

. NMQKDEM 33mm

BACK IN YOUR OWN BACK YARD

DORKAY HOUSE JAZZ CENTRE

MAJA GRUJIC.

October 1992

.A discourse submitted to the Department
of Architecture of the University of
the Witwatersrand in partial fulfilment
for the degree: Bachelor of'
Architecture .

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INHWAL DRAmnNGs
FINAL DRAWINGS
3;?3BIBLIDGRAPHY

THE BIRTH OF AN IDEA

'He came here and played my past and future-~~pn~~ this table like a road. '1 My initial idea was to do a building to house the performing arts in general. This idea of a building housing and forming a backdrop or stage-set to the transient events of performance, were given focus after reading the following article; 2

DORKAY HOUSE 3:3

In the days of Sophiatown, 5 Elolf St was the jazz epicentre of the City. Father Trevor Huddleston, a social worker who took an active interest in the welfare of black artists, was the ptinciple mover behind the ttanstormation of a men's clothing factmy into a cultural centre. In addition to teaching, admin and rehearsal space, The Huddleston Jazz Band included Jonas G, Hugh M, Churchill Jolobe and Mongezi Velele In the 60's, the late Gideon qumalo taught piano. Besides providing space for teaching and rehearsing, Dorkay was home to the Union of Artists. Shows were per- formed around the corner, at the Bantu Mens Social Centre, now a West Hand Admin build- ing stuffed with bureaucrats. When Group Areas was intro- duced, activities at Dorkay stopped. donations dried up. and musicians were detained at fled the country. In the 70's David Thekwane, producer of The Movers. used Dnrkay for rehearsals, funded by Teal Record Companyt Through all the years and under very difficult circum- stances, Dorkay has been kept going by Oueeneth Ndaba. sister of the late Zakes Nkosi. Once a singer with The Melene Brothets, Ndaba took over the admin after her parents prohibited her from performing in 1968. Now she helns returning exiles and Robben Islanders get back into the music scene. and she hopes to revive the centre as a 'performance venue. Every three months, Dorkay show- cases new talent for the music industry. Theory as well as practical jazz, African jazz and mbaqanga classes are offered. On Saturday mornings children can Ieatn traditional dancing. The African Jazz Prophets and the Rohhen Islanders, The Whiplashes playing reggae, and The Boots

playing Afro Jazz, are based at Dorkay. Recently a trust was formed to raise funds to revive Dorkay House and its activities, such as the annual Jazz festivals of the early 60's (Remember the famous Castle Lager Jazz Festival. where an our great musos played?). Upstairs, there's a music school, offering theory and practical lessons for sax, trumpet, clarinet, piano, guitar and voice.

Having discussed the possibilities with Queeneth Ndaba, the administrator of Dorkay House, of reviving the Cultural Centre and re-establishing Eloff Street as the 'jazz epicentre' of the city, I began to formulate ideas on developing the potential of the Dorkay House precinct.

Suggestions had been made to Queeneth about relocating the facilities of Dorkay House to the Market Theatre precinct, where Kippias, a small jazz venue is thriving along with the cultural facilities of the theatre. Queeneth expressed her reluctance to make the move, as the history of Black Culture in general and South African Jazz in particular are rooted at no. 5 Eloff Street and the adjacent building, Bantu Men's Social Centre.

Queeneth Ndaba speaks about the rebirth of Dorkay House and Bantu Men's Social Centre, the return of the exiled musicians and the creative possibilities of the people and the site. She asks me what do I as an architectural student have to offer to this process of regeneration ? :

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The site chosen is situated on Turffontein Farm on the southern tip of the can. It lies to the west of Eloff Street in a prominent position with an active retail edge on Eloff Street, and runs between the old OK building' (Grosvner House) to the east and the new Hemmer Traffic Department to the west. The site to the north is bound by two large municipal parking grounds relating to Rissik Street M2 east/west off rupend the Receiver of Revenue. Diagonally opposite the site to the southwie-Fareday Station bound by the M2 E/H highway.

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HISTORY

The history of jazz along with the personalities of its musicians, provides for the rich and overlaid textures of this music form. Through this relationship jazz becomes a vehicle for the expression of energy, complexity and conflict.

'There's about three of us at the window now and a strange feeling comes over me. I'm sort of scared because I know the Lord don't like that mixing the Devil's music with His music. But I still listen because the music sounds so strange and I guess I'm hypnotised. When he blows blues I can see Lincoln Park with all the sinners and whores shaking and belly rubbing and the chicks getting way down and slapping themselves on the cheeks of their behind. Then when he blows the hymn I'm in my mother's church with everybody humming. The picture kept changing with the music. It sounded like a battle between the Good Lord and the Devil.

'Something tells me to listen and see who wins. If Bolden stops on the hymn, the Good Lord wins. If he stops on the blues, the Devil wins.'

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Menfs Social Centre and Dorkay, are two buildings that define the boundaries of the site, and whose physicalities and history helped to the process of the design.

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FROM B.M.S.C. to W.R.A.B.

Selection from 'In Township Tonightl'
by David B. Coplan.

Bantu Men's Social Centre was built in
1924. Funds were raised mainly by White
capital, who were concerned in having
a cooperative African workforce. It was
to be 'a great cultural centre for
Native life'. 4

This philanthropic gesture was made in
an attempt to keep workers happy
through entertainment, and hence the
site for the building was to be next to
the Native Mining Hostels, (now
occupied by Wemmer Traffic Department),
on the Salisbury Gold Mining Company
land to the south of the CBD.

Although BMSC was initiated and built
by White capital, and managed by
Africans under the direction of an
executive committee of initially mostly
Whites, it did become, along with
Dorkay House an important vehicle for
promoting African culture in
Johannesburg.

The success of BMSC was attained
despite it being seen by some as the
'high hat club of the Whiteman's Good
boys' 5, this was in part due to the
fact that BMSC de-emphasised ethnic
identity and 'tribalism' among
Johannesburg Africans, and that the
performers took seriously their pledge
to use their talents to promote African
unity and to improve social conditions.

LTRANSVAAL AFRICAN EISTEDDFOD :22; gs Mm It
presented a number of plays scripted
and directed by Whites. but using Black
actors.

FOURTH COMPETITIVE MUSICAL FESTIVAL 1934

DECEMBER 13, 14, 15, 17 and 18, 1934 The -Transvaal Eisteddfod was held over
a number of days at BMSC. The programme
for the Eisteddfod included poetry,
folksongs, dramatic pieces, singers and
Official Opening by His Worshln The Mayor. bands of both English and African
December 13 at 3.30'p.m_. Performers.

Floating Trophies (Shield- nl Capanul 0lhr Prize: to b: Awarded.

to n nu: n 1934-35

BANTU MEWS SOCIAL CENTRE, JOHANNESBURG. \$3235 5383;582:323 ??iit' 3:23:

Blackbirds and the Rhythm Kings.

Choirs! Trophies !

Dancing! Shszs !

321135! 7 Cups 1.

Acting! Medals !

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MWMWM , M&CEGII'ANM;l; ' "

19405

Bantu Dramatic Society hosted a number
of performances incorporating music,
dance and dramatic action.

13 Th: Rhythm Kings. founded

in 1935 by John Mammbrla

(far nxht) and dmmmn DnL

Twain Um left)

A GRAND

DANCE

During the 1950s increasing difficulties and obstacles for Black m 'du-n M "m J' mmszu "d' performers and audiences were th_

'Undermoon l'1algm smwn encountered with the new prohibitive laws passed by the Nationalist Government. The group areas act of 1950 enforced racial segregation and removed Black people from the city to distant locations.

19503

'Township' bands and singers began to use BMSC as a venue for performances because of the disruptions in townships like Sophiatown, by urban gangs and 'tsotsis'. Performers like Miriam Makeba, Dolly Rathebe, the Jazz Maniacs, the Harlem Swingsters, Zakes Nkosi's City Jazz Nine and many others were billed.

'During the late 1950s, inter-racial cooperation helped to keep musical professionalism alive in South African jazz and set the stage for international recognition of Black South African performers.' 6

The Anglican missionary Father Trevor Huddleston encouraged Hugh Masekela, Jonas Gwangwa, and many others to perform. This led to the formation of the Huddleston Jazz Band, which was successful in raising money and in promoting awareness under the guidance of the Union of South African Artists (Union Artists). Union Artists began to successfully manage performers like Solomon Linda, Spokes Mashiyane and Mackay Daveshe.

1958

'No Good Friday', Athol Fugard's first play opened at BMSC, it drew upon Union Artist's members for its cast.

'The Western Areas Resettlement Act of 1953 signalled the end of African hopes for recognition. Sophiatown was to be destroyed and its residents moved to the new government townships of Soweto (Southwest Townships), there to be divided according to language group.' 7

'As Sophiatown and its dance halls were destroyed, musicians were shut out of the inner-city clubs and halls, and jazz was gradually deprived of its multi-racial audience.' 8

As a direct result of the new legislation BMSC lost its impetus as a jazz and urban cultural centre.

1972

Following 'Phiri's' (an African jazz musical in a township setting) last rehearsal, Bantu Men's Social Centre was closed down.

As a gesture of finality the building was taken over by the West Rand Administration Board, an authority set up by the government to administer the township of Soweto.

Today, Bantu Men's Social Centre is an

academy for the training of Traffic
Police.
The 14:: Maniacs. a
Sovhmhmm band founded m
1935 by Solomon 'Zuluboy'
Celt: Wilson 'King Forct'
Silgee (standing, left),
saxvphoms1 Zak: Nkosi
(seated. lzfn, saxophonist
Mucky Damsh: (sated,
IMMhmwkm

There is only one photograph that exists today of Bolden and the band. This is what you see.

Jimmy Johnson Bolden Willy Cornish Willy Warner

on bass _ on valve trombone on clarinet

Brock Mumford Frank Lewis

on guitar on clarinet

As a photograph it is not good or precise, partly because the print was found after the fire. The picture, waterlogged by climbing hoses, stayed in the possession of Willy Cornish for several years.

DDRKAY

DORKAY HOUSE THE SURVEYOR'S MISTAKE

Johannesburg, the city of gold where the boundaries of the original farms together with the lines of the mining claims have become edges of structural and spatial shift within the city.

A surveying error along the boundary between Hemmer and Salisbury gold mining companies, resulted in a thin wedge of unmined ground to the west of Eloff Street. In 1951 Dorkay House, a narrow four storey building was built on the wedge of unmined ground.

1954

A farewell concert for Father Trevor Huddleston, held in Bantu Men's Social Centre provided the means to acquire permanent premises in Dorkay House for the Union Artists.

'Union Artists began as an inter-racial effort to protect the professional rights of black performers.'

Under the leadership of Ian Bernhardt, a programme was initiated to 'locate, train and present African musical performers, before a multiracial audience.'

1957

Union Artists helped to set up the African Music and Drama Association at Dorkay House. This association helped to broaden artistic freedom and gave opportunities to musicians and actors. by structuring performances and managing finances. This led to a series of talent contests, and the introduction of the famous Township Jazz and Dorkay Jazz concert series. This series continued until 1966.

'The concerts were highly successful, and many top African performers including Dolly Rathebe, Thandi Klaasens, Letta Mbulu, Sophie McIna, Patience Quabe, the Jazz Epistles and the Jazz Dazzlers appeared. The city took one-third of the proceeds as entertainment tax.'

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1958

DorKay House and EMSC became an important theatrical venue with the production of Athol Fugard's play 'No Good Friday' (a play dealing with life, gangsterism and extortion in the locations) . ,

'No Good Friday' avoided larger political, economic and racial issues, but it authentically reflected black urban experience. '12

h Off to London i

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1959

The birth of the internationally successful musical 'King Kong', (based on the tragic career of South African heavy weight boxing champion Ezekiel 'King Kong' Dhlamini), began at Dorkay House. .

'At Dorkay House, Union Artists made 'Township Jazz', 'King Kong', and dozens of other innovative black variety and theatrical productions possible. '13

These theatrical productions facilitated cultural and creative exchanges between artists and communities of all races, and began to develop a broad South African urban performance culture.

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Ol'g! mm In Joann um 1962

E \$ _ _ ng 9951:3335; aummm- 'King Kong' veteran Ben 'Satch' Masinga

T i"; ' t fli e S Off uhfizi:%2::y'p:'3:&?.t produced his own jazz musical, 'Back in 9 as "10" " " m 9m Your Own Back Yard. ' This entirely

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- : ' C gnu? 2%: \$3"de 'black' production caused polarization

- 9' . '9' " " " " " , _l 9 " " " \$3.1? a u" A especially in the racially mixed Union

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OMB Ahih" echoing through III. hull of Jun Smuu ,

, : my. At their Iinh moved on IIIIO lulu: (ll declined to help Masinga in his

. ' 01' u... unaided 8.30) I grant :towd on due! production.

9 "'m' 3- V 'Back in Your Own Back Yard' became a

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"MAu . ,ELELOFE l contentious issue: ' for changes in

black urban attitudes and white

apartheid legislation would soon make

black-produced, black-acted shows for

black audiences the only viable

direction for black theatre to take. ' 14

Archigec; .to._ I

Professional black performers began to

have bitter feelings of artistic and

financial exploitation by the Union

Artists, who mounted fewer shows, but

continued to provide rehearsal

facilities.

Nathan Mdzbtile (nght) m m: ml: ml: of the Famous at ten years old: Lemmy Mabasa,

mustcni King Kong, rehearse: with Stephen penny wlnstlcr m King Kong

Mallow, who plays his manager

, - Business, Gwigwi Mrwebi. plays a I

dun! rnla l' " R'v'nn Knnn" '

Musektm. :memaammuv succzssyul krumzmn
Munch Ibmhim (Dollar 5mm

'In South Africa, an 'international'
black group really means one that
appeals to South African whites. Black
performers must then choose between
limited careers and second-rate
treatment in South Africa or exile
abroad.' -

The departure of the cutting edge of
black urban talent was the major factor
in the decline of Dorkay House as a
cultural institution.

In an article entitled, 'Dorkay House:
can the glory be revived?', in the
Vrye Weekblad's jazz magazine 'Two
Tone', returned exile Jonas Gwangwa
talks about Dorkay: "A void was left
when the people who used to work here
left.'

The exodus to America and Europe
somehow broke the continuum at Dorkay,
this caused a cultural void in which
music and the arts became diluted.

'There came a moment when history
stopped dead in its tracks because of
a ploy or strategy by some quarters who
had no interest in the flourishing of
the institution.

'It was not a bad thing for black
artists from this institution to go out
and improve themselves - as they
planned to come back and contribute to
its enrichment. But once they went
overseas, they could see South Africa
for, what it was - and thus they became
dangerous to the system. They had been
exposed to what they were not allowed
to see. Such artists, when they
returned could not be expected to act
as if they hadn't seen the reality and
to continue as if nothing had happened.
'Their passports were not renewed and
this resulted in the disintegration of
Dorkay."

Kippu' 'Mnmiaug' Muelmsl, l'Immsso alto
mxaphomst. m Sowcm 1975

ENDNOTES

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Looking North down Eloff Street.

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Looking South up Eloff Street.

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DORKAY HOUSE

The most recognised building in the scheme is that of Dorkay House. In determining the design and layout of the building it was important to acknowledge its historical roots as a cultural centre at its peak in the 1950s. It was decided to retain as much of the symbolic presence of the building as possible. Of all the elements of the building the Eloff Street facade was its most familiar and it was decided merely to revamp this facade.

The existing entrance was retained, the foyer merely being enlarged to provide access to the whole scheme. The ground floor continues to operate in its retail capacity.

Front Facade.

On an examination on the internal layout of the building it was found that the activities performed within were inadequately accommodated :
Rooms allocated to: large bands to v
practise in arevpresently too- ' Maw
small likewise individual
musicians find rooms too big.
There is no permanent space for
residential bands to call their
own, as roo-Svare shared by 3117
due to the lack of facilities.
The existing ablutions are
inadequate, with no showers or
changerooms for band members to
utilise after practice sessions,
and only one toilet per sex per
floor.
Retaining the retail component on
ground floor resulted in the first
floor becoming the principal operating
level of the complex as a whole.
Offices to cater for the promotion and
administration requirements of the jazz
centre are located on this level.
The remaining two floors are comprised
of offices accommodating guest speakers
and lecturers.
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Plans of Dorkay.

Service facilities were relocated to the northern end at Dorkay House to allow for the opening up of the rear facade. This was done- in a direct response to the court that was created behind.

Other reasons reinforcing the opening up of this west facade was that it is no longer a rear facade to Dorkay House, but one of the principal facades addressing the major space within the scheme.

Back of Dorkay House. It hJe;

The passages flanking this facade were enlarged so that they not only served as movement routes, but allowed for the creation of galleries from which to view the performance area below.

To enable the galleries and the new facade to interact with the court below, it was necessary to introduce a lift, facilitating the movement between these two elements.

College at Orleans 1967. Engineer: Jean Prouve.

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BANTU MEN'S SOCIAL CENTRE

Along with Dorkay House, Bantu Men's Social Centre (BMSC) has an important role to play in the redevelopment of the site. Closely linked to the facilities provided for at Dorkay House, BMSC served as a performance venue in its heyday.

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FIRST FLOOR PLAN.

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Originally it functioned as a hall in which various performances were staged, but over the years it underwent subsequent changes :

The stage was totally destroyed to house a strongroom.

An insensitive addition of ablution facilities was attached to the northern facade of the building, destroying its original' form.

At a recent point in its history the hall space was sub-divided into a maze of office cubicles, totally denying its original function as a performance centre.

In response to BMSC's past, it was decided to retain and incorporate it as an integral part of the scheme; much of the building's spatial qualities are retained, but now accommodate new functions. The open expanse of the hall space and double volume are retained in memory, but now- functions" as a. restaurant for the Jazz Club by night and as a canteen by day. The northern facade, now defined by the restaurant and Jazz Club, now becomes a clean edge responding to the outside central performing space. An intermediary zone in the form of a terrace serving the functions behind allows for the connection of the enclosed internal volumes with the open central space occurring at a lower level.

Kate Mantilin restaurant by Morphosis.

BMSC South facade.

Echoing its previous function as a performance venue, the eastern section with its two levels now accommodates a jazz club, housing a dance floor and musicians' platform on the entrance level and a bar and double volume gallery above.

The original entrance to BMSC on the south facade is reinstated as the entrance to the Jazz Club, and the east and south facades along with the plaque commemorating the building's opening are retained.

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NEW BUILDING

After looking at the above two buildings and accommodating the appropriate new functions within them, I began to look at the concept of the scheme as a whole and how I could incorporate these two buildings.

It was necessary to respond to the buildings as forms and examine the established relationships between them and the surrounding space.

Dorkay House is a narrow linear building running parallel to Eloff Street. The lesser rectangular form of BMSC sits adjacent to Dorkay House at its most southern edge, but set back off Eloff Street.

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From the outset my intention was to create an urban centralised space within the scheme and the L-shaped relationship between these two buildings starts to set up a configuration in which the addition of another L shape allows for the completion of the square. These two new edge buildings form the other half of the scheme and accommodate all the functions the other buildings are not equipped to deal with. Like Dorkay House, the western most edge is of a linear building type and operates mainly as a service building. Conceptual ideas of enclosing the space.

A hard edge is formed as a boundary to the site along which a length of stair ascends, allowing its user to move off onto the different levels housing various functions. where the edge of this building butts against BMSC it is narrower in width and linked to the main section by means of a series of gangways occurring throughout a double volume. On ground level this area accommodates the kitchen serving the restaurant together with toilet facilities serving both the buildings.

Conceptual model with stair serving walkways.

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