various groups prevalent on the Black music scene with styles ranging through choral singing, jazz, soul, pop, mbaqanga and orchestral. While most of these groups are self-taught they remain musically illiterate. That is to say they cannot read or write music. Notable exceptions are the choral and orchestral groups who have some loose knowledge.

The choral groups specialise in TONIC SOLFA which is a limited kind of notation. It visualises neither leaps (intervals) nor rhythmic patterns. Orchestras use the simplistic STAFF NOTATION. Now these exceptions have grown false ideas about their knowledge. So much so that when one challenges them on improvisation some say "write the improvised line for me". What a farcical situation!

African music is by nature improvisational. There are instruments and dances for every occasion and each performance becomes a new excursion. That we have lost the flair for improvisation, an intrinsic part of our music heritage, is a serious indictment on our music scene. Should literacy mean death to one's identity and culture?

The elitist choral singer is weighed down by semi-religious flavour, innocent harmonies and tame rhythms. He has not challenged himself with new vocal techniques as are explored in jazz, blues and non-vibrato singing (a characteristic of the African singing style). In essence, this so-called learned performer is trapped by his knowledge. His knowledge does not create the bridge to more challenging and creative horizons.

On the other hand soul and mbaqanga groups exude a dedication and pride in what is, so to speak, inborn. The combination of tribal rhythms, religious themes, township nursery rhythms and the cliché western harmony chords i, iv, v, is, while exciting stifled in repetitiveness. Music is much more expansive. There are many more chords than primary chords.

Spontaneity is vital in art. Technical knowledge provides a firm base, but the act of searching is the life blood of creativity. This is what music training should be all about.

GEORGE MATHIBA

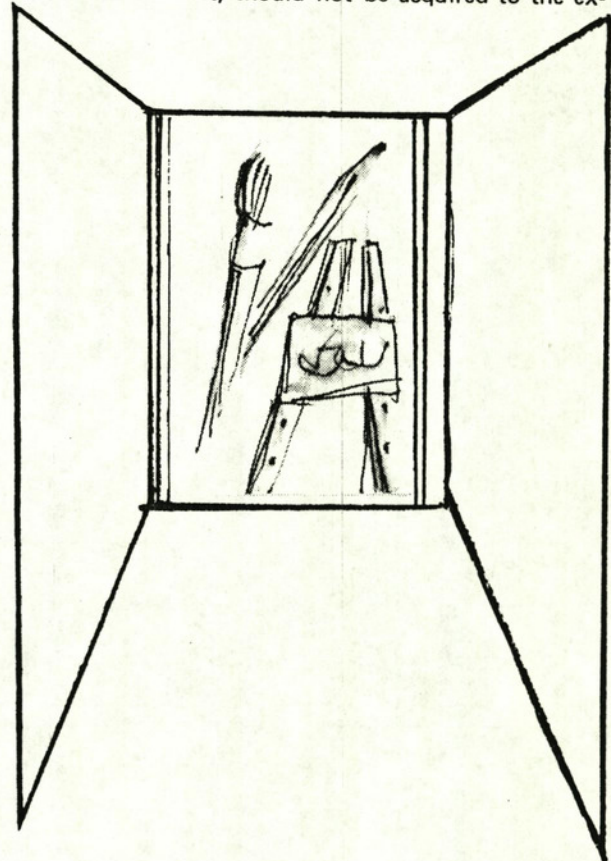
SEMINAR ON COMMUNICATION:

Writing is a form of communication. Bongani Khumalo is one of the very few Blacks in the country to specialise in this field. He paid his dues in the U.S.A. where he obtained an M.A. in this field. On the 21st June at 2 p.m. he'll share with us thoughts on communication with special reference to the role of the writer in this country.

An open invitation is extended to Fuba members and friends.

A MASTER STROKE: Notes to an art student

If the art student is to develop a professional attitude to his work, then he must be primed to assume responsibilities that such an attitude will demand. In addition to class exercises the student must realise that art involvement is time involvement. Outside of the actual course the would-be artist should keep a sketchbook, do research in libraries, attend exhibitions and lectures at galleries, read art books and periodicals and acquire and organise his materials. Obviously to achieve all this he has to regulate his time. Creative involvement demands one's entire being. This is not an easy task but is possibly the only way that challenges the potential of a talented student. An attitude that remains only in the classroom limits the student's development. If for instance the student is studying drawing he should learn to cultivate an interest in other areas as well. He should investigate painting, sculpture, design crafts, printmaking and other related areas. A knowledge of the art of the past, while vital to the student, should not be acquired to the ex-



clusion of contemporary trends. Likewise, a student steeped in contemporary work stunts his growth without a grasp of the past. A study of the development of art through the ages is important to the development of the student.

It is only by re-assessing the past and challenging the present that the would-be artist is able to chart his own creative course. Art is vital. (In subsequent issues of Fuba Forum we will be looking at elements like line, value, texture, colour and space)

DUMISANI MABASO.

POETRY WORKSHOP:

The next poetry workshop conducted by Sipho Sepamla takes place on June 7th at 2 p.m.



DECENTRALISED WORKSHOPS:

These work pockets established in Soweto and Alexandra by Fuba are a great boon towards theatre-awareness. Not only do these sessions have an immediate impact upon the students of the course but there is a ripple effect amongst neighbouring homes. People are definitely taking an interest in the work. Again the attendance of young ones is a credit to parents who see the need for this kind of arts activity. We are all aware that drama is totally neglected within the frame work of our education systems. It cannot be over emphasised that drama is an important aspect of the learning process.

As we grow into this appreciation, the fuller implications of drama also enlarge. We learn to question our heritage, the theatre that we see and the standard of presentation and performance that prevail. The work then moves away from its starting point, i.e. the individual to the community as a whole. We definitely need to establish as many such centres in as many areas as is possible.

PETER SEPHUMA



ON LANGUAGE: Everybody's talking stew.

The ghettos have their own free flowing language. It is neither Zulu, Shangaan nor Sotho. Not even. . . ag. . . In fact it is stew.

In the de-centralised workshops every Black language is presented. The use of one language in preference to another or even the use of an international language affects the quality of creativity. The order of the day is stew.

In life outside the workshop you also find a Venda makhulu, a Xhosa granny and a Sotho gogo sharing an idea across the fence in the following fashion.

"Ja on Sundayss uya kwa manyeu nge miletse xa a khumbule a masoja nemvanya you know"

So with the children in the streets. Everybody's talking stew.

JAMES MTHOBA

THEATRE ARTS TECHNICAL COURSE:

This initial 12 week course, concentrating on BASIC LIGHTING and PROP MAKING (MASKS) will terminate on the 19th June 1980. After a short break the course will resume with stage two of its programme. Stage two will include LIGHTING DESIGN, BASIC SOUND and STAGE MANAGEMENT. The course, however, will evolve in accordance with the needs of the students. Persons wishing to join stage two of this course should register with Fuba now. Stage two will also last 12 weeks.

RADIO AND TELEVISION:

A special course, on Radio Television under the guidance of Dr John Van Zyl of the Drama Department, Wits will be incorporated into the Fuba Drama Diploma. The course will begin on June 7th 1980 and will initially last for 10 weeks meeting once a week on Saturdays only from 12 noon to 1 p.m.

NEW STAFFERS:

Fuba is proud to have the invaluable service of the following persons.

Livy Phahle: well known jazz pianist who conducts jazz piano classes at Fuba.

Almon Memela: has joined General Duze and George Mathiba in the music department as a third guitar tutor. A versatile guitarist his speciality is Mbaqanga guitar.

Peter Molobye: has been with Fuba for some time as a part-time piano teacher. Since April he joined George as the 2nd full time teacher in the music department.

Luis Wald, violinist of the Jazz group Estudio, is conducting violin classes together with Mr Ahlers another noted teacher.

Ms. Hillary Blecher, theatre director and lecturer at Wits Drama, has joined the staff of the Fuba drama diploma course.

Ms. Thokozile Ngobese, was appointed administrative secretary of Fuba from May 1980. She takes over from Benjy Francis who deputised for the past year. Ms Ngobese hold a law degree and is ideally placed to assist artists on legal matters, in addition to her numerous other functions.

Patti Slavin: noted stage and costume designer, now attached to the Drama Dept Wits University is conducting a mask-making class as part of the theatre technical course.

Stephen Molobye, younger brother to Peter is now assisting Ms Lulama Msiwa with the Junior music classes which have grown considerably in number.

Benjamin Nsusha, a specialist in sculpture, silkscreen, photographic silkscreen and etching, and photography has joined the Fine Arts department as a full time tutor. A graduate of Rorke's Drift, Ben comes to Fuba from Natal.

We welcome all new staffers and wish them a long and fruitful stay with FUBA.

FUBA LIBRARY:

The following additions have been made to the library.

Wally Serote, Yakhal'inkomo; Poetry
Abrahams, Greig, Kirkwood, Saunders, Bateleur Poets; Poetry
Lionel Abrahams, The Celibacy of Felix Greenspan; Novel
Barney Simon, Joburg, Sis! Stories
Avril Herber, Conversations; Interviews

The above mentioned books were donated by Bateleur Press.

Sipho Sepamla, Hurry Up To It; Poetry
Sipho Sepamla, The Blues Is You In Me; Poetry
New South African Writing, Quarry '76, '77, '78-'79
Pascal Gwala, Jol'inkomo; Poetry
South African Poetry of the Seventies, A World Of Their Own; Poetry
Wally Serote, No Baby Must Weep; Poetry
Chris Van Wyk, It Is Time To Go Home; Poetry
Wally Serote, Behold Mama, Flowers; Poetry
Various Poets, To Whom It May Concern; Poetry

These books were donated by Ad-Donker.

We are grateful to these donors for their contributions.

