



# Panaf Hotel



KENYATTA AVENUE, P.O. BOX 30486, NAIROBI, KENYA. PHONE 720822, CABLES: PANAFOTEL, TELEX 22454

Peter Abrahams  
Post Office Box 20  
Red Hills, St. Ann  
Jamaica, WI

December 10, 1986

Dear Peter:

I'm writing from Nairobi, Kenya where I've been invited by the Kenyan government to participate in "African Film Week". The Kenyan government is attempting to create a Pan-African film industry and so invited over 100 African (diaspora-types included) to screen their films, participate in symposiums designed to exchange information on co-productions, distributions and so on.. Needless to say, considering my plans to make a film from A VIEW FROM COYABA, the event proved to be a goldmine of information and opportunity. Uganda, however, was not represented...why, I'm not sure.

In any event, the resources for African-based co-productions are there so I just have to structure a deal. It will take time, of course, but I can see the light at the end of the tunnel.

It was really good meeting you. I'll be in touch as things progress. Take care of yourself (which is not hard in a beautiful place like Jamaica).

Sincerely,

*St. Clair Bourne*

St. Clair Bourne

9th January, 1963.

Mr. Charles W. Sachs,  
Suite 515,  
9229 Sunset Boulevard,  
Los Angeles 69,  
California,  
U.S.A.

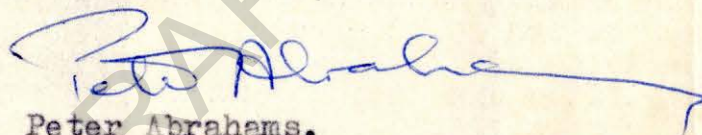
Dear Mr. Sachs,

Please forgive me for the delay in replying to your letter of December 18. I have been off the island over the Christmas period. As far as the Conton novel is concerned and your treatment of it and the fact that you do in fact have to work with the Ghana Government, my letter to Warren Bayless is in fact a hard no. Frankly I do not see how anyone can make an honest film about any African territory - from the Cape to Cairo - if he has to depend on the co-operation of any Government there. It is precisely because Africa is an angry young giant that all the political types - from Nasser to Nkrumah to Verwoerd - will try to harness any interpretation of it to suit their own purposes. It is not a question of whether my thinking on Nkrumah has hardened since **A WREATH FOR UDOMO** (in some ways it has, and in other ways I find myself feeling a great deal more sorry for the man and more impressed by his achievement and more understanding of his position as a prisoner in Christianborg Castle) it is just that I feel that any writer who attempts to interpret Africa today will fail utterly if he has to be dependent on the approval or the goodwill of anybody who holds political power in contemporary Africa. I think that in order to be true to Africa and her deepest needs the African writer must be more aggressively independent in his thinking than almost any other writer in the world. To the extent that Conton is, as you say, flabby, I think it is because he does in fact try to pussyfoot before the people in power. Please do not misunderstand me. I do not say it is the writer's business to be against the Government. What I am saying is that if democracy is to come to Africa then we must inaugurate a tradition of dissent. People must be free to hold and to express unpopular views and still survive. And to begin to have this sort of thing the writers of Africa must do a job of pioneering. Anyway it is not my purpose to lecture you.

I think the most likely people who might do the kind of script that you want may be found among the small group of Negro writers from South Africa who are now in exile in London. The names that come to mind are Todd Matshikiza, who did most of the writing of the successful musical, King Kong, and Arthur Maimane. Another writer (whose name escapes me at the moment) who might be a possible person is the man who currently heads the radio station in Sierra Leone.

At the moment relations between Ghana and Nigeria are so bad that it will not be a good idea to try to use any writer from Nigeria. From here in Jamaica I think you could try the novelist John Hearne. Indeed I am not sure that Hearne will not do a better job than any of the others I have mentioned. He is possibly the most competent craftsman among all the coloured writers throughout the world who are in the under forty age bracket. He writes very beautifully and he is passionately interested in Africa. I have passed the Conton novel and your treatment on to Hearne. I do not know if he is interested, and of course I do not know if you are interested in communicating with him. If you are his address is John Hearne, Department of Extra-Mural Studies, University of the West Indies, Kingston 7.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Peter Abrahams". The signature is fluid and cursive, extending across the width of the page.

Peter Abrahams.

PA/ul.

cc: Mr. John Hearne

SUITE 515  
9229 SUNSET BOULEVARD  
LOS ANGELES 69, CALIFORNIA

CRESTVIEW 3-4080  
TREMONT 8-2080

18 December 1962

Mr. Peter Abrahams  
Coyaba  
Red Hills Post Office  
St. Andrews, Jamaica

Dear Mr. Abrahams:

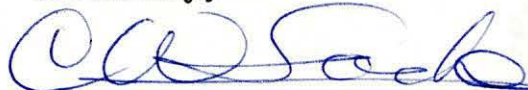
I have just seen a copy of your letter to Warren Bayless and am sorry to learn that you feel unsuited to the project.

Perhaps, if your thinking on Mr. Nkrumah has hardened since A WREATH FOR UDOMO, the Ghanaian government would be unhappy at the prospect of your participation. I must say, though, that they have advised us, albeit informally, that they will steer clear of editorial censorship. Frankly, I don't believe it and anticipate some trouble getting even our milder views accepted.

You mention Conton as a possible scenarist. Don't you find his writing a bit flabby? What we are looking for, really, is an African writer with a great deal of power and bite; someone who conceives dramatically in terms of clearly delineated scenes and incisive dialogue. The point is, if we are going to make this film, it should be made honestly without a lot of Hollywood claptrap. If Africa is an angry young giant then, by God, that's what the film should say. Just between you and me, I think Conton pussyfoots around. Now, whether or not Ghana is going to go along with this, I don't know. Meanwhile, the search for a screenwriter continues. If you can recommend anyone I would be extremely grateful, as I would be if you could find some time to set down your views on our basic approach to the book.

If there is any point in querying Ghana regarding your participation, please let me know directly. Your agent on the West Coast interpreted the Bayless letter as being a hard no, but I wasn't so sure; am I wrong?

Cordially,



Charles W. Sachs

12th December, 1962.

Mr. Warren Bayless,  
Curtis Brown Ltd.,  
575 Madison Avenue,  
New York 22,  
U.S.A.

Dear Warren Bayless,


I am very sorry about the delay in replying to your letter of November 8, especially as it has led to a long distance call from California by Mr. Charles Sachs to me on Saturday.

After very careful thought and after reading both "THE AFRICAN" and the treatment of the novel I am not sure that this is a job for me. Mr. Sachs told me that he has read my novel, A WREATH FOR UDOMO, and I am sure that if he thinks back to that and the way in which I handled what was after all a reasonably accurate psychological portrait of Nkrumah he will agree that I am not the best person to do a script for a film which may have to be underwritten by the Government of Ghana. Don't misunderstand me. I have enormous sympathy for Nkrumah and his problems but I fear that artistic integrity (and I am not being pompous) will compel a script which might have, by implication, even harsher things to say than I said in my novel. I may be wrong but it seems to me that this is a little bit like asking Boris Pasternak to do a script on the life of Stalin and which must meet with the approval and financial backing of Stalin.

Just as a matter of interest why do they not get Conton to prepare a screen treatment?

Also I am extremely anxious to try and get down to some original writing of my own. I have not written a new novel over the past six years. For these reasons I am inclined to say no to this proposal.

Yours sincerely,

  
Peter Abrahams.

cb

Curtis Brown, Ltd. 575 Madison Avenue, New York 22 PLaza 5-4200

Alan C. Collins, President  
Nellie Sukerman, Secretary

November 8, 1962

Peter Abrahams, Esq.  
Coyoba  
Red Hills P. O.  
St. Andrew  
Jamaica, B. W. I.

Dear Peter Abrahams:

Last summer we received a request from a Mr. Charles Sachs asking for the availability of you as a screenwriter. At the time, the arrangements were rather nebulous and we asked our West Coast representatives, Ziegler, Hellman, & Ross, to investigate Mr. Sachs' organization and determine, if they could, just how far he wants to go.

Apparently, it took Mr. Sachs quite some time to organize his particular project, that of securing the rights to a novel entitled THE AFRICAN by William Conton, and with these rights prepare a screen treatment. Mr. Sachs' letter of October 23rd to Fred Engel of ZHR, Beverly Hills, a copy of which is enclosed, will give you some picture of their desire to have you do the screenplay based on the novel.

The offer is a payment of \$5,000 for screenwriting services and the producers offer a two to four week visit to Ghana in order to work on the project. In order to assist you in reaching a decision I am sending you under separate cover a paperback edition of the novel and a manuscript screen treatment, which the producers envision as the direct basis for the screenplay. I am also enclosing here a copy of Fred Engel's letter of October 24th to me which gives us some more details to have for consideration.

When you have had an opportunity to consider the proposal, please let me know. I am sure you would find such a project of tremendous interest but I am not sure whether you desire to take a crack at screenwriting.

Sincerely,

Warren Bayless

Warren Bayless

WB/jl encls.

SUITE 518  
8229 SUNSET BOULEVARD  
LOS ANGELES 69 CALIFORNIA

October 23, 1962

CRESTVIEW 34060  
TREMONT 8-2080

Mr. Fred Engel  
Ziegler, Hellman & Ross  
121 South Beverly Drive  
Beverly Hills, California

Dear Fred:

As per our phone conversation on the 22nd instant, I am enclosing a copy of THE AFRICAN, and a treatment of the novel.

It is our intent to make a film which will be shot entirely on location in Ghana, with that government underwriting a substantial portion of below-the-line costs.

Robert Wise and Milton Sperling are sponsoring the film (the option is, in fact, held in Mr. Flynn's and my behalf by Mr. Wise) and Harry Belafonte has agreed to contribute theme music.

Owing to the nature of the project, we are of necessity working on a limited budget. Both Mr. Sperling and Mr. Wise (who is charged with "creative responsibility") are providing their services gratis. Mr. Sperling is advancing the money for the screenplay.

Mr. Flynn and I feel that we should defer final screenplay to a writer whose knowledge of West Africa is substantially greater than ours -- thus, Peter Abrahams. Should Mr. Abrahams be interested in writing the screenplay, we would be able to pay him \$5,000.00 plus a negotiable percentage of net or gross. Also, there will be an all-expenses-paid pre-production trip to Ghana lasting some three weeks and commencing as soon as practicable for Mr. Abrahams and us.

I hope this letter answers most of your questions. If not, please call me. In any event, let me hear from you soon as we are most anxious -- as is Ghana -- to go forward with this project.

Cordially,

Chuck

Charles W. Sachs  
Producer

ZIEGLER · HELLMAN & ROSS

321 SOUTH BEVERLY DRIVE

BEVERLY HILLS  
AGENCY  
NEW YORK

BEVERLY HILLS · CRESTVIEW 4-5963

October 24, 1962

Mr. Warren Bayless  
Curtis Brown, Ltd.  
575 Madison Avenue  
New York 22, New York

Dear Warren:

Attached herewith the novel, "THE AFRICAN",  
by William Conton. Also attached a proposed  
treatment of the basic material.

Some time ago Alan Collins wrote Zig that  
Charles Sachs was interested in having  
Peter Abrahams do the screenplay of the  
project. It seems it took Mr. Sachs quite  
a bit of time to organize his project, but  
he now seems prepared to go forward. The  
deal for Mr. Abrahams has not been, at this  
writing, fully negotiated. I saw no reason  
to do it until we found out whether or not  
he is at all interested. What is firm I am  
told, however, is a two to four week visit to  
Ghana and at this moment they are only  
prepared to spend \$5,000 for the screen  
adaptation which, because of the nature of  
the project, does not seem terribly low, and  
it might be something Mr. Abrahams would enjoy  
doing.

As you are probably aware, Robert Wise is one  
of the industry's finest producer-directors  
and Milton Sperling has also been an executive  
in the business for many years. The auspices  
are good and perhaps this might be something  
that would be of interest to Mr. Abrahams.

I include a photocopy of Charles Sachs'  
letter of October 23. Would you please pass

ZIEGLER · HELLMAN & ROSS

BEVERLY HILLS  
AGENCY  
NEW YORK

321 SOUTH BEVERLY DRIVE

BEVERLY HILLS · CRESTVIEW 4-5963

Mr. Warren Bayless

October 24, 1962

the enclosed along to Peter Abrahams if you  
deem it advisable and let me know how he  
feels as quickly as possible.

Best regards,

Fred Engel

eiv  
enc.

cc: Mr. Alan Collins  
Mr. Svarts Ziegler


5th September, 1962.

Mr. P. Henzell,  
Director,  
Vista Productions Ltd.,  
18A Duke Street,  
Kingston.

Dear Perry,

Thank you for your note of the 30th which was something after all the time I wasted. When television is finally established here I personally will only be interested if it does not become Mr. Minow's "waste land" and the cheapest, the lowest and the most mercenary. And certainly, I will not waste my time or allow my time to be wasted because there are a few important books I still want to write.

Yours sincerely,

  
Peter Abrahams.

PA/ul.

*vista*



PRODUCTIONS LTD. 18A Duke Street, Kingston, Jamaica, W.I. Telephone 22710

30TH AUGUST, 1962.

MR. PETER ABRAHAMS,  
THE WEST INDIAN ECONOMIST,  
164 HARBOUR STREET,  
KINGSTON.

DEAR PETER :

IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT WE NEVER DID  
MANAGE TO GET "FREEDOM" PRODUCED, I SHOULD LIKE TO  
THANK YOU FOR THE ENTHUSIASM AND EFFORT THAT YOU PUT  
INTO THE IDEA BEFORE WE FINALLY HAD TO ABANDON IT.

WHEN TELEVISION IS FINALLY ESTABLISHED HERE  
ON A PERMANENT BASIS, AND IF I AM WORKING IN T.V.  
PRODUCTION AT THAT TIME, I SINCERELY HOPE THAT WE WILL  
HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY OF TAKING UP WHERE WE LEFT OFF.

YOURS SINCERELY,  
VISTA PRODUCTIONS LIMITED

*Penny*  
M. P. HENZELL,  
DIRECTOR.

MPH/BA.

FROM THE DESK OF

BILL CHAMBERS

6 July, 1961.

Dear Peter,


Again, let me tell you what a pleasure it was to spend a few moments together. Would that it were more often.

Today I wrote Louis Martin, Ted Patrick and Harry Sions. What I had to say was substantially the same in each instance. Enclosed is a copy.

No great advancement yet on this end. I shall go on pulling teeth, or should I say cheque books? I am also exploring the possibilities of London.

Looking forward to hearing from you when the pressure of work lessens a bit, I am,

Sincerely yours,



Bill.

6 July, 1961

Mr. Harry Sions  
Holiday Magazine  
Independence Square  
Philadelphia, 5, Pa.

Dear Mr. Sions;

At the suggestion of Peter Abrahams, I take the liberty of addressing this note to you.

Perhaps you are aware of Peter's well-received and most perceptive novel, *A WREATH FOR UDOMO*, published in 1956. An excellent stage adaptation of the book has been written by William Branch, one of our promising young Negro playwrights. And I plan producing the play in New York this coming Fall.

There is no doubt in my mind that it will be received as timely and important, with every dramatic element present to help make it a successful venture as well. Basically it is a sensitive, historically prophetic story about an African emerging from colonialism, which will aid the American public in understanding the complexities of the African states immeasurably.

My production is now in the process of capitalization and, quite frankly, I find the going a bit sticky. On his recent trip here, Peter indicated you might know one or two individuals concerned with this subject matter whose interest could manifest itself further by their participating in the financial arrangements also.

Would you care to read the manuscript? Peter thought you might and, I believe is writing you shortly. However, I did not wish to impose without first apprising you of my purpose. In the event you are interested, I can have a copy in your hands be return mail.

Very sincerely yours,

WC/dr

William Chambers



TELEPHONE  
VICTORIA 3800

FLAT No. 411,

Keyes HOUSE,

DOLPHIN SQUARE,  
S. W. I.

October 28, 1961

Dear Peter,

I'd hoped to drop a note to you before now, but we've been so very busy with rehearsals that I've put it off 'til now. I only hope this reaches you before Thursday night.

As you know, we open here in London at the Lyric Hammersmith then, with Earl Cameron & Edric Connor as Udomo and Mhendí. We've had to accomplish miracles in the short space of a few weeks, and we could really do with another week's rehearsals plus a few weeks on the road - you have no idea how complicated a show this one is! I know I didn't.

But the important thing is that, by now, I'm absolutely certain that we'll have a distinguished, moving, exciting theatrical experience. I think if you were here that you'd be very proud of what we have. I know that I am - enormously.

I don't know if it will be possible for you to arrange a visit to London sometime during the run, but if it is at all possible, Peter, do come when you can. We hope, of course, to move to a house in the West End



TELEPHONE  
VICTORIA 3800

FLAT N<sup>o</sup>.....,

..... HOUSE,

DOLPHIN SQUARE,

S. W. 1.

proper as soon as possible - providing, of course, that we're not lambasted by the critics Friday morning. UDAMO obviously will be a very hot cup of tea to many people here, and I'm not sure we can't expect our share of brickbats, but we've refused to compromise - the play still says exactly what it said when you read it.

I'm not sure how long after the opening I'll be in London - I'm due home no later than December 10<sup>th</sup> to start a trip to Lagos for the American Society of African Culture. But, should you like, you can reach me at the address above, or in care of the Lyric-Hammersmith Theatre, London, W. 6.

So, as we await the culmination of years of hopes and work, I want you to know that a very fine job has been done by all concerned here to make this an important and significant production. I'm very, very pleased and proud of it. I think you would be, too.

Regards to your family - (Marie + the baby are flying over Tuesday night) - and continued best wishes,

*William Branch*

# INTERNATIONAL THEATRE MONTH

SPONSORED BY

The United States National Commission for UNESCO, Department of State

The American Educational Theatre Association

The National Theatre Arts Council

November 16, 1960

CHAIRMAN  
HERSCHEL L. BRICKER  
UNIVERSITY OF MAINE  
ORONO, MAINE

Mr. Peter Abrahams  
c/o Radio Jamaica & Rediffusion  
Kingston, Jamaica

ASSOCIATE CHAIRMAN  
ALICE GRIFFIN  
THEATRE ARTS MAGAZINE  
130 W. 56TH STREET  
NEW YORK 19, NEW YORK

Dear Mr. Abrahams:


Your name has been given to me as one who could give me information about African drama and its availability for translations.

I am chairman of International Theatre Celebration in this country. ITC is for the purpose of bringing about better understanding of peoples of the world through the presentation of drama. In order to make more plays available from specific areas of the world, we sponsor through the generosity of Dr. and Mrs. John D. Mitchell of the Institute for Advanced Studies in Theatre Arts, the Rosamond Gilder Awards for the best translations of foreign plays. It has been our hope that we might place emphasis upon Africa in the near future. We are interested, of course, in plays written by native Africans which could be translated into English by persons in Africa or in this country. We would, of course, need to know the sources from where these plays might be obtained, as well as the languages in which these plays were initially written.

Would there be any interest among those living in Africa in translating plays from the various African languages into English, in other words, would there be many in Africa who would be interested in entering the Rosamond Gilder Awards Competition?

Any help which you will be able to give, will be genuinely appreciated. My sincere and good wishes to you,

Cordially yours,

  
Herschel L. Bricker  
Chairman

HLB:mb

PS: In as much as a decision must be made soon, I would appreciate a reply at your earliest convenience.

## STATE REPRESENTATIVES

Alabama	Marian Gallaway, P. O. Box 1771, University of Alabama	Nebraska	Harry Stiver, University Theatre, University of Nebraska, Lincoln
Arkansas	Virgil Baker, Director, University Theatre, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville	New Jersey	Annetta L. Wood, Chairman, University Department of Drama, Rutgers University, New Brunswick
California	George Savage, Department of Theatre Arts, University of California, Los Angeles 24	New Mexico	Edwin Snapp, Chairman, Department of Drama, University Theatre, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque
Delaware	C. Robert Kase, University of Delaware, Newark	New York	William Vorenberg, Director, Hall of Fame Playhouse, Dept. of Speech and Drama, New York University, University Heights, New York 53
Florida	Charles W. Philhour, University of Miami Ring Theatre, Coral Gables	North Carolina	Arnold Colbath, Catawba College, Salisbury
Georgia	Leighton M. Ballew, University Theatre, The University of Georgia, Athens	North Dakota	Henry G. Lee, Director of Theatre, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks
Idaho	Vio Mae Powell, Head, Speech and Drama Dept., Idaho State College, Pocatello	Ohio	F. Lee Miesle, Director of Theatre, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green
Illinois	Donald E. Polzin, Chairman, Dept. of Speech and Dramatics, Illinois College, Jacksonville	Oregon	Frederick Hunter, Department of Speech, University of Oregon, Eugene
Indiana	Hubert Heffner, Dept. of Speech and Theatre, University of Indiana, Bloomington	Pennsylvania	Robert Reifsneider, Assoc. Prof. of Theatre Arts, Pennsylvania State University, University Park
Kansas	Jack Brooking, Department of Speech and Drama, University of Kansas, Lawrence	South Dakota	Wayne S. Knutson, University Theatre, University of South Dakota, Vermillion
Louisiana	Sharon Anthony, Department of Speech, Louisiana State University, Univ. Station, Baton Rouge 3	Texas	Loren Winship, Chairman, Department of Drama, College of Fine Arts, University of Texas, Austin 12
Maine	Gene Jellison, Colby College, Waterville	Utah	Vern Adix, Department of Speech, University of Utah, Salt Lake City
Maryland	Lyle V. Mayer, Dept. of Speech and Dramatic Art, University of Maryland, College Park	Washington	Eugene H. Radach, President, Washington State Drama Association, 912-C So. 23rd Avenue, Yakima
Minnesota	Arthur H. Ballet, Department of Theatre, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis	West Virginia	Sam Boyd, Department of Speech, West Virginia University, Morgantown
Mississippi	Charles M. Getchell, Chairman, Dept. of Speech, University of Mississippi	Wisconsin	Jack E. Frisch, The Wisconsin Idea Theatre, The University of Wisconsin, Madison 6
Missouri	Donovan Rhynsburger, Dept. of Speech and Dramatic Art, College of Arts and Science, 1 Jesse Hall, University of Missouri, Columbia	Wyoming	Charles M. Parker, Assoc. Director of Theatre, University of Wyoming, Laramie

## ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATIVES

Maine Speech Association	William Burgess, Deering High School, Portland, Maine	Theatre Library Association	Kurtz Meyers, Detroit Public Library, 5201 Woodward Avenue, Detroit, Michigan
Long Island Community Theatre	John F. Havens, 5 Hazelwood Drive, Jericho, N. Y.	Florida Speech Association	L. L. Zimmerman, Director of Theatre, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida
National Collegiate Players	John Wesley Swanson, 116 Lincoln Hall, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois	Speech Association of America	John Walker, Department of Speech, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan
North Central Theatre Association	Harold Hayes, Director of University Theatre, University of Minnesota, Duluth Branch, Duluth, Minnesota	City of Chicago	Jack Higgins, Chicago Park District, 425 E. 14th Street, Chicago, Illinois
National Catholic Theatre Conference	Brother Dunston, C. S. C. Cathedral High School, Indianapolis, Ind.	Bay Area Independent Theatre Assoc.	Leslie Abbott, Abbott-Abrams Productions, 1725 Washington Street, San Francisco 9, California

May 4, 1960

Mr. Gilbert Parker  
Music Corporation of America  
598 Madison Avenue  
New York 22, New York

Dear Mr. Parker:

Enclosed herewith please find our check in the amount of \$41.70 for the following performances of "A WREATH FOR UDOMO."

Mar. 8	18.00	Mar. 24	9.00
9	15.50	25	38.00
10	14.10	26	108.00
11	20.60	27	15.60
12	46.00	28	Dark
13	10.00	29	20.00
14	Dark	30	6.30
15	28.50	31	22.50
16	3.00	Apr. 1	22.50
17	8.40	2	61.30
18	3.50	3	20.90
19	75.40	4	Dark
20	5.30	5	4.50
21	Dark	6	45.50
22	25.00	7	8.00
23	12.00	8	17.20
	<u>328.50</u>	9	<u>50.00</u>

	449.50
	<u>326.50</u>
	776.00
Advanced Sales	1368.60
	<u>2144.60</u>
Season stubs @ \$1.00	217.00
	<u>2361.60</u>
	6%
	<u>141.6960 = \$141.70</u>
Less advance to Mr. Branch	<u>-100.00</u>
check:	41.70

Very cordially yours,

Ellenora Wagner  
Administrative Secretary

PA.

11th December 1959.

TO THE SELECTION COMMITTEE, CANADA COUNCIL  
NON-RESIDENT FELLOWSHIP:

I have known Mr. Basil McFarlane, at work and away from it, for three years. He is a professional writer, and a talented one. His interest in the cinema medium is an expression not only of the writer's aptness to be interested in all the creative forms, but of a sensitiveness to the needs of his community as well.

I recommend Mr. McFarlane for the course of work and travel proposed.

PA

Peter Abrahams.  
MANAGING EDITOR

11 Stuyvesant Oval  
New York 9, N. Y.  
December 8, 1959

Dear Peter,

Hello down there, and how are things in what I gather from Ruth Jett is God's country? Both Marie and I have been chafing at the bit ever since Ruth returned with such glowing accounts, and though we're tied up at the moment, one of these days we're just going to shove aside all these delaying details and head for Kingston. We'll warn you first, of course, if you promise not to alert all the Jamaican land, sea and air forces!

Peter, I've just had a long-distance call from Mrs. Rowena Jellife, co-director of the Karamu Playhouse out in Cleveland, Ohio. They wish to do A WREATH FOR UDOMO out there beginning February 15th, and they wanted permission to announce it right away. I asked them to hold off until Monday while I dashed off a letter to you. In the meantime, she's sending me a letter with further details, such as how long a run they contemplate, royalties, etc., and of course I'll pass that information on to you just as soon as I receive it.

Karamu, you may recall, is the outfit we discussed during your visit here, though at the time the director and designer whom you met--Mordecai Gorelik--was involved in the picture. I regret to say that Max is no longer available and the Karamu's own director will stage the work. And, if things go well there, this could prove just the shot in the arm we've been needing to overcome the "damn good work, but not commercial" attitude we've kept running into in trying to get UDOMO on Broadway. And believe me, from some of the things that are being done on Broadway this season, UDOMO is badly needed!

So Peter, would you send me a note by return mail indicating your pleasure concerning the Karamu production? I know you gave me verbal permission when you were here, but according to contract I should have it in writing before proceeding. You will, of course, receive your half of whatever royalties are involved, as well as equal billing, and as I promised, I'll see what I can do about interesting some foundation or other in bringing you up to see it. (There may be a pretty good chance through the American Society of African Culture.) So please let me know also if you'd be able to get away for such a trip.

Well, that's about all there is to it at the moment. I hope the prospect is as exciting to you as it is to me. To see UDOMO actually come alive on a stage is a dream I've had ever since I first cracked the covers of your book. And though we can't expect Broadway capabilities at Karamu, I think Langston will affirm for you that their work is not to be taken lightly. They recently mounted a production of his EMPEROR OF HAITI which he told me he had great admiration for.

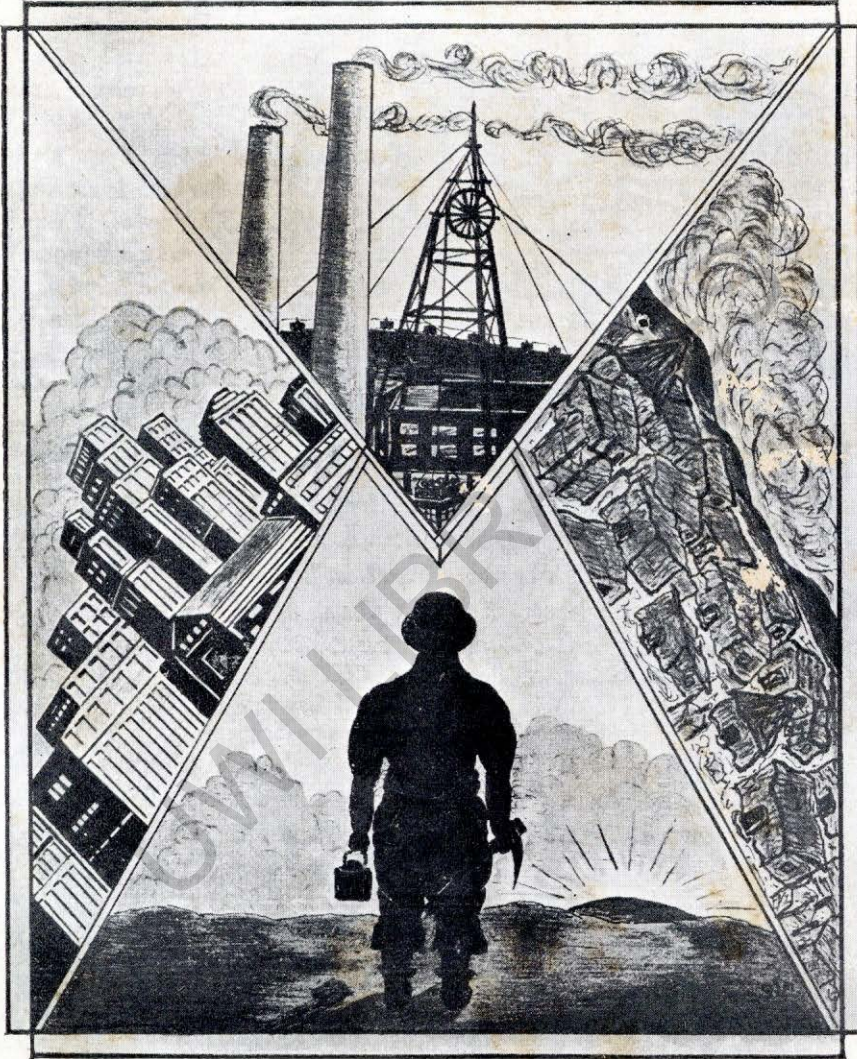
UNIVERSITY



OF NATAL

DURBAN MEDICAL STUDENTS' DRAMA GROUP

PRESENTS THE FIRST PERFORMANCES OF



# MINE BOY

A STAGE ADAPTATION BY WILLIAM BRANFORD  
OF THE NOVEL BY

*William Branford*

PETER ABRAHAMS

**SOUVENIR PROGRAMME**

**20th to 23rd APRIL, 1955**

# MINE BOY

THE PLAY PRODUCED BY WILLIAM BRANFORD

Characters in order of appearance

XUMA	<i>You saved her too. It is strange</i>	John Ngubeni	<i>John Ngubeni</i>
LEAH	<i>With money you can buy a policeman</i>	Frieda Matthews	<i>F. Matthews</i>
DADDY	<i>That is why I like her</i>	Mtunzi Mbete	<i>Mtunzi Mbete</i>
MA PLANK		Lepoqo Molapo	<i>Lepoqo Molapo</i>
DLADLA		John Masange	<i>John Masange</i>
JOHANNES		James Rasekoala	<i>James Rasekoala</i>
ELIZA		Beryl Oldjohn	<i>Beryl Oldjohn</i>
NANA		Thamsanqa Mokoena	<i>Thamsanqa Mokoena</i>
MAISY		Theodora Malaba	<i>J. V. Malaba</i>
POLICEMAN		Sebastian Mautsa	<i>S. Mautsa</i>
DR. MINI		Martin Marivate	<i>M. Marivate</i>
THE FOX		Ibrahim Seedat	<i>Ibrahim Seedat</i>
LEAH'S CUSTOMERS, MINERS AND POLICE		John Masange, Lennox Mohapeloa, Kingsley Bolani, David Leboho, Myles Meyer, L. V. Naidoo.	<i>L. V. Naidoo</i>

- SCENE 1. In front of Leah's house and later inside it. Friday Night.  
SCENE 2. At the mine, above ground. Afternoon, the following Monday.  
SCENE 3. In front of Leah's house, a fortnight later.  
SCENE 4. Inside Leah's house. Evening, about three months later.  
SCENE 5. The same, about two months later. Afternoon.

## INTERVAL OF FIFTEEN MINUTES

- SCENE 6. In front of Leah's house, the following evening.  
SCENE 7. The same, about ten days later. Morning.  
SCENE 8. In front of Leah's house, and later inside it. The night of the same day.  
SCENE 9. At the mine, some weeks later.

Accordion: D. K. Konoso.  
Business Management: Cassim Kamdar, Essop Lockhat, Ibrahim Seedat, Ahmed Mahomedy, Kingsley Bolani.  
Continuity: Lennox Mohapeloa.  
Costumes and Make-up: Jean Branford and Sydney Shongwe.  
Cover Design: Quarchand Maharaj.  
Guitarist: Martin Marivate.  
Lighting: Walter Pople. Assistants—Roopraj Bauchoo, Renni Naidoo, B. T. Naidoo, L. V. Naidoo, Perumal Mestry.  
Music and Dances arranged by: Peter Modiselle with Charles and Martin Marivate.  
Prompter: Fred St. Leger.  
Stage Manager: Caleb Mamabolo. Assistants: Simon Pefile, Samuel Pitsoe, Alfred Mofokeng.

# THE PLAY

*Mine Boy* is a picture of our own times and our own country; of the clash of 'the custom and the city', as it is called by one of the African characters in the story. One side of the picture presents squalor, disease and crime; the other, the grim sense of comedy and the human kindness of those who make out a living in the slum quarters of our great industrial towns.

Because of technical difficulties, and in order to cut down the interruptions of scene-changing, the play is being presented with the minimum of scenery and on the simplest possible set.

## THE AUTHOR

Peter Abrahams is well known as the author of the novels *Wild Conquest*, *Path of Thunder* and *Mine Boy*. He has also written *Return to Goli*, a stimulating survey of people and conditions in South Africa, in the guise of a travel-book, and an autobiography, *Tell Freedom*. Mr. Abrahams was born in Vrededorp, and is at present living in England.

## THE DURBAN MEDICAL SCHOOL DRAMA GROUP. PREVIOUS PRODUCTIONS.

- 1953 — A WITCH IN MY HEART ..... by Hilda Kuper  
Scenes from THE TEMPEST by William Shakespeare  
1954 — DINGANA ..... by H. I. E. Dhlomo

Like *Mine Boy*, *Dingana* and *A Witch in My Heart* were being presented for the first time. To this little list, we hope in time to add many more productions, including, we trust, more new plays that deal with life and problems in South Africa.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our special thanks are due to Mr. Abrahams for his generosity in allowing us to make and to use this stage version of his novel, without charge.

We should like also to thank Messrs. Hart Ltd., 1134-68 Umbilo Road, for a generous gift of helmets, Miss Elizabeth Sneddon for loan of recording apparatus, the International Club and the Institute of Race Relations for publicity, and all those, including many whose names do not appear on this programme, who have so kindly helped in other ways.

Your support is a great encouragement, and we hope that it will continue.

**This Programme kindly sponsored by**

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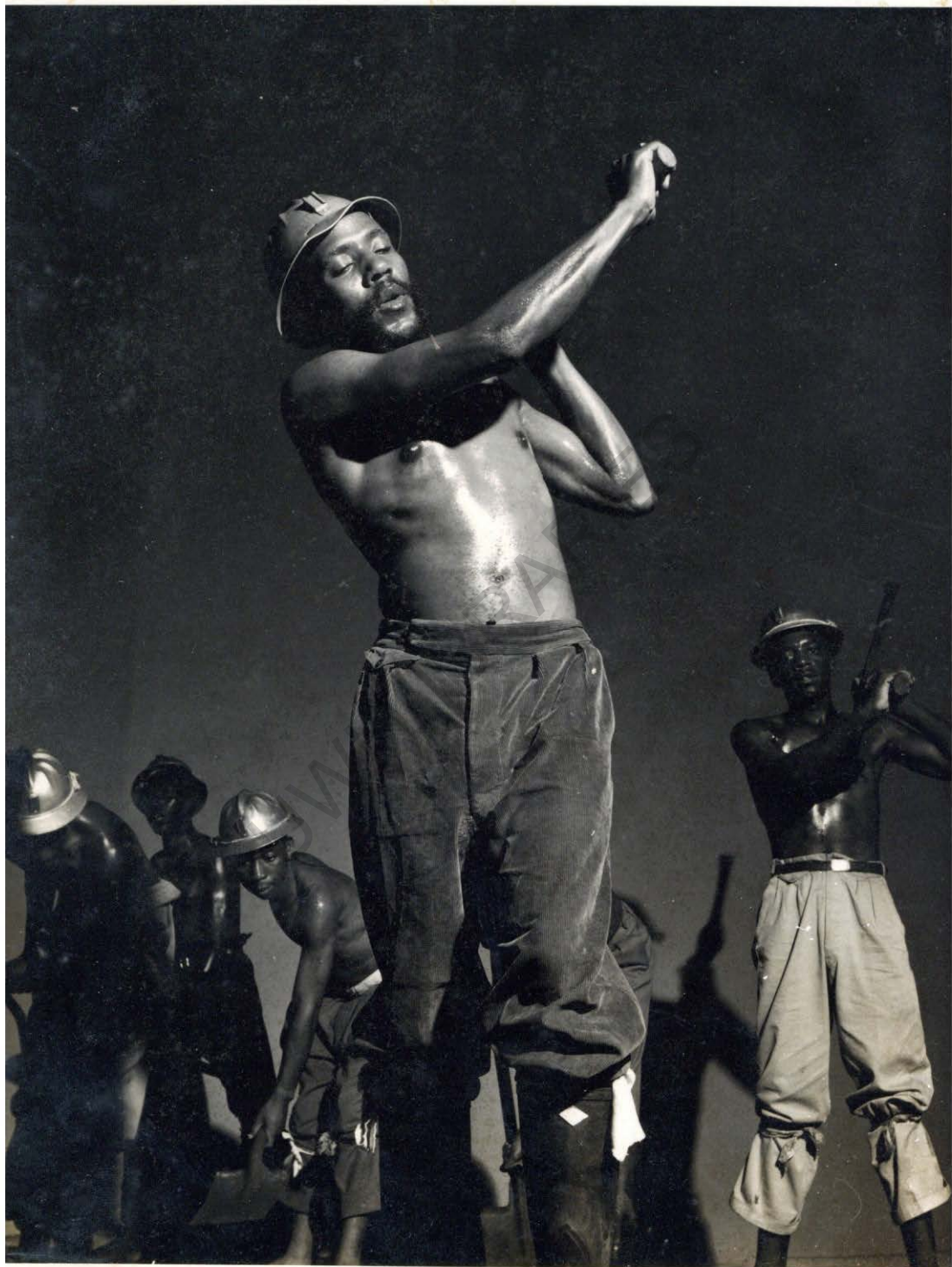












27 Manor House,  
South Ridge Road,  
Durban,  
Natal.  
15th May 1955.

Dear Mr. Abrahams,

I hope you will forgive me for my long delay in reporting on MINE BOY. ~~I~~ I've had a lot to catch up with since the production.

Under separate cover I'm sending photographs, programmes and press cuttings. If you have friends in Durban you may already have had independent comments on the show; my viewpoint, of course, is partisan. Let me begin by saying that ~~I~~ I'm very happy about the final result, and very grateful to you.

But all the troubles I had foreseen materialised, plus a number of others. Our two experienced women at first said they wouldn't play, then that they would, and then walked out on us. The man cast as Johannes thought he ought to have been Xuma, and walked out too. We had no difficulty in replacing him, but for women were left with three girls of 18, fresh from school, two of them very shy, and a man who volunteered to play Ma Plank. With these we were making quite good progress when, three weeks before the opening night, the ex-Johannes and his friends went into action. After failing to get the cast to strike or the students to boycott the play, they called a general meeting of the Group to 'enquire into resignations' (meaning their own) which they packed with numbers of people who had never taken part in the work, accused me of rigging the casting, and, by insulting my wife, on whom a great deal depends as she is ~~in~~ in charge of costumes and make-up as well as being a member of the committee, left me nothing to do but resign from the group, though they seemed mildly surprised when I did so.

Before the meeting I had assured the cast that I would see MINE BOY through, whatever happened. Though at the actual meeting, in face of the hostile imported crowd, only a few of the older and steadier ones had spoken on my side, the only vote that was taken went overwhelmingly in our favour, and throughout rehearsal, both before and after the trouble boiled up, the cast, stage crew and business staff worked away without turning a hair: the whole affair was engineered from outside the working party. So the ~~curtain~~ curtain went up on the appointed date.

We played on a virtually bare stage against a cyclorama giving effects of sunlit sky for the outdoor scenes. Flanking the stage were two corrugated iron walls with boxing posters and scribblings of the usual kind on them - these were a last-minute provision for those who expect scenery. We had experimented with cut-out mine dumps and pitheads, but they didn't work. The critics professed to like the bare stage, and I think one of them did.

Xuma and Daddy gave really good performances and nobody gave a really bad one. Leah (Frieda Matthews, Professor Matthews's daughter), considering that she's smallish (all the available girls were) and only 18, made an admirable job of her part, and the substitute Johannes, to my not altogether disinterested satisfaction, got a very good reception. And teamwork and continuity, which to my mind matter just as much as individual performances, were competent and sometimes a bit more than that. The only serious slip was when Leah once tried to throw Dladla through an entrance which the stage crew had inadvertently blocked with a winch, and ~~was~~ even that didn't show as much as it might have done.

Competence, I feel, with more than competent individual performances here and there, is at present really our ceiling; we haven't yet either the knowledge or the Old Guard of experienced performers that enables an amateur company really to play from strength.

It seemed pretty generally agreed that the script was the best of the three we've had so far; since at least three-quarters of it reproduces your novel almost word for word, we're very grateful to you for that.

Performance, though, I thought, showed up two weaknesses in the script, though no one remarked on them to me. Both are ~~my~~ of my making. One is Scene IV: a concentration of long speeches which should be enlivened~~d~~ or redistributed. The other is that Daddy disappears too soon. I may feel this because Mtunzi Mbete was playing the part, and audiences love him, but I think there's more to it than that. Two days before the show I took the liberty of writing in another few lines for him at the end of Scene VI, just after Leah 's advice to Xuma and Eliza:

ELIZA I won't be jealous. Go on.  
 (Xuma is crossing to Maisy. Daddy has risen, and stops him, pointing with stick.)

DADDY Xuma, my friend.

XUMA What is it?

DADDY Did they tell you about the man in the circus?

XUMA No. What did he do?

DADDY He rode a horse and a motor-bike, both at once.

XUMA And what happened, Daddy?

DADDY They all fell down. And that was the end of the man and the motor-bike. The horse got another job.  
 (Dance and song....)

Thanks to Mtunzi, this got a big laugh every night. Daddy needs yet more, I think; not perhaps very much more, since the role of commentator is taken over by Dr. Mini (in the stage version) and by Xuma himself, but a bit more, say, in Scene VI and possibly a last appearance at the beginning of Scene VII. If Daddy's death were to be put into the play, it would need a whole new scene, I think, plus some revision before and after the insertion.

Some people thought that Xuma has too little to do - this is partly the result of cutting out Paddy and the mine disaster - but I didn't feel his passivity as a weakness in the script.

Over a thousand people saw the play, which is a most satisfactory number considering Wentworth's inaccessibility. On the last two nights there was not even standing room. Quite a number of the students, including some of the heads of the conspiracy, came two or three times. The Paramount Chief sent Prince Isaiah Zulu as his representative: he came backstage and made a long speech after the show. If we had played two week-ends instead of from Wednesday to Saturday of the same week, we should probably have filled the hall to capacity every time. We got over 100 column-inches of advance publicity altogether, in six newspapers, and the Race Relations Institute, the International Club and the Bantu Indian and ~~the~~ Coloured Arts Group all circularised their local members for us; ~~the~~ Group also sent out 500 circulars of its own. The Central News Agency in Durban gave us a window display of ~~my~~ your books and photos of the play, and we got an ~~ad~~ advance notice on the S.A.B.C. Zulu programme too. To get any audience at all to face the eight miles of potholes between central Durban and Wentworth, you have to work pretty hard. (The alternative, though, is the financial plus all the other risks of playing in town. All our cast live in the Wentworth hostel. We won't play to segregated audiences, and short of the City Hall, there seems to be no place in Durban with an adequate lighting system that ~~all~~-ows the other kind.)

There was one slip in our publicity, for which I must ask your pardon, though I was misreported. I told the Natal Mercury in an interview that you had accepted my script without any changes: this was printed as "Peter Abrahams allowed me to change his novel just as I wished": I'm sorry.

We appear to have taken just under £200 - slightly more, I think, than ~~any~~ either of our previous shows has made - and for this nice fat sum, which we owe in such large measure to you, you have our very heartfelt thanks.

I've been asked to take over again as chairman, but I don't think that<sup>r</sup> it's in anybody's interests that I should do so until proper amends have been made by the folk who so nearly broke up the production; I can't expose my wife to any more of that sort of thing, and she and I work together. I'm sorry that I've had so much backstage bitchery to report; I wondered whether to spare you, but since it happened to your play, it seems right to let you know.

~~Rehax~~ Perhaps I might ask you one more favour. If you know of any good unpublished script that the Group might be able to use, I should be most grateful if you would let me know about it, and I'll pass on the information to whoever takes over if I'm not reinstated myself.

With very many thanks for your generous encouragement, and all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Bill Brauford

P.S. I'm airmailing the cuttings with this; programmes and photographs (the originals of the newspaper pictures) which are rather heavy for airmail, ~~the~~ follow by sea. If any more cuttings turn up, I'll send them - I haven't yet seen the Ilanga Lase Natal and Leader write-ups, if there were any.

Unfortunately I've no spare copy of a Sunday Tribune ~~with~~ advance notice which had a bit about you:

'A word about the author, Peter Abrahams, whose father was an Abyssinian and whose mother was a Cape Malay. He was born in Vrededorp; lost his father when he was very young, and survived in spite of starvation, thrashings and dire poverty.

'As a child he sold wood from a handcart, sold newspapers and carried parcels and baskets for shoppers in the Johannesburg market.

'The turning point in his life came when, at school for a short period, he discovered Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare, Palgrave's Golden Treasury and the poems of Keats. ('A new world was born', he says in his books, "Tell Freedom").

'He started to write poetry (some of it was published in "Ilang Lase") and he left South Africa a few years before the outbreak of the last war. Today he lives in Essex.'

This was in Mrs Reinhardt's ~~theater~~ theater column.

BFB

27 Manor house,  
South Ridge Road,  
Durban,  
Natal.  
15th March 1955.

Dear Mr. Abrahams,

Very many thanks for your encouraging letter of the 3rd, your permission for us to go ahead with MINE BOY, and your very generous gesture over our offer of a fee.

We have now collected some women, and we ~~went~~ began rehearsal last night, using the script that I sent you without any changes at all. We plan to open on 20th April, and ~~to~~ to run for four nights; this gives us a much shorter rehearsal period than has been usual with us, but I am hoping that it will turn out better to try to work the company hard for five weeks than to let them loaf along for the usual nine or ten. There may have to be a postponement, but I devoutly hope not. It is likely to pay us to get in one or two performances before the beginning of Ramadan. Our business managers are Moslems, and the support of the Moslem merchants has been very valuable in the past.

We plan to use our own hall out at Wentworth and not to attempt any performances in town; these are difficult and expensive to ~~organise~~ organise, and our lighting system can't travel with us. Our last two productions played to capacity houses; in fact we nearly came to blows with people ~~fixt~~ who had to be locked out of DINGANA (we're taking special precautions this year against over-selling). This shows that with a bit of luck and effort, an audience can be got out to Wentworth, though of course in the case of the present show both the luck and the effort have yet to materialise.

Our Leah, Valencia Majombozi, who played ~~the~~ the lead in both our previous shows, is likely to do justice to the part, and Xuma, Gay Lahla Ngubeni, alias Jobeni or 'the client', our last years' Dingaan, is capable of doing very well, but he's about to become a father, and this may put him off his stroke. Ma Plank, Johannes and the ~~fix~~ policeman also have experience; so has Daddy, but he has evening classes too, so we may lose him. The rest are freshmen. We have our full share of small feuds, temperaments and personal antipathies, but your name is going to be very good for morale, and I expect the play will survive them.

If you do get the play put on at St. Martins-in-the-Field, I should of course be delighted to have my name associated with it in any way.

When there's more to report, I'll let you know how production and publicity are shaping.

All good wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Bill Branford

Natal University,  
P.O.Box 152,  
Durban.  
30.10.'54.

Dear Mr. Abrahams,

Thankyou very much for your very kind letter. You'll be wondering, I'm afraid, what has become of our Mine Boy scheme. Our group had a long discussion of the book the other night, and there is one point about which we feel you should be consulted before I draft the stage version.

The book, as I understand it, has three main lines of action:

- (a) The shebeen: Leah's protection of Xuma; her duel with the police.
- (b) Love: Xuma-Eliza and Xuma-Maisie.
- (c) The Mine: Xuma's relations with Paddy and their united stand after the disaster.

If all three are worked into the stage version in the same proportions as in the novel, I feel that attention and interest may be scattered, particularly since a number of short scenes will then have to take place in several different places. I would like to suggest that the stage version, without sacrificing (c) should concentrate on (a) and (b), using Xuma's experience of the mine less as a source of incident than as a colour-wash pervading the whole story.

This wouldn't necessarily mean cutting or putting off-stage all the mine incidents, but it would make the main climax of action the arrest of Leah. If we follow this plan, the mine disaster, I suggest, should not be staged, but something of the kind should take place, and be reported, just before Leah's arrest. The end of the play would then be Xuma's double decision to speak up for the rights of his fellow-workers and, having taken the consequences of that, to begin a new life with Maisie - much as the novel has it - a decision precipitated by the arrest of Leah.

The group would like also to suggest that the Europeans of the story should appear as little as possible - they would still, of course, be potent off-stage influences. Despite the great importance in the novel of Paddy, we are suggesting this change partly because of the proposed shift of emphasis, and partly because the distance of the students' hostel from Durban (nine miles of indifferent road, with a very bad bus service) will make it almost if not quite impossible to get Europeans for rehearsals. Some Indian Cockneys we once saw in a play make the the prospect of Indian Irishmen rather alarming. To compensate for the shifting of Paddy into the background, I should like to make Dr. Mini more prominent.

You may perhaps prefer to reserve judgement on these points until I am able to submit my draft for your criticism, but we thought it advisable to let you know what we had in mind. We do greatly appreciate your kindness in allowing us to attempt the adaptation, and I hope very much that I shall be able to put together a satisfactory script.