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The  
COMMITTED ARTISTS

production of

MBONGENI NGEMA'S

# ASINAMALI!

October 7 — November 1, 1986

Cast

(Alphabetically)

SOLOMZI BISHOLO

THAMI CELE

BONGANI HLOPHE

BHEKI MQADI

BHOYI NGEMA

Production Stage Manager

MICHAEL COOK

Stage Manager

MAKALO MOFOKENG

Lighting Designed by

MANNIE MANIM

Directed by

MBONGENI NGEMA

*through special arrangement with  
Columbia Artists Theatrical Corp. & The Market Theatre*

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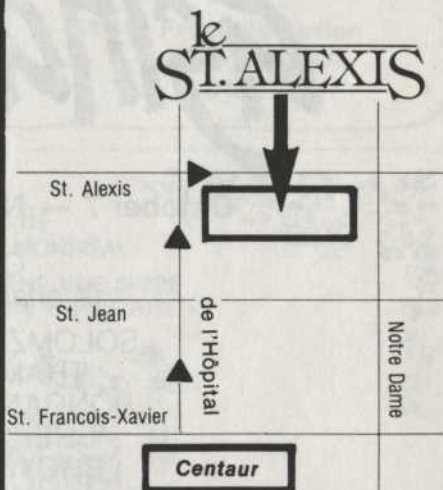
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## ABOUT ASINAMALI!

"Its genesis lies in the removals, forced evictions . . . (and) tent cities in the rain." This is the origin (as described by its author, Mbongeni Ngema) of ASINAMALI!, one of the most celebrated and influential productions on the recent South African theatre scene. First produced in 1983 in Durban, the play grew out of a series of disturbances in Lamontville township that year. A leader emerged from these disturbances: Msizi Dube, who demonstrated passionately against proposed rent increases in the township. Dube's rallying cry was "Asinamali!", or "We have no money", a phrase which at once provided both a focus for the disaffected and a poignant description of one class existence. Dube was later gunned down, a martyr to his cause; but from these incidents grew Ngema's Committed Artists, a group of actors whose primary artistic concern was the revelation and ultimate eradication of racial and social inequality. Out of this concern ASINAMALI! was born.

The play itself takes place in a South African jail as five prisoners recount through word, song, and dance the events which have brought them there. There is Bheki Mqadi, the innocent, condemned unfairly after a security raid because of his skin color; Thami Cele, a farmer whose momentary indiscretion brings him face to face with the Immorality Act; Bongani Hlophe, a migrant laborer whose struggles to find a job lead to murder; Solomzi Bisholo, a con man and pickpocket who plies his trade at funerals and demonstrations; and Bhoyi Ngema, a young activist who worked with the martyred Msizi Dube. In a series of sketches these five bring to vibrant life their dreams and frustrations, mixing satire, humor, music and spirited passion in a high-energy theatrical steamroller that one Johannesburg critic termed "a stunning production by any standards". Wrote another "Apartheid, poverty, unemployment, influx control, insurrection, arson, are all presented as side-splittingly funny and frightening — not in turn, but simultaneously. . . . ASINAMALI! is not a drama. It is too episodic, too raw and too close to reality."

In 1985, ASINAMALI! was awarded the three top coveted Vita Theatre Awards for theatrical excellence.

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## ABOUT THE MARKET THEATRE COMPANY

The Market Theatre Company of South Africa was founded in 1974 by Artistic Director Barney Simon and Managing Director Mannie Manim. Two years later, it moved into the renovated Newtown Market in Johannesburg. In the ensuing decade, the Market has won an international reputation for the wide scope and excellence of its productions. Most compelling of the Market's presentations have been its productions of notable South African playwrights, including Athol Fugard (SIZWE BANZI IS DEAD, THE ISLAND, MASTER HAROLD ... AND THE BOYS, THE ROAD TO MECCA, and the world premiere of A LESSON FROM ALOES), Elsa Joubert (POPPIE NONGENA), and Mbongeni Ngema (ASINAMALI! and WOZA ALBERT!), devised with Barney Simon and Percy Mtwa). Equally impressive are its uncompromising administrative and artistic policies. The Company is fully integrated, presenting works by all people, for all people. Moreover, the Company refused to receive government subsidy, or any support which would attempt to influence its artistic policy. The energy and artistic integrity that have imbued the work of the Market through its first dozen years have established it firmly as South Africa's only truly national theatre.

The Market Theatre Foundation is committed to the development of indigenous work in theatre, music, dance, and the plastic arts — that reflect our aspirations and our lives — if not always South African, at least relevant to what we are. Through the trials, errors, successes and failures of the past nine years, we have learned that what we aspire toward is not simply achieved without at least part of the subsidy that other non-commercial companies enjoy. But we still hold ideals, and these as exemplified by our theatre, are some of them:

We attempt a theatre that is alive to all the dramatic possibilities that surround us — not the obvious news stories, but the faces, the biographies, the vernaculars, the songs, the dances that reach even to our doorstep.

We attempt a theatre that holds the highest possible standards, that entertains and informs, that does not in the conventional commercial way repeat what is already known, but extends and illuminates life experience — that calls on our audiences to be independent, creative witnesses — participants.

We invite evidence of struggle and risk rather than comfortable commercial certainty. We have learned to measure our accomplishments through a count of challenged minds rather than empty or full seats.

We choose to be a platform for people and ideas that do not often receive them. We choose to be a place where discoveries are made. Whether by an amateur Soweto group on a show-case Friday evening, experiencing professional facilities for the first time or a sophisticated non-racial group of actors struggling through a creative process that will be a VAN AARDES VAN GROOTOOR, a WOZA ALBERT!, or the text and performance of BLACK DOG or SATURDAY NIGHT AT THE PALACE.

A theatre that permits players to enjoy their successes and learn through their failures — that permits them the right to fail. A living, celebratory space rooted as much in the place and time where we live as in a tradition of theatre.

We hope to maintain a theatre that has taught us, as the Market has, that homegrown phenomena like THE ISLAND, THIS IS FOR KEEPS, KABARET, and CINCINNATI can be as commercially viable as a West End farce — work that happened when creative rather than commercial instincts were followed.

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We are proud to have been the theatre that opened with MARAT/SADE, that housed an Afrikaans, VROUE VAN TROJE at the same time as the non-racial musical, THE ME NOBODY KNOWS; that attracted large non-racial audiences to witness SIZWE BANZI and THE ISLAND and the astonishing raw performances of THE WOMEN OF CROSSROADS. We are proud to have presented international talents like Janet Suzman, Athol Fugard, Yvonne Bryceland, John Kani, Winston Ntshona, Dollar Brand, Donald Howarth, Emlyn Williams, Rod McKuen, Percy Mtwa, and Mbongeni Ngema — and to enjoy their continued support.

When we began our venture we said, "Johannesburg is not only a place where gold was hunted and discovered. It is a place where many people of many colours gathered and lived and risked. There have been buildings, graceful and strong, that were reminders of this. Very few of them have been permitted to remain. The Indian Fruit Market has. We promise the people of Johannesburg an arts center as vital, as enriching and as relevant to their lives as the market that it replaces."

Barney Simon, Artistic Director  
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## ABOUT THE COMMITTED ARTISTS

Inspired by the Mexican El Teatro Compensitore, Mbongeni Ngema went back to South Africa after the United States tour of WOZA ALBERT! and started the COMMITTED ARTISTS, a group that involved 30 talented and creative youths. Using a potpourri of ideas, and strongly influenced by the writings of Jerzy Grotowski and Peter Brook, Mr. Ngema has developed his own techniques of theatre. Ngema trained the members of the COMMITTED ARTISTS, none of whom had ever acted professionally, and developed a unique approach to theatre that combined their experiences in racist South Africa with professional actor training. What developed was a group with explosive energy which gave rise to ASINAMALI!

The success story of the COMMITTED ARTISTS is that it is one of the few such groups to have come from the black communities of South Africa. The modus operandi of COMMITTED ARTISTS is the infusion of skills and technique, with a clear vision for a bright future in South Africa. "Our work should be artistically excellent, and at the same time bring a banner of hope to a dispossessed people," says Mr. Ngema. Their ultimate goal is the establishment of professional Black Theatre companies in South Africa, which are presently non-existent.

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## ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT/DIRECTOR

**MBONGENI NGEMA** is 30 years old and was born in Verulam, near Durban, before the South African government's Group Areas Act proclaimed it an Indian-only area. He grew up in several townships and slums around Durban, amongst them Kwa-Mashu, Umlazi and Umkhumbane. Before completing high school, he left and was first employed at Richards Bay as a tool boy. This was followed by work for various companies for maximum periods of three months before he decided he was not cut out for manual labour. Growing up with the rhythms of township music in bars and in the streets, he became a guitarist backing many plays in Durban including Lucky Mavundla's ISIGCINO, where, due to the absence of a lead actor, he made his debut. He later worked at the Stable Theatre with Kessie Govender. Following this he wrote and directed his first play, THE LAST GENERATION. In 1979 he went to Soweto and approached noted playwright Gibson Kente for work, finally getting a character role in the play MAMA AND THE LOAD. In 1981 he collaborated with actor Percy Mtwana and Market Theatre Company director Barney Simon in writing and creating the internationally acclaimed WOZA ALBERT! In 1982, after a tour of WOZA ALBERT! in the United States, inspired by the Mexican/American experimental theatre company El Teatro Campesino, he started a theatrical group in Durban called The Committed Artists out of which came ASINAMALI! (WE HAVE NO MONEY), which he devised and directed. In 1985, he won the A.A. Mutual Life Vita Award for Excellence in Direction, and shared the award for Most Promising South African playwright: ASINAMALI! won the award for Best Play of the Year. Mr. Ngema recently made his entrance into the music world when he wrote, arranged, produced and was lead vocalist in a record album with the best-selling African Mbaqanga group, the Soul Brothers, and the Music Unlimited Orchestra. The record is called *S'timela Sase-Zola* and received ovations at its launching last November.

## ABOUT THE LIGHTING DESIGNER

**MANNIE MANIM** (lighting designer) Mannie Manim is Managing Director of the Market Theatre Company, the resident producing body of the Market Theatre, as well as Managing Trustee of the Market Theatre Foundation. He is also Chairman of the Drama Committee for the Grahamstown Festival, Governor of the FUBA (Federated Union of Black Artists), a founder member of the SAITT (South African Institute of Theatre Technology), and a member of the Executive Committee of the SAATM (South African Association of Theatre Managements).

During the past 24 years he has, in addition to producing and directing, designed lighting for over 300 major productions (including drama, ballet, and opera) throughout South Africa. In 1980 he designed the lighting for Athol Fugard's A LESSON FROM ALOES at the National Theatre in London, and 1983 designed the lighting for Fugard's MASTER HAROLD ... AND THE BOYS at the National Theatre, London. He designed the lighting for all the international tours of WOZA ALBERT! He received the A.A. Mutual Life Vita Award for "Best Original Lighting Design" for THE ROAD TO MECCA by Athol Fugard.

In 1973 he joined with Barney Simon to create the Company, which successfully tendered the lease of the Market Theatre in 1974. As Managing Director for the Market Theatre Company, he has to date produced 162 productions and directed three. The Market Theatre Company has won 49 awards locally and received for WOZA ALBERT! the Edinburgh Fringe First Drama Award in 1983, the Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award in 1982, and the Obie Award. The Market Theatre Company's production of MASTER HAROLD ... AND THE BOYS won the Evening Standard Award for Best Play of the Year, in London. The Market Theatre Company has toured productions in the U.S.A., U.K., Ireland, Europe, and Australia.

Mr. Manim has received the Shirley Moss Award for Greatest Practical and Technical Contribution to Theatre in South Africa (1980), the South African Institute of Theatre Technology Award for Outstanding Achievements as a Theatre Technician, Administrator and Lighting Designer (1981), and the first A.A. Mutual Life Vita Award for Most Enterprising Producer (1984).



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## ABOUT THE CAST

**SOLOMZI BISHOLO** was born at Paarl Nbekweni location in April, 1960. He started acting in 1977, in a school production titled BUZANI KU-BANO, written by W.K. Thamsanga and directed by his teacher, Bram Mhlom. While very young he joined the Mbekweni Dramatic Society, where he co-directed (with Colin Ndevu) the improvisational show LIZ IS THE WORD. He left school in 1979 and concentrated fully on theatre, performing in productions adapted from poetry and the works of other African writers, including Achebe and Ngugi. By then he had come strongly under the influence of playwrights Athol Fugard and Gibson Kente, as well as the original Market Theatre Company production of WOZA ALBERT!, which he had seen in 1981. That year he performed in Boikie Mohlamme's AMEN, among other plays; from 1982 to 1984 he worked with Gibson Kente, acting in CRAZY JEALOUSY ZIYABEDA and THINGS ARE BAD MZAZA. At this time he met Mbongeni Ngema in Durban and was drawn to Ngema's experimental approach to theatre; in September, 1984, he joined Ngema's group, the Committed Artists, and soon after began work on ASINAMALI!

**THAMI CELE** was born in Clermont Township near Pinetown in July, 1952. He started school in Clermont and then went to Ohlango High School. In 1974, he dropped out of social work at Unizul and started work as a postal clerk in Clermont. He left the Post Office in order to act in his first play, CHIEF MAMBA. Later he met Mbongeni Ngema and acted with him in TOO HARSH and ISIGCINO. He also appeared in MKABAYIKI JAMA by Nonkamfela Ndelu. In 1979, he moved to Johannesburg to concentrate on acting and filming, later joining Gibson Kente and becoming involved with the successful musical IPI'NTOMBI. He went back to Durban where he worked as a quality controller/inspector at Aserma New Germany. In 1981, he came back to Johannesburg, where he joined the Dhlomo Theatre; here he participated in the TRIAL OF DEDAN KIMATHI and was assistant stage manager in NEW SONG. He has also done various film and television pieces. He is a member of the Committed Artists.

**BONGANI HLOPHE** was born in June, 1960 at Kwa-Mashu, where he attended local schools. He started acting in 1976 in a school production titled MGENZENI. His next role was in a play written by Dumisani Mahlaba, USIZI, where he took the part of the priest. In 1979 he acted in UNOMZAMO, written by the late Thamsanqa Khumalo and Dumisani Mahlaba. In 1981 he moved to Umlazi Township and secured a role as a Tsotsi in NGIYA-ZISA by Mthandeni Mchunu. After working for several months as a boat-maker for Hyper-Marine, early in 1983 he met Mbongeni Ngema and told them of his desire to act. Mbongeni persuaded him to join the Committed Artists.

**BHEKI MQADI** was born in 1960 in Clermont Township near Pinetown. After completing high school in 1980, he worked for Consolidated Frame Cotton Corporation Limited as a machine operator. During that time he was acting in various amateur productions, since he had always wanted to be an entertainer. He lost his job after going on strike for wage increases. He joined the Committed Artists after meeting Mbongeni Ngema in 1984 and started work on ASINAMALI!

**BHOYI NGEMA** was born in 1962 and started acting at school. In 1982 he started work with his youth brothers and created the play APHI AMADODA with Thulani Mkhwamazi. Early in the next year, he worked in Vryheid as a labourer on the Coronation Mines while at the same time looking for acting work. Realizing he could not work and act at the same time, he left the mines and joined the Committed Artists. With them, he began to "learn about life" and ASINAMALI! was created.

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THE ACTORS AND STAGE MANAGERS EMPLOYED IN THIS PRODUCTION ARE MEMBERS OF ACTORS' EQUITY ASSOCIATION, THE UNION OF PROFESSIONAL ACTORS AND STAGE MANAGERS IN THE UNITED STATES.

*Centaur Theatre Company is a member of the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres and engages professional Artists, who are members of Canadian Actors' Equity Association, under the terms of the Canadian Theatre Agreement. Centaur Theatre Company performs under the auspices of the Centaur Foundation for the Performing Arts.*

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