

BRITAIN'S ROYAL BALLET IN APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA, 1960*

LAURA QUINTON 

New York University

ABSTRACT. *This article reconstructs and analyses, for the first time, the Royal Ballet's state-sponsored tour of apartheid South Africa from February to April 1960. It traces the public outcry surrounding the company's decision to exclude its only dancer of colour, as well as the tour's planning, execution, and continuation through the Sharpeville massacre, local reception, and aftermath. In this episode of the post-war period, politics and high culture operated in tandem to sustain Britain's imperial connections amid decolonization and the Cold War. The article proposes a reframing of the 'Wind of Change' moment, analyses the role of ballet in Britain's cultural Cold War, and underscores the British state's willingness to set aside human and moral concerns for political advantage. Above all, it argues that, rather than being peripheral to, or merely reflecting, the British state's agenda, ballet enacted its politics.*

In the House of Commons on 9 December 1959, the eminent Labour MP Tom Driberg rose to interrogate Prime Minister Harold Macmillan. The focus of Driberg's rant was neither nuclear weapons nor immigration. Rather, he took the prime minister to task on the subject of ballet.

The Royal Ballet, Britain's leading national dance company, was scheduled to visit South Africa in early 1960.¹ Did Macmillan know, Driberg pressed, that a

New York University, New York, NY 10003 lq203@nyu.edu

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¹ By 1960, the Royal Ballet included over 100 dancers. From 1957 until 1970, the organization divided into two large groups: while one group performed in London at the Royal Opera House, the other toured the British provinces or performed abroad. The group referred to as the 'Touring Section', formerly known as the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet, formed the basis of the team that visited South Africa in 1960.

'non-European' member of the company had been barred from joining this tour because of apartheid? Given this disgraceful restriction, was the prime minister planning to cancel subsidies promised in support of this tour? Would he raise the matter with South Africa's prime minister, Hendrik Verwoerd?² Driberg's questions ignited a media storm. In Britain and South Africa, writers disputed the political implications of the Royal Ballet's decision to comply with apartheid. In February 1960, following this uproar, the company nevertheless travelled to South Africa. The British Council, a leading state-funded organ for cultural diplomacy, provided financial insurance and helped co-ordinate the three-month visit. Johaar Mosaval, the company's only dancer of colour, remained in Britain.³

Historians have paid scant attention to the Royal Ballet's 1960 South Africa tour.⁴ Yet this episode reveals how, in the post-war period, politics and high culture worked together to sustain Britain's imperial connections amid decolonization and the Cold War. This article argues that, rather than being peripheral to, or merely reflecting, the British state's international agenda, ballet enacted its politics.

The Royal Ballet's tour began immediately after Macmillan completed a six-week journey through 'British Africa' and delivered his storied 'Wind of Change' address to the South African parliament in Cape Town. In this speech, given on 3 February 1960, Macmillan announced it was time to accept African nationalist movements and intimated disapproval of apartheid. Two days later, the Royal Ballet gave its first performance in Johannesburg. The company of seventy then travelled to Pietermaritzburg, Durban, and Cape Town, giving nearly 100 performances by 30 April 1960.⁵ In Cape Town alone, it reportedly drew 46,400 viewers.⁶ Local English- and Afrikaans-language newspapers vigorously covered these performances and the dancers' offstage engagements. The tour coincided with the 21 March massacre at Sharpeville, where South African police shot and killed sixty-nine people at a

² House of Commons Deb, 9 Dec. 1959, Hansard, vol. 615, cc. 516–20.

³ While his colleagues performed in South Africa in 1960, Mosaval danced with other Royal Ballet members at the Opera House (see n. 1).

⁴ The tour is mentioned in S. Woodcock, *The Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet* (London, 1991), pp. 131–2; and N. Lebrecht, *Covent Garden: the untold story* (Boston, MA, 2001), p. 231. Presenting it as a window onto post-1945 British and South African relations, this article builds on previous scholarship: R. Hyam and P. Henshaw, *The lion and the springbok: Britain and South Africa since the Boer War* (Cambridge, 2007); G. Schaffer, 'The limits of the "liberal imagination": Britain, broadcasting and apartheid South Africa, 1948–1994', *Past & Present*, 240 (2018), pp. 235–66; H. Sapire and A. Grundlingh, 'Rebuffing royals? Afrikaners and the royal visit to South Africa in 1947', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 46 (2018), pp. 524–51; D. Feather, 'British policy towards military cooperation with the Republic of South Africa, 1961–1975', *International History Review*, 41 (2019), pp. 729–52.

⁵ J. Tooley to S. Thomas, 15 Dec. 1959, The National Archives (TNA), London, BW 1/308.

⁶ D. Hatfield, 'Royal Ballet season has thrilled thousands', *Cape Times*, 30 Apr. 1960, p. 9.

peaceful protest organized by the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC). It continued through ensuing demonstrations and government suppression.

That John Maud, the British high commissioner in South Africa, both prepared the ‘Wind of Change’ address and organized the Royal Ballet’s tour suggests the latter’s purposeful timing. Although Conservative MPs who argued against Driberg publicly asserted that ballet and politics were unrelated, internal messages relayed between Maud, British Council representatives, and the Royal Ballet’s management affirm the tour’s explicitly political justifications and goals. Complementary parts of one larger project, the Royal Ballet’s excursion in South Africa and Macmillan’s speech worked subtly to reinforce Britain’s ties with and exert British influence on the apartheid state.

Considering the Royal Ballet’s tour alongside the prime minister’s address thus reveals a fuller picture of the ‘Wind of Change’ moment. While scholars widely agree that Macmillan’s speech marked a pivotal shift in British imperial politics, ushering in a rapid phase of decolonization, some have recently probed its rhetoric, intentions, and circumstances more deeply.⁷ They note that, although it strained already tense relations between Britain and South Africa, political estrangement was not Macmillan’s ultimate goal. Critical but not combative, Macmillan deployed a soft language of commonality and ‘kith and kin’ when describing British and South African relations.⁸ While his careful words could only imply a partnership, the Royal Ballet’s actions throughout the tour reaffirmed an unspoken, enduring friendship between the two nations. Like the speech, the tour was geared toward English- as well as Afrikaans-speaking white South Africans. Appealing to this population viscerally and ideologically, the ballet company counteracted political antagonisms the prime minister’s language kindled, warmly inviting audiences to join an attractive cultural milieu.

Along with presenting Britain and South Africa as a united front, the Royal Ballet underscored Macmillan’s Cold War objective of awakening his listeners to the importance of defending Western European ideals. Scholars of Cold War dance diplomacy, some of whom deploy political scientist Joseph Nye’s concept of ‘soft power’, have interrogated how state-sponsored ballet tours during this period worked to sway foreign nations toward particular ideological causes.⁹ An in-depth analysis of this Royal Ballet tour uncovers Britain’s efforts in this cultural Cold War.¹⁰ Sending internationally renowned, opulent

⁷ L. Butler and S. Stockwell, eds., *The Wind of Change: Harold Macmillan and British decolonisation* (New York, NY, 2013).

⁸ S. Dubow, ‘Macmillan, Verwoerd and the 1960 “Wind of Change” speech’, in *ibid.*, p. 39.

⁹ V. Phillips, *Martha Graham’s Cold War: the dance of American diplomacy* (Oxford, 2020); S. Gonçalves, *Danser pendant la guerre froide: 1945–1968* (Rennes, 2018); S. Prickett and S. Tsintziloni, ‘Dancing national ideologies: the Athens festival in the Cold War’, *Congress on Research in Dance Conference Proceedings* (2016), pp. 308–14; C. Croft, *Dancers as diplomats: American choreography in cultural exchange* (Oxford, 2015); C. Ezrahi, *Swans of the Kremlin: ballet and power in Soviet Russia* (Pittsburgh, PA, 2012).

¹⁰ Studies of Britain’s cultural Cold War typically omit dance: T. Shaw, ‘Introduction: Britain and the cultural Cold War’, *Contemporary British History*, 19 (2005), pp. 109–15; J. Vaughan, “A

productions and elite ballet dancers to South Africa in 1960 not only flattered and dramatized the significance of the company's hosts; by demonstrating the supposed superiority of British and Western European culture, the company's performances breathed life into Macmillan's effort to steer white South Africans away from political isolationism, reinforcing the need to safeguard these fragile, 'elevated' ideals as communist movements stirred throughout Africa.

If this Royal Ballet tour clarified and enlivened Macmillan's address, reconciling his government's imperial and Cold War agendas, it also underscores the moral compromises Britain's political and cultural establishment willingly made in order to shore up ties with a segregated Commonwealth nation. Analysing the tour illuminates less conspicuous erasures and injustices which accompanied the overt violence of the British state as it sought to recast its imperial identity in this moment.¹¹ Along with the exclusion of Mosaval, the commitment of the government and the company to continuing the tour after Sharpeville indicates how the beautiful, benign veneer of classical ballet could be mobilized to conceal the human costs and murky ethics underpinning the post-war British state's liberal diplomatic machinations and its national dance company's overseas prestige missions.

I

In February 1959, Jim Stodel, general manager of African Consolidated Theatres (ACT), the South African organization which oversaw most of the country's performance venues, met with R. T. Butlin, the British Council's representative in South Africa, to discuss the possibility of a Royal Ballet visit. Over lunch, Stodel lamented the recent lack of visits by British artists to South Africa, wondering whether a 'really high level' venture might demonstrate the 'diplomatic importance of appearances in South Africa' to these performers and their managers. Stodel had already proposed to the Royal Opera House, the home of the Royal Ballet, that the company visit in early 1960. Opera House administrators had entertained the idea, but remained noncommittal. Would Butlin be willing to add some pressure?¹²

certain idea of Britain": British cultural diplomacy in the Middle East, 1945–1957', *Contemporary British History*, 19 (2005), pp. 151–68; S. Davies, 'The soft power of Anglia: British Cold War cultural diplomacy in the USSR', *Contemporary British History*, 27 (2013), pp. 297–323; A. Webb, *London calling: Britain, the BBC world service and the Cold War* (London, 2014). Exceptions which consider dance in this context include: Gonçalves, *Danser pendant la guerre froide*, Prickett and Tsintziloni, 'Dancing national ideologies'; and L. Nicholas, 'Fellow travellers: dance and British Cold War politics in the early 1950s', *Dance Research*, 19 (2001), pp. 83–105.

¹¹ B. Grobb-Fitzgibbon, *Imperial endgame: Britain's dirty wars and the end of empire* (London, 2011); D. Branch, *Defeating Mau Mau, creating Kenya: counterinsurgency, civil war, and decolonisation* (Cambridge, 2010).

¹² TNA, BW 1/308, 23 Feb. 1959, R. T. Butlin to Controller.

Stodel's shrewd remarks about the 'vital' contributions British theatre could offer South Africa resonated with Butlin, who felt the Council would have the 'fullest political justification' in helping ACT co-ordinate this tour.¹³ Reporting back to London, Butlin noted that 1960 would be the year of the Festival of the Union of South Africa. Planned by the South African government, this celebration would commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of South African unification by glorifying the nation's Afrikaner culture and heritage. Afrikaners (or Afrikaans-speakers), descended largely from seventeenth-century Dutch, German, and French settlers, made up one of the two major ethnic groups in South Africa's white population – the other being British (or English-speakers). The Festival would be part of an ongoing effort by the Afrikaner National Party, the country's governing party since 1948 and orchestrator of apartheid, to diminish British influence in South Africa and foster a nation which championed the Afrikaans language, religion, and history as well as racial segregation.¹⁴ A visit by the illustrious Royal Ballet preceding these official celebrations could stymie this effort, reminding local audiences of South Africa's importance to Britain while also offering a visible, attractive projection of Britain's cultural achievements and comparatively liberal values.

Despite the Royal Opera House's earlier vacillations, in June 1959, top administrator John Tooley journeyed to South Africa for discussions with ACT. Butlin escorted Tooley to Cape Town to meet John Maud, the British high commissioner in South Africa. A suave former Oxford don, Maud was the British government's leading representative in the region, and he would play an enthusiastic and forceful part in the tour's co-ordination and execution.¹⁵ Butlin also took Tooley to Durban to see E. G. Malherbe, a liberal-leaning Afrikaner and principal of Natal University, who wanted the Royal Ballet to perform during the university's 1960 Golden Jubilee celebrations.¹⁶

After his visit, Tooley began making formal plans for a 1960 tour, asking the British Council for a financial guarantee against potential losses in case audience attendance was low.¹⁷ Butlin then vigorously relayed to his colleagues Maud's readiness 'to bring the strongest pressure to bear in the highest quarters to provide the necessary guarantee or subsidy' for this tour.¹⁸ In August 1959, another message from Maud circulated through the British Council: negotiations for this tour must be made 'priority number one', as 'from the political point of view...there could be no better means of upholding the British tradition in

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: a biography of a people* (London, 2011); D. Moodie, *The rise of Afrikanerdom: power, apartheid and Afrikaner civil religion* (London, 1980); E. Cloete, 'Afrikaner identity: culture, tradition, and gender', *Agenda*, 13 (1992), pp. 42–56.

¹⁵ On Maud: J. Redcliffe-Maud, *Experiences of an optimist: the memoirs* (London, 1981); Robert Armstrong, 'Maud, John Primate Redcliffe (1906–1982)', *ODNB*.

¹⁶ TNA, BW 1/308, 6 July 1959, Butlin to director.

¹⁷ TNA, BW 1/308, 1 July 1959, memo by Thomas.

¹⁸ TNA, BW 1/308, 6 July 1959, Butlin to Thomas.

South Africa' in the Festival of Union year.¹⁹ From its inception, the tour was thus part of a concerted political push to bolster Britain's appeal in South Africa and counteract Afrikaner nationalism.

The Royal Ballet had other reasons to visit South Africa. Along with enhancing the company's already glittering international reputation, the tour might encourage South African dancers to continue auditioning for the Royal Ballet and its school. Since the Second World War, numerous South Africans had filled the institution's ranks: some of these artists, including leading dancers Nadia Nerina, Alexis Rassiné, and David Poole as well as choreographers John Cranko and Alfred Rodrigues, became part of its creative core. The company's director, Ninette de Valois, thus took a 'particular, personal interest' in South Africa, and was determined that the company go.²⁰ Economic motivations also factored in. During a meeting in July 1959, the Royal Opera House Board agreed that profits from a tour of a wealthy foreign country might offset the Opera House's anticipated future deficits.²¹ That Royal Ballet dancers had recently performed in South Africa without a hitch gave the company's administrators little reason to hesitate.²²

With a £2,800 guarantee against losses from the British Council confirmed by early December, the company was set to perform in Johannesburg, Pietermaritzburg, Durban, and Cape Town from February through April 1960. They would dance at the University of Natal's Golden Jubilee gala. The Royal Ballet would also comply with the rules of Equity, the British theatre union, for performances in countries with colour-bars. In a three-month season of near-nightly shows, they agreed to give two performances in a segregated theatre in Pietermaritzburg, and two performances for black audiences: one in Johannesburg, and one in Cape Town.²³

Back in South Africa, this news caught the attention of esteemed writer and leader of the South African Coloured People's Organisation, Alex La Guma. Writing in *New Age*, a socialist newspaper sympathetic to the African National Congress (ANC), La Guma found cause for celebration: 'there's no doot

¹⁹ TNA, BW 1/308, Aug. 1959, memo from the office of the high commissioner, Pretoria.

²⁰ 'Historic Royal Ballet tour of South Africa', *The Stage*, 10 Dec. 1959, p. 8; J. Mosaval, interview with author, 25 July 2018.

²¹ Board minutes, 21 July 1959, Royal Opera House Collections (ROHC), London.

²² M. Grut, *The history of ballet in South Africa* (Cape Town, 1981), p. 48. In 1954, the organization's junior company, then named the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet, toured South Africa with ACT's sponsorship. While Mosaval was not included on this visit, the South African dancer David Poole, whom Hilde Roos explains 'was born in 1925 into a coloured family' and later 'had himself reclassified by South African authorities in England as a white person', was. Poole left the Theatre Ballet in 1956 and later worked as a ballet choreographer, teacher, and director in Cape Town. H. Roos, *The La Traviata affair: opera in the age of apartheid* (Oakland, CA, 2018), pp. 90–1. Also: R. Glasstone, *David Poole: a life blighted by apartheid* (Kibworth, 2018).

²³ 'Africans to see Royal Ballet?', *Observer*, 25 Oct. 1959, p. 17. In this article, I follow South Africa scholars who use the term 'black' to refer collectively to people categorized as 'African', 'coloured', and 'Indian' by the apartheid state after the 1950 Population Registration Act. While this approach is common, it is not universal.

many of us black folks are looking forward to seeing the Royal Ballet Company when it visits our sunny land...the fact that they accept Equity's decision to dance for Non-Whites is a big rent in the cultural colour-bar curtain'.²⁴ His enthusiasm soured, however, when news spread that the black dancer Johaar Mosaval, born and trained in South Africa before joining the Royal Ballet, would not be a part of the company's visit to his home country.²⁵

Mosaval's exclusion first arose as a problem for the British Council when, on 7 December 1959, staff members learned that Driberg planned to ask questions about it in the House of Commons two days later. Panic ensued: word was 'getting out' about Mosaval, and the Council would need to make a statement.²⁶ Scrambling to counteract impending criticism, Council representatives attributed the decision to the Royal Ballet's management. Although one representative conceded internally that an official from the Commonwealth Relations Office had, at Maud's behest, warned him in November that bringing Mosaval to South Africa would likely 'have serious repercussions', the Council maintained it never discussed the matter with the Royal Ballet – the company's decision, 'taken entirely on their own initiative', was a complete surprise.²⁷

Publicly, the Royal Opera House explained that Mosaval would not be going on the tour to avoid his being 'embarrassed', and that it was 'not [the company's] place' to take a stance on apartheid.²⁸ Behind closed doors, the Opera House Board agreed that excluding Mosaval was 'common sense' – 'not least in his own interests'.²⁹ At a meeting of the Ballet Sub-Committee, the Opera House's general administrator David Webster asserted that racial bias had played no part in this decision: Mosaval 'was not a key performer', and 'there was therefore no special reason why he should be included in the cast on this occasion'. The Sub-Committee agreed, noting that 'while it would have been wrong to weaken the programme artistically because of political pressure, it was merely common sense to avoid incidents embarrassing to all parties when the omission of one particular member of the company would not affect the general standard of the performance'.³⁰

²⁴ A. La Guma, 'Up my alley', *New Age*, 10 Dec. 1959, p. 5.

²⁵ Gerard Samuel notes that Mosaval 'would have been classified Muslim and Coloured' by the South African government. G. Samuel, '(Dis)graceful dancing bodies in South Africa', *Choreographic Practices*, 6 (2015), p. 124. Also see A. La Guma, 'Up my alley', *New Age*, 11 June 1959, p. 6: 'Local boy who has made good is Johaar Mosaval, the Coloured dancer back in South Africa from the Royal Ballet.' For more on 'coloured' identity and this contested and unstable term: M. Adhikari, *Not white enough, not black enough: racial identity in the South African coloured community* (Athens, OH, 2005); Z. Erasmus, *Coloured by history, shaped by place: new perspectives on coloured identities in Cape Town* (Cape Town, 2001); C. Jung, *Then I was black: South African political identities in transition* (New Haven, CT, 2000).

²⁶ TNA, BW 1/308, 7 Dec. 1959, memo by P. A. Controller.

²⁷ TNA, BW 1/308, 10 Dec. 1959, memo by assistant director general; TNA, BW 1/308, 14 Dec. 1959, 'Background notes to P. Q. on Royal Ballet tour in South Africa'.

²⁸ "'Britse Haatlikheid" yet', *The Spectator*, 11 Dec. 1959, p. 4.

²⁹ ROHC, 22 Dec. 1959, Board minutes.

³⁰ ROHC, 17 Dec. 1959, Ballet Sub-Committee minutes.

Mosaval's remarkable career trajectory reveals the disingenuousness of these statements. Born in 1928 in the neighbourhood of District Six, Cape Town, Mosaval studied ballet at the University of Cape Town Ballet school with some of the country's leading instructors.³¹ In 1950, he received a scholarship to attend the Sadler's Wells Ballet School (later renamed the Royal Ballet School) in London, and joined the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet (later renamed the Royal Ballet) the following year. After two weeks with the company, he was dancing principal parts.³² Throughout the next decade, he originated leading roles in major new works like John Cranko's *The lady and the fool* (1954), and critics frequently singled him out, praising his artistry and virtuosity.³³ Fellow Royal Ballet dancers also held Mosaval in high esteem: principal dancer Susan Alexander, for instance, described him as 'one of our most valuable soloists'.³⁴ In late 1959, Mosaval's position within the company was strong. A new production included in the tour programme for South Africa featured a role he originated.

Facing Driberg's questions in the House of Commons on 9 December, Home Secretary R. A. Butler repeated the British Council's line that the decision about Mosaval rested with the Royal Ballet. As Driberg and other dismayed Labour MPs who found Mosaval's exclusion 'thoroughly repugnant' argued for government intervention, Conservative MPs responded that apartheid was a domestic South African concern, and that ballet and politics were entirely separate matters.³⁵ The latter argument squarely denied the fact that the tour had been organized for explicitly political reasons.

Major British newspapers printed this debate, stirring up a media storm. A *Spectator* writer lambasted the Opera House for its treatment of Mosaval, claiming that 'the Royal Ballet, for all its pretensions to artistic dignity, lags behind most of the artistic profession in its concern for racial justice'. The company's 'tolerance', the writer argued, had been 'thrust upon it': the Royal Ballet had only scheduled performances for black audiences after Equity rejected the tour's 'original arrangements'. Furthermore, public money – which supported the Royal Ballet through hefty Arts Council grants – should never be used 'to

³¹ In historically liberal Cape Town, there was limited racial integration at the University of Cape Town ballet school under the direction of Dulcie Howes in the mid-twentieth century. See R. Glasstone, *Dulcie Howes: pioneer of ballet in South Africa* (Cape Town, 1996); R. Hagemann, 'The politics of dance in South Africa', *Ballet International*, 31 (1990), pp. 127–46. Still, Mosaval was made to stand at the back of the studio, 'know[ing] my place'. J. Mosaval, interview with author, 25 July 2018.

³² J. Mosaval, interview with author, 25 July 2018. Mosaval became a soloist in 1956 and was promoted to principal in 1960.

³³ See 'Dancer you will know: Johaar Mosaval', *Dance & Dancers*, Nov. 1953, p. 19; R. Buckle, 'Ballet', *Observer*, 26 Dec. 1954, p. 7; 'Male dancers in the Royal Ballet', *Times*, 14 Jan. 1958, p. 3.

³⁴ S. Alexander, *Dance of my life* (Kinloss, 2007), p. 104.

³⁵ House of Commons Deb, 9 Dec. 1959; House of Commons Deb, 17 Dec. 1959, Hansard, vol. 615, c. 219W.

condone police oppression within the Commonwealth'.³⁶ In *The Sunday Times*, eminent ballet critic Richard Buckle also condemned the decision to exclude Mosaval, whom he called 'a very good dancer'.³⁷

In South Africa, news of the debate and a photograph of Mosaval appeared on the front page of the influential Afrikaans-language newspaper, *Die Burger*.³⁸ The paper's 'Dawie' column subsequently addressed the controversy. Likely written by the paper's editor Piet Cillié, a leading intellectual of the Afrikaner nationalist movement, the piece accused Labour of using Mosaval to humiliate the Conservative government. It endorsed the decision not to include him on the tour, contending that 'a mixed ballet company from abroad which will enjoy a kind of official status at the Union Festival will not do'. The column recommended Mosaval instead be invited to dance with the Eoan Group, a prominent Cape Town organization for 'coloured' performing artists, so as to 'neutralize the bad taste which all the fuss caused' in Britain.³⁹ In the English-language *Rand Daily Mail*, another writer described Mosaval's exclusion as a logical decision.⁴⁰ In *New Age*, La Guma offered a sharp critique: 'it would not be Joha[a]r who would be embarrassed by South Africa's apartheid laws if they brought him along, but South Africa itself, and a good thing too'.⁴¹

Amid this commotion, the Macmillan government stayed silent. South Africa had long been a 'difficult cousin' for Britain and, although Macmillan's cabinet did not endorse apartheid, they felt they could not afford to offend or alienate the South African government.⁴² In late 1959, South Africa was part of the Commonwealth, a sterling area member and a historic trading partner, providing an economic buttress as Britain grappled with ongoing balance-of-payments problems. It was also a strategically located ally in the worldwide battle against Communism. Moreover, after the 1956 Suez Crisis and Britain's highly criticized crackdowns in Kenya and Nyasaland in March 1959, the government found itself struggling to retain its international authority. Arguing against Driberg, Butler and other Conservative MPs asserted that Britain had no right to meddle in South Africa's domestic affairs—a defence often invoked by the South African government.⁴³

³⁶ "'Britse Haatlikheid" yet', p. 4.

³⁷ R. Buckle, 'Return of the native', *Sunday Times*, 13 Dec. 1959, p. 24.

³⁸ 'Storm in Brittanje Oor S. A. Danser: Diskriminasie Beweer teen Mosaval', *Die Burger*, 10 Dec. 1959, p. 1.

³⁹ Dawie, 'Uit My Politieke Pen', *Die Burger*, 12 Dec. 1959, p. 12. On the Eoan Group: Eoan History Project, *EOAN: our story* (Johannesburg, 2013); Roos, *The La Traviata affair*; J. Pistorius, 'Coloured opera as subversive forgetting', *Social Dynamics*, 43 (2017), pp. 230–42; *An Inconsolable Memory*, DVD, directed by A. Kaganof and S. Muller (Stellenbosch, 2014).

⁴⁰ D. L. S., 'London ballet critic is not correct', *Rand Daily Mail*, 15 Jan. 1960, p. 6.

⁴¹ A. La Guma, 'Up my alley', *New Age*, 4 Feb. 1960, p. 6.

⁴² R. Skinner, *The foundations of anti-apartheid: liberal humanitarians and transnational activists in Britain and the United States, c. 1919–1964* (London, 2010), p. 156.

⁴³ Hyam and Henshaw, *The lion and the springbok*, p. 146.

Without any countervailing directive from the government, plans for the tour moved forward. For the management of the Royal Ballet and the Opera House, the artistic and economic promises of visiting South Africa proved too tempting to forgo. For the British Council, which claimed that plans for the tour had advanced too far to turn back, withdrawing support might mean damaging its relationship with the Royal Ballet, losing the chance to insert itself further into South African cultural affairs, and forgoing a major opportunity to advance its larger goal of 'bring[ing] British influence to bear on the Afrikaner'.⁴⁴ Although these organizations and the Macmillan government made claims to enlightened civility and moral leadership, they withered in the face of a racial injustice imposed by choice in order to avoid rankling white South African authorities.

Despite their initial impassioned denunciations in parliament, which included demanding the government rescind the ballet company's Royal Charter (a request Macmillan himself denied), and even as they increasingly aligned themselves with Britain's burgeoning anti-apartheid movement, Labour MPs gradually lost interest in the tour.⁴⁵ Media coverage also receded. By the time the company left for South Africa in late January, the storm seemed to have passed. A progress report later delivered to the British Council noted, with relief: 'Mosaval story dead before Company's arrival and not since resuscitated.'⁴⁶

II

When the Royal Ballet's dancers stepped off the plane in Johannesburg on 1 February, the city's mayor and nearly 1,000 cheering people greeted them.⁴⁷ On the tarmac, radio hosts interviewed the dancers, who signed autographs and took photos with fans.⁴⁸ Two days later, Macmillan delivered his 'Wind of Change' address in Cape Town. As he spoke about recognizing nationalist movements in Africa and alluded to Britain's discomfort with apartheid, South African representatives listened with stone-faced expressions. If Macmillan's message unsettled white South African authorities, the Royal Ballet would soon underscore its friendlier underpinnings.

Back in Johannesburg on 5 February, the British and South African national anthems played back-to-back at the Royal Ballet's opening in *Swan Lake* (1895). This fanfare, which Maud insisted upon, loaded the performance with symbolic

⁴⁴ TNA, BW 61/18, 2 May 1960, 'Council work in South Africa'. Also: TNA, BW 1/308, 11 Dec. 1959, director general to M. Edelman; TNA, BW 68/18, 5 Jan. 1960, executive meeting minutes.

⁴⁵ House of Commons Deb, 17 Dec. 1959.

⁴⁶ TNA, BW 1/308, 4 Apr. 1960, UKSLS Pretoria to CRO.

⁴⁷ Alexander, *Dance of my life*, p. 100.

⁴⁸ 'Royal Ballet here – undaunted by altitude', *Rand Daily Mail*, 1 Feb. 1960, p. 19.

meaning before the curtain rose.⁴⁹ Both anthems featured regularly in South African political and cultural life from the region's unification in 1910 until 1957, when the National Party jettisoned *God Save the Queen* in its effort to eradicate British influence in South Africa. By reinstating this tradition, the tour's opening evoked earlier periods of collaboration between English and Afrikaans politicians.⁵⁰ In his address, Macmillan lauded General Jan Smuts, one of the most prominent of these leaders.⁵¹ Following Macmillan, the tour from the very beginning offered a reminder of happier times in British–South African relations.

If tensions were high when the dancing began, the audience, crowded with members of Johannesburg's and Pretoria's white political and social elite, soon became mesmerized by the grand, fantastical world of *Swan Lake*.⁵² At a party thrown later that night in honour of the opening, cameras flashed as dancers posed with smiling officials, and one even danced the cha-cha with the mayor of Johannesburg's wife.⁵³ That evening, and throughout the next three months, the ballet company's actions reflected the amicable undercurrents of Macmillan's statements, reassuring white South Africans that they still had a friend in Britain.

Acting as ambassadors for their country, the Royal Ballet dancers attended similar whites-only parties hosted by elites in every city they visited. They also headlined cultural and charity events, signed autographs at department stores, and appeared in advertisements for local beauty products.⁵⁴ Wealthy South Africans welcomed the dancers into their homes, where they splashed in swimming pools and drank iced beverages provided by servants.⁵⁵

Genial relations outside the theatre strengthened the vision of white South African and British partnership the company presented onstage. Although its members were mostly British, the Royal Ballet included many South African dancers. Two of these dancers—the star ballerina Nadia Nerina, and the soloist Desmond Doyle—were featured heavily throughout the tour. Local audiences took pride in these performers: advance publicity in Afrikaans- and English-language publications celebrated Nerina's much-anticipated

⁴⁹ J. Tooley, *In house: Covent Garden, 50 years of opera and ballet* (London, 1999), p. 182.

⁵⁰ H. Giliomee, 'The growth of Afrikaner identity', in W. Beinart and S. Dubow, eds., *Segregation and apartheid in twentieth-century South Africa* (London, 1995), p. 191.

⁵¹ 'Address by Mr. Macmillan to both houses of the parliament of the Union of South Africa, Cape Town', in R. Hyam and W. R. Louis, eds., *The conservative government and the end of empire, 1957–1964, part I* (London, 2000), p. 168.

⁵² M. Kenwood, 'Ballet in Johannesburg', *Ballet Today*, Feb. 1960, p. 21.

⁵³ 'Johannesburg's mayoress "did tennis with Walder Pidgeon..."', *Rand Daily Mail*, 18 Feb. 1960, p. 7.

⁵⁴ 'Cup to be presented', *Rand Daily Mail*, 17 Feb. 1960, p. 6; 'Jottings about the ballet', *The Star*, 22 Feb. 1960, p. 14; 'Dancers entertained in Maritzburg', *Natal Daily News*, 23 Mar. 1960, p. 9.

⁵⁵ Alexander, *Dance of my life*, p. 103.

homecoming, and critics heaped praise upon her and Doyle in both languages.⁵⁶ Presenting these dancers alongside British performers as one cohesive unit, and in ballets featuring intimate supported partnering sequences, the company not only echoed but embodied Macmillan's celebration of Britain's and South Africa's familial ties, 'true partnership', and 'interdependence'.⁵⁷ That the Durban Civic Orchestra accompanied the Royal Ballet throughout the tour added further evidence of fruitful South African and British co-operation.⁵⁸

The ballets the company performed during the tour furthered this political message. They brought productions already familiar to South African ballet artists and audiences, from classics like *Giselle* (1841), *Swan Lake* (1895), and *Les Sylphides* (1909) to signature British works like *The Rake's Progress* (1935) and *Les Patineurs* (1937). Visiting British artists had performed these ballets in South Africa before, and some had even staged them for local companies. Highlighting these productions, the Royal Ballet underscored a historic artistic partnership.

Indeed, the British and South African ballet worlds had long been mutually constituting.⁵⁹ In the early twentieth century, efforts by British artists to transform ballet into a national high art form inspired ballet teachers and dancers hoping to achieve a similar goal in South Africa. Many South Africans travelled to London to train and perform, returning home afterward to establish ballet organizations based on British models. Recognizing the wealth of talent emerging from South Africa and its enrichment of their own national tradition, British teachers, dancers, companies, and choreographers travelled to South Africa in turn to export training systems, perform, and set ballets on budding local companies. This energetic artistic circulation continued as the century wore on, even after the formal instituting of apartheid in 1948. The 1960 Royal Ballet tour continued this trend, reaffirming the essential unity of these two ballet worlds and thereby invoking the shared 'legacy of history' Macmillan alluded to in his address.⁶⁰

For the British state, the fact that the Royal Ballet might reach white Afrikaans- as well as English-speakers made it a particularly promising emissary for a myth of British and white South African unity. While many South African ballet artists had British roots, some – like the dancer Petrus Bosman – were

⁵⁶ D. Sowden, 'The ballet: supreme perfection!', *Sunday Times*, 28 Feb. 1960, p. 16; O. Walker, 'Nerina's radiance as Aurora', *The Star*, 29 Feb. 1960, p. 13; E. B. S., 'Younger Royal Ballet members shine', *Natal Witness*, 23 Mar. 1960, p. 7; D. Hatfield, 'Two Odiles had ovations at the Alhambra', *Cape Times*, 19 Apr. 1960, p. 4; W. E. G. L., 'Joger Dansers en Danseress Sorg vir Hoogtepunte', *Die Burger*, 25 Apr. 1960, p. 2; A. F. V., 'Die Geheim van Sibley se Sukses', *Die Burger*, 28 Apr., p. 2.

⁵⁷ 'Address by Mr. Macmillan', pp. 168, 171, 173.

⁵⁸ See E. Schay, *Of exile and music: a twentieth-century life* (Ashland, OH, 2014), pp. 157–61.

⁵⁹ Grut, *The history of ballet in South Africa*, J. Worrall, ed., *Ballet in South Africa* (Cape Town, 1949).

⁶⁰ 'Address by Mr. Macmillan', p. 174.

bilingual, with Afrikaans heritage.⁶¹ Afrikaans-speaking critics also took an interest in and reviewed ballet performances.⁶² Through the non-verbal language of dance, the Royal Ballet might circumvent a major point of white division in South Africa, enticing not only English- but also Afrikaans-speakers interested in the art.

The South African press indicates that the Royal Ballet did in fact attract Afrikaans- and English-speaking critics keen to evaluate the company's dancing and flaunt their own knowledge of ballet. Watching South African and British dancers as well as familiar ballets, critics even saw aspects of their own culture on stage. For instance, a *Die Burger* writer likened the sprightly English dancer Alan Beale to a springbok, an antelope found in South Africa, and compared the graceful movements of English ballerina Antoinette Sibley to those of a gull from the Boland.⁶³ A *Cape Times* critic meanwhile maintained that a local South African company outperformed the Royal Ballet in key dramatic moments of *Swan Lake*.⁶⁴

If the company's dancing allowed local connoisseurs to identify cultural continuities and comparisons, it also exhibited particular British qualities which audiences might admire. Despite National Party efforts to squash it, British culture still permeated mid-twentieth-century South Africa, and historians note how after the Second World War white South Africans continued to idealize a genteel, 'Edwardian way of British life – of style and comfort, of masters and servants'.⁶⁵ The gracious, refined deportment of the Royal Ballet's trademark movement style, embedded within productions celebrating tradition, order, aristocracy, and nostalgia, could appeal to such tastes. For instance, *The Sleeping Beauty*, the company's acclaimed calling-card, displayed a pleasant, deferential world of nobles and attendants. At the same time, the visual splendour of leading British designer Oliver Messel's costumes and sets, as well as the technical excellence of British ballerinas in the grand, demanding central role, signalled the supremacy of British art and artists. Ninette de Valois's striking dramatic work, *The Rake's Progress*, meanwhile portrayed a moralistic tale based on a series of eighteenth-century paintings by English artist William Hogarth. Expressing a hierarchy of values through dance, the ballet illustrates a wealthy man's devolution into impoverishment and insanity through a transition from erect, courtly gestures to grounded, expressionist movement. If this work reflected a particular idea of 'civility', by highlighting Hogarth it also

⁶¹ Bosman joined the Royal Ballet in 1959.

⁶² 1950s reviews from Afrikaans-language papers *Die Vaderland* and *Die Transvaler* appear in G. Rosen, 'Frank Staff and his role in South African ballet and musical theatre from 1955 to 1959' (Ph.D. thesis, Department of Music, University of Cape Town, 1998).

⁶³ A. F. V., 'Svetlana Beriosova en Donald MacLeary', *Die Burger*, 27 Apr. 1960, p. 2.

⁶⁴ Hatfield, 'Two Odiles had ovations at the Alhambra', p. 4. This argument on reception draws inspiration from M. Clayton, 'Touring history: Tortola Valencia between Europe and the Americas', *Dance Research Journal*, 44 (2012), pp. 29–49.

⁶⁵ Hyam and Henshaw, *The lion and the springbok*, p. 279.

paid homage to one of Europe's Old Masters, a historic category of visual artists to which white South African settlers from across Europe could also lay claim.⁶⁶

In selecting the ballets for this tour, the Royal Ballet's management avoided productions that might disturb conservative ideologies. The only new works the company presented, Kenneth MacMillan's *Solitaire* (1956) and John Cranko's *Sweeney Todd* (1959), were strikingly benign in the context of recent ballets produced in Britain. A so-called Angry Young Man, MacMillan reinvented the classical form to explore dark subjects, tackling physical deformity, violence, and psychological torment. An anomaly in his choreographic oeuvre, *Solitaire* is a light divertissement, featuring playful music and a melancholy heroine in a pink and orange tutu.⁶⁷ White South African critics found this ballet 'wholesome' and 'sparkling'.⁶⁸ South African choreographer John Cranko's entertaining *Sweeney Todd*, set in Victorian England, also delighted audiences – claiming Cranko as a home-grown talent, one South African critic called it 'ingenious'.⁶⁹ Yet this production lacked the artistic adventurousness, pensiveness, and satirical force of other works by Cranko.⁷⁰ Presenting stately, charming, and moralistic productions, the Royal Ballet shunned experiment and the unsettling, uglier modern realism then emerging in dance and the art world in Britain.⁷¹ It depicted Britain as a non-threatening, desirable ally.

Crucially, the company projected this demure image through ballets foregrounding women. The pastoral *Swan Lake*, *Les Sylphides*, and *Giselle* feature entirely female corps scenes, and women dominate the cast of *The Sleeping Beauty*. If these dramatic canonical works showcased the Royal Ballet's artistic and technical prowess, they also allowed it to sidestep long-standing prejudices against male dancers in South Africa.⁷² With their romantic plots and moods, translucent white and pastel dresses, and precise, lyrical choreography for women, these ballets offer a vision of graceful, ethereal femininity in bucolic settings – images which hardly challenged the patriarchal values of white South African society.⁷³ Some South African leaders even became enamoured of the company's glamorous female principals: E. G. Malherbe, for instance,

⁶⁶ On notions of dance and 'civilization' prized by white South Africans: S. van Wyk, 'Ballet blanc to ballet black: performing whiteness in post-apartheid South African dance', in S. Friedman, ed., *Post-apartheid dance* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2015), p. 39.

⁶⁷ J. Parry, *Different drummer: the life of Kenneth MacMillan* (London, 2009), pp. 170–3.

⁶⁸ A. B. S., 'Miss E. Anderton scores big success in "Solitaire"', *Natal Daily News*, 1 Apr. 1960, p. 14; D. O., 'Evening of ballet was radiant – unforgettable', *Sunday Tribune*, 27 Mar. 1960, p. 5.

⁶⁹ "'The Rake" splendidly performed by Royal Ballet Company', *Natal Daily News*, 28 Mar. 1960, p. 7.

⁷⁰ J. Percival, *Theatre in my blood: a biography of John Cranko* (London, 1983), p. 129.

⁷¹ R. Hewison, *In anger: British culture in the Cold War, 1945–1960* (London, 1981); A. Marwick, *Culture in Britain since 1945* (Oxford, 1991).

⁷² Glasstone, *Dulcie Howes*, p. 88; D. Hatfield, 'Cape Town University Ballet', in Worrall, ed., *Ballet in South Africa*, p. 32.

⁷³ Cloete, 'Afrikaner identity'; Hyam and Henshaw, *The lion and the springbok*, p. 279; S. Dubow, *Apartheid, 1948–1994* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 6–7.

found himself 'smitten' with Antoinette Sibley.⁷⁴ According to one local critic, *Swan Lake*, *Giselle*, and *Beauty* were the tour's most popular ballets.⁷⁵

Indeed, reviewers for English and Afrikaans presses marvelled overwhelmingly at the Royal Ballet. They described the company's dancing as 'thrilling', 'astonishing', 'superb' – like 'magic'.⁷⁶ Passions developed for female soloists. The 'celestial' Sibley 'captured' hearts: one critic divulged that the ballerina's performance in *The Sleeping Beauty* 'left me breathless'.⁷⁷ Others eulogized Beryl Grey and Svetlana Beriosova's interpretations of *Giselle*.⁷⁸ The company even enchanted more censorious reviewers. Though writers for *Die Burger* faulted the dancing of the corps and the length and designs of some productions, the Royal Ballet's superlative soloists, especially Sibley and Doyle, ultimately won them over.⁷⁹

Critics chronicled how the company consistently catapulted spectators in packed theatres to a higher emotional plane: as one Johannesburg writer put it, 'we are all a little intoxicated' by the company's 'fabulous feast of ballet'.⁸⁰ *The Sleeping Beauty* reportedly brought audience members to tears, while the 'furious fun' *Sweeney Todd* had them 'dying of laughter'.⁸¹ On the company's final night in Johannesburg, streamers and balloons fell from the ceiling as performers and audience members sang a spontaneous rendition of the traditional British tune, *Auld Lang Syne*. Noting endless ovations, critics agreed that the company's performances would be remembered for years to come.⁸²

If the Royal Ballet presented white South Africans with an enticing image of Britain, its productions also had the potential to steer them away from political isolation. The company's sumptuous classical works, including the quintessential French Romantic ballet *Giselle* and the imperial Russian ballet *Swan Lake*, invited white South African spectators (referred to as 'Europeans' in this

⁷⁴ V. Malherbe, 'A jubilee in a turbulent year', *Natalia*, 42 (2012), pp. 9–18, at p. 11.

⁷⁵ 'Royal Ballet hopes to come again', *Cape Times*, 2 May 1960.

⁷⁶ Hatfield, 'Two Odiles had ovations at the Alhambra', p. 4; L. Sowden, 'A rich staging of *Swan Lake*', *Rand Daily Mail*, 6 Feb. 1960, p. 3; D. L. S., 'A brilliant season', *Rand Daily Mail*, 8 Feb. 1960, p. 6; D. Hatfield, 'Ballet brings magic to Cape Town', *Cape Times*, 13 Apr. 1960, p. 4.

⁷⁷ O. Walker, 'At the ballet: royal swans have regal mistresses', *The Star*, 8 Feb. 1960, p. 11; M. Kenwood, 'The Royal Ballet in Johannesburg: second half of the season', *Ballet Today*, June 1960, p. 23.

⁷⁸ E. B. S., 'Beryl Grey dances her way into city's heart', *Natal Witness*, 22 Mar. 1960, p. 7; D. L. S., 'The four Giselles', *Rand Daily Mail*, 22 Feb. 1960, p. 6.

⁷⁹ W. E. G. L., 'Vertoon Suiwere Tegniek', *Die Burger*, 14 Apr. 1960, p. 2; A. F. V., 'Antoinette Sibley Is Inspirerend', *Die Burger*, 19 Apr. 1960, p. 2; A. F. V., 'Antoinette Sibley en Gary Burne Saam', *Die Burger*, 22 Apr. 1960, p. 2; A. F. V., 'Die Geheim van Sibley se Sukses', p. 2.

⁸⁰ Kenwood, 'Ballet in Johannesburg', p. 21.

⁸¹ D. L. S., 'The four Giselles', p. 6; O. Walker, 'At the ballet: Cranko brings on the keystone kops', *The Star*, 9 Feb. 1960, p. 9; W. E. G. L., 'Jonger Dansers en Danseresse Sorg vir Hoogtepunte', *Die Burger*, 25 Apr. 1960, p. 2.

⁸² D. O., 'Nadia Nerina's absence was keenly regretted', *Sunday Tribune*, 10 Apr. 1960, p. 8; R. Hains, "'Sleeping Beauty" cast a spell over audience', *Natal Daily News*, 25 Mar. 1960, p. 14; Hatfield, 'Royal Ballet season has thrilled thousands', p. 2; Kenwood, 'The Royal Ballet in Johannesburg: second half of the season', p. 23; A. F. V., 'Die Geheim van Sibley se Sukses', p. 2.

period) to share in an exalted European past. Discussing these works while referencing Shakespeare, Baroque art, Tchaikovsky, and European ballet history, local critics paraded their knowledge of European culture while also extolling the unique but equal talents of the company's South African and British performers.⁸³

The Royal Ballet thus reminded audiences of their connections to a larger, more cosmopolitan European tradition. One Afrikaans-speaking critic chastised audience members for disruptive behaviour that would never be found in a 'European theatre of repute', while an English-speaking writer reflected on how the company showed ballet to be the 'physical and spiritual' domain of all Western nations, noting, 'this poetry of motion unites us all'.⁸⁴ The company implicitly reinforced to these viewers the Cold War necessity for defending Western ideals and heeding Macmillan's 'Wind of Change' call for white South Africans, 'sprung from Europe', to join Britain in the West's fight against Communism 'for the minds of men'.⁸⁵

Although white South Africans predominantly made up the Royal Ballet's audiences during the tour, the company did engage with black South Africans. It gave Mosaval's family front-row tickets to the company's only performance for 'coloured' people in Cape Town.⁸⁶ After this performance, dancers met with leaders of the Eoan Group. Company manager John Field and ballet master Henry Legerton also visited the Group's school, arranging for new ballet shoes to be sent to its students. Field received a letter from Mosaval, who asked if a few dancers could have dinner with his family in Cape Town. After discussing this request with Maud, who recommended the invitation 'be accepted so that no offence may be given to the coloured people', Field arranged for a group of dancers to visit: they presented Mosaval's mother with the gift of a gramophone.⁸⁷ Just as Macmillan made no clear effort to reach out to ANC leaders while he was in South Africa, however, these interactions were not the company's primary concern.

The local press covered only a few minor gestures. After the company's only performance for black spectators in Johannesburg, Nerina told reporters that the audience was 'marvellous' – she would sign autographs after the show for this crowd 'until midnight, if necessary'.⁸⁸ During the performance for 'coloured' people in Cape Town, a young girl from the audience presented a flower

⁸³ Walker, 'At the ballet: royal swans have regal mistresses', p. 11; Hatfield, 'Ballet brings magic to Cape Town', p. 4; D. Hatfield, 'Dancer has buoyant personality', *Cape Times*, 21 Apr. 1960, p. 4; W. E. G. L., 'Vertoon Suiwere Tegniek', p. 2.

⁸⁴ W. E. G. L., 'Vertoon Suiwere Tegniek', p. 2; 'Triumph of ballet', *Sunday Times*, 14 Feb. 1960, p. 14.

⁸⁵ 'Address by Mr. Macmillan', pp. 169, 170, 172.

⁸⁶ 'Coloured audience thrilled by the Royal Ballet', *Cape Times*, 26 Apr. 1960, p. 11.

⁸⁷ ROHC, 21 Apr. 1960, Ballet Sub-Committee minutes, 'ANNEX: The Royal Ballet, report from Durban – No. 2, from John Field'.

⁸⁸ D. L. S., 'Standing room – outside only', *Rand Daily Mail*, 2 Mar. 1960, p. 9.

bouquet to Beryl Grey, who bent down and kissed her cheek. At the same performance, Mosaval's sister, Moegmina, gave flowers to Susan Alexander.⁸⁹ After the show, Grey told a reporter that the audience was 'wonderful...I loved every minute of it, and I should love to dance for them again'.⁹⁰

The *Cape Times* depicted this performance, which attracted approximately 1,100 audience members, as highly successful. One article quoted the South African ballerina Toby Fine, who attended as a guest of Cape Town's mayor, saying it had 'all the exciting parts of the ballet brought out and presented at their best'. It also quoted Mabel Canterbury, an Eoan Group principal, stating,

We are extremely grateful for this opportunity of seeing the Royal Ballet to such good advantage. The lighting was excellent, and the dancing out of this world. All our Eoan Group ballet dancers were here, and you can imagine the thrill they got out of seeing ballet of such a high standard.⁹¹

Yet George Golding, president of the Coloured People's National Union, harshly criticized the performance, describing its arrangements as 'an insult'. The show took place in a 'drab' municipal hall rather than a proper theatre. Moreover, because it was scheduled on a weekday afternoon, anyone who went had to forfeit a day's pay. Golding denounced this 'shabby treatment', which he pointed out 'many leading members of the Coloured community' also found 'disgust[ing]', and planned to 'submit protest' to British Equity, the Labour party, and African Consolidated Theatres.⁹² Some audience members also deplored the performance programme, which featured truncated excerpts rather than a full-length ballet.⁹³

The Johannesburg performance also took place in a City Hall, and followed the same presentational format. As in Cape Town, the local mayor requested that employers 'make every endeavour to give their non-European employees the afternoon off if they wish to see the ballet'.⁹⁴ According to a *Rand Daily Mail* reporter, on the day of the matinee, the venue reached peak capacity and the Hall had to turn away hundreds of people. Without indicating names, this journalist gathered quotes from audience members who attended the performance. While one viewer found *The Rake's Progress*, which included an orgy scene, 'unsuitable for the young, immature minds of children', another spectator described it as 'educational'. A third audience member felt the dancers in *Les Sylphides* were 'so graceful that it's hard to believe they are living people'. A major rebuke came from a fourth spectator, who told the reporter, with a critique anticipating Golding's, 'We appreciate this, but would the Royal Ballet have come if they had known in what conditions they

⁸⁹ Alexander, *Dance of my life*, p. 105.

⁹⁰ 'Coloured audience thrilled by the Royal Ballet', p. 11.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁹² TNA, BW 1/308, 26 Apr. 1960, CAPE TOWN to CRO.

⁹³ Woodcock, *The Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet*, p. 132.

⁹⁴ 'Non-whites can see ballet', *The Star*, 25 Feb. 1960, p. 1.

would be appearing for us? Why couldn't we have the University Great Hall with some scenery – not just curtains? Must we always get half loaves?'⁹⁵ If the tour presented black South Africans with a brief opportunity to see the Royal Ballet, it nevertheless conformed to apartheid's pervasive inequalities.

The company was in Pietermaritzburg when the Sharpeville massacre occurred on 21 March. At a peaceful protest organized by the PAC, police fired into the crowd, killing 69 people and wounding 180. Protests erupted throughout South Africa. Three days after Sharpeville, the Royal Ballet moved to Durban for the University of Natal's Golden Jubilee gala. Before the performance, approximately seventy-five black students congregated outside the theatre to rally against the university's segregationist practices. Protestors carried posters with phrases like 'Natal University – Showpiece of Apartheid', 'Inauguration of Apartheid Jubilee', and 'No Jubilation in Humiliation'.⁹⁶ Freedom fighter Kader Hassim joined the crowd – he later recalled watching audience members arrive for the gala:

these were your so-called liberals...the long sleek black limousines came in, the Whites came in with their bow-ties and tailcoats, the women with the fancy gowns, and the next thing we unfold our banners and our placards...And Elizabeth Sneddon, Professor Sneddon, she used foul language against some of the students because she was embarrassed tremendously. Of course, the students gave it back to her in kind.⁹⁷

The atmosphere inside the theatre contrasted sharply with the tensions outside. The lavishly dressed audience included the university's chancellor and vice-chancellor as well as decorated members of South Africa's diplomatic corps, police force, army, and navy. Before the curtain opened on *The Sleeping Beauty*, the South African and British anthems played back-to-back. Maud gave a speech, lauding the university for co-ordinating an upcoming international education conference and praising its refusal to 'confine itself to citizens of Natal or even South Africa or to people of one race or colour'. Describing the jubilee evening as a 'royal occasion', he further commended the university for including the Royal Ballet in its festivities, emphasizing that ballet's language 'is universal and needs no interpreter', crossing 'all national frontiers'. Quoting Byron and Shakespeare, he concluded, with a final shout, 'God for Ballet, England and Natal!'⁹⁸ After the performance, E. G. Malherbe hosted a *braai*, a traditional Afrikaner barbeque, for the dancers and other illustrious attendees. The next day, the performance received rave reviews. A *Natal Daily News* critic described it as 'a night I will long remember', filled with 'fairy-tale enchantment and

⁹⁵ D. L. S., 'Standing room – outside only', p. 9.

⁹⁶ 'Non-white pickets at ballet opening', *Natal Daily News*, 25 Mar. 1960, p. 14.

⁹⁷ K. Hassim, interviewed by D. Shongwe, 24 June 2002, University of Durban-Westville Documentation Centre Oral History Project, 'Voices of resistance', www.sahistory.org.za/archive/kader-hassim-interview-2002-06-2 (accessed 22 June 2019).

⁹⁸ E. G. Malherbe, *Never a dull moment* (Cape Town, 1981), pp. 315–16.

delight' which 'swept the audience into the world of make-believe' and 'brought from the capacity house a sigh of sheer enjoyment'.⁹⁹

As the tour continued, protests swept the country. On 30 March, Philip Kgosana organized the Langa March, a PAC protest with approximately 30,000 participants. The South African government declared a state of emergency that day. By the end of the month, thousands of protestors had been arrested, including ANC president Albert Lutuli and PAC leader Robert Sobukwe. Back in Britain's House of Commons on 7 April, following an enormous public outcry about Sharpeville, questions about ballet's entanglement with politics re-emerged. Driberg implored the prime minister to extract the Royal Ballet, arguing that bringing the company home would visibly demonstrate that the British government was 'serious in their disapproval of the continuing tyranny in South Africa'. In response, R. A. Butler maintained that the tour's continuation was not up to the government, but to the Royal Ballet, again asserting that it would be unsuitable 'to use the Ballet as a means of making a political gesture'.¹⁰⁰ The day after this debate, the South African government banned the ANC and the PAC. Two days later, South African Prime Minister Verwoerd narrowly survived an assassination attempt.

The Royal Ballet's management instructed the dancers not to speak to the press about the violence surrounding them. Writing from Durban in early April, company manager John Field informed the Ballet Sub-Committee that he was still giving promotional radio interviews. Ticket sales in Cape Town, the company's next stop, were robust, as were sales for the rest of its Durban run. Shootings had occurred near the Durban theatre where the company was performing, but the dancers, remaining 'discipline[d]' and 'calm', were safe. In fact, Field reported, their morale was 'extremely high', and 'not one member of the Company or Staff wishes to return home'.¹⁰¹ The soloist Susan Alexander, however, later confided that the dancers, appalled by the 'terrible injustice' of Sharpeville, 'felt increasingly uncomfortable and feared our presence was making the situation worse'.¹⁰²

Field further reassured the Opera House that he was making hourly contact with Maud's office. He reported that a planned trip to 'the Zulu Reserve... was, for obvious reasons, cancelled in the most diplomatic manner possible', adding, 'I have, quite naturally, put places of interest like the Indian Market completely out of bounds.' If the situation became dangerous for the dancers, he would demand protection from the police. Yet, Field contended, 'the Company and Staff have made themselves equally popular with the Coloured, Indian and Native people as they have with the white population, and it is well recognised in this country that we do not intend to play any part in their internal policies'.

⁹⁹ Hains, "'Sleeping Beauty" cast a spell over audience', p. 14.

¹⁰⁰ House of Commons Deb, 7 Apr. 1960, Hansard, vol. 621, cc. 561–2.

¹⁰¹ ROHC, 21 Apr. 1960, Ballet Sub-Committee minutes.

¹⁰² Alexander, *Dance of my life*, pp. 103–4.

To the relief of ACT manager Jim Stodel, who phoned Field in a ‘frenzy’ about the tour’s possible cancellation, Field was determined that the company stay put.¹⁰³ On 7 April, Field told the *Cape Times* that the tour had been ‘very rewarding’ for the company, and that he felt ‘impressed not only with the enthusiasm of the audiences, but with their discernment...this was his smoothest tour ever, both administratively and technically’.¹⁰⁴

The British Council likewise saw no need to withdraw the Royal Ballet. On the contrary, a report by R. T. Butlin presented its ongoing presence as highly beneficial. It asserted that the tour ‘without any doubt has been of very great value in providing [a] visible non-political link with Britain for tens of thousands of South Africans both European and non-European’: its continuation at this strained moment therefore ‘only served to enhance its value, supporting Commonwealth relations’. Driberg’s demand for the tour’s cancellation was, evidently, ‘definitely not motivated by knowledge of the facts in South Africa’.¹⁰⁵ Echoing this argument, Maud relayed to the Council that he saw ‘no reason’ for the company not to finish the tour ‘successfully and safely’. He added:

They have been very popular here and are doing excellent job in Union/United Kingdom Relations. Their withdrawal at this difficult time in our relations with the Union would be interpreted as a political gesture which would be resented by both Government and by greater majority of white South Africans...it would be quite wrong to use the Royal Ballet to make political gestures.¹⁰⁶

Thus, amid extreme crisis, the Opera House, the British Council, and Maud resisted pressing for the tour’s early cancellation: the artistic, economic, and political work the company was doing in South Africa was too valuable to disrupt. The Royal Ballet continued to perform in a strange kind of cultural vacuum. White South African audience members noticed this dynamic. One Natal critic described how, after being whisked away by the escapist pleasures of *Swan Lake*, ‘it was a reluctant audience that moved out into the windy night; an audience brought starkly back to earth by a flapping newspaper post which read: “State of Emergency: Many Arrests.”’¹⁰⁷ Attending a party hosted for the dancers in Durban, the emerging anti-apartheid activist Ronnie Kasrils recalled how ‘champagne flowed, and we were swept into a world where Sharpeville did not intrude’.¹⁰⁸ The company, then, allowed white South Africans to turn a blind eye to an unravelling order.

¹⁰³ ROHC, ‘ANNEX: the Royal Ballet, report from Durban – No. 2, from John Field’.

¹⁰⁴ ‘Royal Ballet will open here as planned’, *Cape Times*, 7 Apr. 1960, p. 7.

¹⁰⁵ TNA, UKSLS Pretoria to CRO.

¹⁰⁶ TNA, BW 1/308, 4 Apr. 1960, CAPE TOWN to CRO.

¹⁰⁷ R. Hains, ‘Beryl Grey shines in “Swan Lake” ballet’, *Natal Daily News*, 31 Mar. 1960, p. 14.

¹⁰⁸ R. Kasrils, *Armed and dangerous: my undercover struggle against apartheid* (Oxford, 1993), p. 24.

III

The Royal Ballet left South Africa on 1 May. That day, Field lauded South African audiences and told the *Cape Times* that he hoped the company would return soon. Speaking on behalf of the Royal Ballet, he described the tour as ‘one of our most rewarding experiences’.¹⁰⁹ The enormous cost of transporting thirty-five tons of the company’s costumes and sets, as well as a star-studded roster of dancers, to South Africa had been worth it. The British Council meanwhile deemed the tour an outstanding achievement in enhancing Britain’s prestige and moral leadership in South Africa, and in warming the two countries’ relations. A top administrator asserted that the Council was ‘most happy to have been associated with this engagement’, while Butlin claimed the tour had offered ‘a living example of higher values than those which obsessed the public mind with particular intensity at this time’.¹¹⁰

Maud likewise basked in the company’s success. Writing to Field, he gushed, ‘the United Kingdom could have no better ambassadors in the Union’s Festival Year...we hope that you will come back soon’.¹¹¹ In a report for the Commonwealth Relations Office, he mused that ‘such visits trail clouds not only of glory but of the British tolerant and undiscriminating recognition of the individual artist’. The company showed how both nations’ ‘strong ties of culture and friendship...can survive and may help to moderate those unhappy aspects of South African policies which impose a political strain between us’. He concluded, ‘a senior Afrikaner official told me with emotion how glad he was that the Royal Ballet were here at this particular time of political unhappiness. Many others, I know, felt as he did. And so did I.’¹¹²

The tour was a stunning exercise in soft power. The Royal Ballet had completed numerous international goodwill tours before, performing some of the same ballets and fulfilling the obligations of fraternizing with local officials and British representatives. But this tour showed how far the company’s managers, and its state supporters, were willing to go for political, artistic, and economic gain. White South African critics and elites lavished praise on the company’s dancers and productions and, amid extreme crisis, the Royal Ballet and its official sponsors never risked upsetting this community. The dance on display throughout the tour thus belied the British prime minister’s indirect critique of apartheid in his ‘Wind of Change’ speech, demonstrating that British and South African friendship would persist.

If its British organizers immediately considered the tour a triumph, its long-term effects were less clear. In January 1960, before the Royal Ballet visited South Africa, Prime Minister Verwoerd called for a referendum on becoming

¹⁰⁹ ‘Royal Ballet hopes to come again’.

¹¹⁰ TNA, BW 1/308, 24 May 1960, Bridges to Drogheda; TNA, BW 107/26, report of the cultural adviser: Oct. 1956 – Apr. 1960.

¹¹¹ TNA, BW 1/308, 29 Apr. 1960, Maud to Field.

¹¹² TNA, BW 1/308, 24 May 1960, Maud to CRO.

a republic. In October 1960, voters turned out in favour of this change, and in 1961, to the British government's dismay, the country withdrew from the Commonwealth. Overshadowed by the intense violence and political conflict that coincided with the company's visit to South Africa, the tour ended up being more of a spectacular final bow. The aim of Ninette de Valois, the Royal Ballet's director, to attract South African artists to her company also became obsolete. South African dancers employed in Britain before 1961 were allowed to obtain British citizenship, but from that point forward the Royal Ballet could not hire any new arrivals from South Africa.¹¹³

For Johaar Mosaval and his family, the experience had been painful and upsetting. Mosaval later reflected that dancing with the Royal Ballet in his home country would have been 'one of the major things in my life'. The company's decision to exclude him likewise disappointed and disturbed his many fans in Cape Town.¹¹⁴ According to the ballerina Susan Alexander, the Royal Ballet's dancers 'sorely missed' Mosaval throughout the tour, feeling his absence 'acutely' when they performed in Cape Town.¹¹⁵ Though this episode was quickly forgotten by the British public, its events mirror those of the D'Oliveira Affair, wherein the politically explosive exclusion of the distinguished 'coloured' South African cricket player Basil D'Oliveira from the England cricket team's 1968–9 tour of South Africa sharpened the anti-apartheid sports boycott.¹¹⁶

In the ensuing decade, British governments of both parties continued to navigate a tricky course between 'containment and co-operation' with South Africa. At a United Nations meeting in May 1960, facing mounting public ire after Sharpeville, Macmillan's government finally renounced its position that apartheid was a 'domestic concern'.¹¹⁷ Yet successive administrations continued to view the state as 'half-ally and half-untouchable', vacillating over economic and strategic questions about sanctions and arms sales while hoping that Britain might 'preserve essential higher objectives, the "national interest" and the best interest of Africans as they saw them'.¹¹⁸

The Royal Ballet was never again deployed in service of this effort. South African theatre managers and officials did, however, invite the company back. By 1963, a proposition that the company return had already been put forward. This time, the Royal Opera House's Ballet Sub-Committee agreed the offer should be 'refused at once'. While the money the tour might generate

¹¹³ Woodcock, *The Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet*, p. 132.

¹¹⁴ J. Mosaval, interview with author, 25 July 2018.

¹¹⁵ Alexander, *Dance of my life*, pp. 100, 104.

¹¹⁶ B. D'Oliveira, *Time to declare: an autobiography* (London, 1980); P. Osborne, *Basil D'Oliveira: cricket and conspiracy* (London, 2004); B. Murray and C. Merrett, *Caught behind: race and politics in springbok cricket* (Pietermaritzburg, 2005).

¹¹⁷ Dubow, *Apartheid*, p. 83.

¹¹⁸ Hyam and Henshaw, *The lion and the springbok*, p. 35.

'would be welcome', such funds were 'not of over-riding importance'. Moreover, if Mosaval was 'still...with the company', the Royal Ballet 'must not go to South Africa without him'.¹¹⁹ The following year, although some members of the Opera House Board felt 'it was important to avoid giving the impression of a boycott', they ultimately turned down another invitation for the company to visit South Africa. Again, Tooley 'made it clear that Covent Garden would not agree that Mosaval should be kept back if the visit took place'. The Board concurred.¹²⁰ Immediately after Sharpeville, the anti-apartheid movement had gained headway. Though its force and influence in Britain 'ebbed and flowed' throughout the 1960s, it likely contributed to the Opera House's avoiding further visits to South Africa, particularly as respected British artists, like other highly regarded international figures, and Equity elected to boycott the country.¹²¹ The British Council, meanwhile, determined it would need to engage with black as well as white South Africans if it truly wanted to 'liberalize' the nation's outlook.¹²² It continued to support British arts in South Africa on a small scale throughout the 1960s, sending over a few visiting performers. None were ballet dancers.¹²³

But the dialogue between British and South African ballet persisted outside of official British channels.¹²⁴ In 1962, amid an economic boom, the South African government began funding the arts for the first time. As scholar Sharon Friedman notes, the fact that almost all of its budget for dance went to classical ballet organizations underscored the apartheid state's determination to foster elite Eurocentric 'culture'.¹²⁵ New professional companies invited South African dancers who performed with the Royal Ballet and other British ballet groups to South Africa, where they assumed key administrative positions and staged ballets by British choreographers. In 1963, Beryl Grey accepted a solo invitation to perform with the Ballet Transvaal. In 1972, Britain's premiere ballerina Margot Fonteyn's decision to visit the country

¹¹⁹ ROHC, 17 Dec. 1963, Ballet Sub-Committee minutes.

¹²⁰ ROHC, 7 Oct. 1964, Board minutes.

¹²¹ Skinner, *The foundations of anti-apartheid*; R. Fieldhouse, *Anti-apartheid: a history of the movement in Britain* (London, 2005); H. Thorn, *Anti-apartheid and the emergence of a global civil society* (New York, NY, 2006).

¹²² TNA, BW 68/18, 3 May 1960, Executive Meeting minutes.

¹²³ The Council sent actress Rosalinde Fuller to South Africa in 1961, and theatre director Norman Marshall in 1965. It sponsored educational exchanges and sent exhibitions of British art as well as books and films there throughout the 1960s.

¹²⁴ M. Lauer, 'Dancing for the nation: ballet diplomacy and transnational politics in post-apartheid South Africa', *Dance Research Journal*, 50 (2018), pp. 85–98, at pp. 88–90.

¹²⁵ S. Friedman, 'Mapping an historical context for theatre dance in South Africa', in Friedman, ed., *Post-apartheid dance*, p. 3. Also: C. Botha, 'The dancing body, power and the transmission of collective memory in apartheid South Africa', in H. Thomas and S. Prickett, eds., *The Routledge companion to dance studies* (New York, NY, 2019), pp. 22–32; G. Samuel, 'Shampoo dancing and *Scars* – (dis)embodiment in Afro-contemporary choreography in South Africa', *Dance Research Journal*, 43 (2011), pp. 40–7, at pp. 41–3.

and perform for segregated audiences produced a fiery international public reaction.¹²⁶

In late 1975, after a twenty-five-year career with the Royal Ballet, Johaar Mosaval moved back to his home country with the hope that the singular knowledge and talent he displayed in London would allow him to become an important ballet teacher and coach in the South African ballet community. The relationship Britain and South Africa had so carefully managed, however, did not land Mosaval a position at any of Cape Town's leading ballet institutions. He would have to strike out on his own.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ M. Knipe, 'Dame Margot argues with critics of apartheid', *Times*, 20 Apr. 1972, p. 7.

¹²⁷ J. Mosaval, interview with author, 25 July 2018; N. Daniels, 'Learning from a legend', *Cape Times*, 23 Feb. 2018, p. 3. Mosaval formed his own multi-racial ballet school in 1977.