A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY OF ROSALIE VAN DER GUCHT : INVESTIGATING HER CONTRIBUTION TO EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SPEECH AND DRAMA

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VOLUME ONE OF TWO VOLUMES

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to explore the ways in which Rosalie Van der Gucht influenced and contributed to Speech and Drama education during the second half of this century in the Cape. The writer takes the view that although Van der Gucht was not particularly original in her work -- dramatically, socially or politically -- she had an impact which is still felt in the Cape Province and beyond, because of her outstanding qualities as a leader, teacher and play director; effected through her special skills as a communicator.

The chosen form is a critical biography, which makes it possible to investigate the impact of Van der Gucht's initiatives within the contemporary context. Given that there are only a handful of books which deal with the theatre of this period in the Cape, and they contain few specific references to Van der Gucht; the chief sources for this topic were unpublished written material, and interviews with Van der Gucht's past students, colleagues, friends and relations. Of special importance were Van der Gucht's unsorted collection of papers (bequeathed to the Human Sciences Research Council), the Little Theatre Press Cutting books and the University of Cape Town Archives.

In Chapter One the formative influence of her parents, her education, and her first working years in England prior to the Second World War are traced. The following six chapters cover, decade by decade, the period from 1942 to 1971 when Van der Gucht was at the University of Cape Town, training aspirant Speech and Drama teachers, actors, and students taking general Arts degrees. Her influence upon the teacher and actor training courses, including a scrutiny of curriculum developments, is examined; as is her membership of the South African Guild of Speech Teachers and her foundation and leadership of Theatre for Youth which aimed to reach young people beyond the University. Chapter 8 covers the years after her retirement from the University, when she launched upon a second career as a play director, and attempts to pinpoint the chief

characteristics of her directing. Chapter 9 deals with the events leading to her death in 1985 -- which shed new light on Van der Gucht as a person.

The conclusions drawn from this study pertain to Van der Gucht's quality as a person and teacher. The writer takes the paradoxical view that this woman of British origin and education; was, first and foremost, an educator of the traditional kind found in Africa: an oral educator, who used oral material, verbal communication and social situations to inspire and direct those with whom she worked to greater efforts for the benefit of their society, themselves and the discipline of drama. The study is intended to be a useful historical resource for students of drama and the theatre in South Africa.

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I remember especially the three meetings with the late Professor Donald Inskip: his encouragement, his astonishingly clear memories and his very fine mind. I am especially indebted to Mrs Crighton (Prim Stevenson in the text), who answered hundreds of questions, found myriad odd snippets of information, read the text in its first draft, and was always friendly, courteous, and supportive -- filling our exchanges with humour.

Finally, I thank my husband, Chris Truter, for his heartening and persistent encouragement, and I acknowledge with gratitude the long-suffering patience of my three small boys. Without their endurance, I could never have finished this thesis.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE THESIS

ADB Associate of the Drama Board

BA Bachelor of Arts

CAPAB Cape Performing Arts Board

DIE Drama in Education

FATSSA Federation of Amateur Theatre Societies of South Africa

Guild The South African Guild of Speech and Drama Teachers

KRUIK Kaaplandse Raad vir die Uitvoerende Kunste

Little Little Theatre Press Cutting Books

LRAM Licentiate of the Royal Academy of Music

LTCL Licentiate of the Trinity College of Music, London

NTO National Theatre Organization

PACOFS Performing Arts Council of the Orange Free State

PACT Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal

Papers Van der Gucht's collection of Papers (officially unsorted)

RBHS Rondebosch Boys High School

SACS South African College School

UCT Archives Archives of the University of Cape Town

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INTRODUCTION

The orientation of this study

Rosalie Van der Gucht worked at the University of Cape Town from 1942 to 1971, training aspirant Speech and Drama teachers, actors, and students taking general arts degrees; thereby furthering educational drama, oral education and theatre in the Cape Province and also further afield. After her retirement in 1971 she was active in the theatre until her death in 1985. Her quality, both as a person and as an educationalist, profoundly influenced the practice of drama teaching and actor training in the second half of this century in South Africa, substantially contributing to Theatre and Educational Drama practice during that period.

During the first thirty-five years of her life, spent mostly in Britain between the two World Wars when significant gains were made for female emancipation, she was educated by unusually powerful women of vision. The lessons she learnt from these women influenced her greatly, and she used them throughout her professional life. Her mother taught Van der Gucht the highest standards of personal conduct and honour, loyalty and duty towards her family and her responsibilities. Her mother also taught her daughter that she was perhaps never quite 'good enough' for her mother's exacting standards, which elicited in Van der Gucht an unassuming modesty she never lost. Elsie Fogerty, founder of the Central School of Speech and Drama, instilled in Van der Gucht something of the creative and aesthetic possibilities of English speech well spoken, English poetry well interpreted, and the powerful force that spoken English and drama can be in the lives of young people. The headmistress at Malvern Girls' College where Van der Gucht began her teaching career, encouraged her to try her hand as a play director; and Sister Frances Mary at the Grahamstown Training College where she first worked in South Africa, introduced her to the art of teaching teachers. Van der Gucht used all these lessons throughout her working life.

She was of that generation of British women who gained the right to vote for the first time, who were starting to pursue professional careers; and some of whom have made a prodigious contribution to South Africa. Such women are Dulcie Howes, who founded the University Ballet in Cape Town, Elizabeth Sneddon who founded the Speech and Drama Department at the University of Natal (Durban), and the world renowned Professor of Anthropology, Monica Wilson. One cannot help conjecturing upon the factors which led such women -- in this instance Rosalie Van der Gucht -- to contribute so much so well. What can the reader learn from Van der Gucht's example of commitment and prodigious activity?

The substance of this thesis is devoted to describing and examining the nature of Van der Gucht's work in Cape Town:

i. The purpose for which Speech Training was taught at the University and how British practices were borrowed and integrated.

ii. The precepts which governed the theoretical and practical study of the theatre and how Van der Gucht significantly developed this practice.

iii. The ways in which she developed and disseminated the teaching of Drama -- particularly among the young.

iv. Her work in contiguous fields beyond the University is surveyed for the light it sheds on her strengths as a **leader, play director** and **teacher.**

It is the above capacities in Van der Gucht -- in addition to her considerable **personal qualities** -- from which educationalists and practitioners in the field of drama and theatre in South Africa can learn.

This study takes the view that Van der Gucht was not exceptionally innovative -- socially, politically, or dramatically; but that she was outstandingly resourceful in applying the original ideas of others, and truly creative about generating dramatic activity in the Cape. Her strength lay, not with the generation of original material but in seeing that any good material was fully and properly used: in bringing together people and ideas and generating happy productivity. She was not very concerned with defining or redefining

the theories of drama, but she was completely committed to **the practice of drama**. Thus she is a model -- however imperfect -- from whom we can learn to know and understand something more of our own background, value our own work as Van der Gucht encouraged us to do -- as well as the work of 'foreign experts' -- and so develop an increasingly rich and worthwhile drama practice and pedagogy for this country.

Readers will note that I avoid evaluating her work as a paradigm for 'Speech and Drama' as a discipline. To offer the reasons for this in a sentence or two will force me into over- simplification. May I just say that my overriding finding was that Van der Gucht was a practical person, a person who did things. Similarly I offer no glossary of terms such as 'Speech and Drama'. This is because the full implications of what meaning these words / names held during the seventy years covered by this study is gradually illuminated in the course of this thesis. I have deliberately chosen a varying nomenclature and have tried to use it with the utmost care.

The choice of form: critical biography

It is also important that Van der Gucht's working life is seen in its context. This was perhaps the strongest reason for offering this study as a biography: so that the decisions she made and the initiatives she took are understood for what they meant at the time; as well as for what they may mean for workers in theatre and drama in South Africa today. If we really want to understand the possible meanings of cultural signifiers such as Drama or Theatre in South Africa, then it is necessary to place these in their context, and to study the interactions between form and context. In some cases it is also pertinent to examine their failure to interact. Future generations may well re-interpret past events in the light of their newer vision; but before such re-interpretations happen, my intention is to flesh out a picture of the past so that readers might feel as if they have experienced it themselves. In other words, while it is essential to develop a vibrant praxis of South African theatre in this country, we can only move into the future from where we are now and by knowing how we got here; and so my contention is that the more complete our understanding and acceptance is of the 'Britishness' of part of our theatre heritage, the

more we will be in a position to notice those parts which are not. Thus it was, that early on in the process of research I came upon a letter to Van der Gucht from Mary Renault which I took to heart. She wrote:

> I must admit I have an inhibition, probably vocational, against exploiting the past for the expedience of a present aim. All those people who were alive and feeling, and now are dead: it seems we should not blot them out from understanding, just to suit ourselves. And do we gain? In a sense the past is at our mercy, it cannot answer back; but it has its own truth, and with truth as with tables, the harder you kick the more you bruise your own toes. The great fascination of history, it seems to me, is its perpetual dialogue between what is perennial in man, and what changes with the zeitgeist. We can ignore this dialogue, refuse to invoke the dead to speak for themselves, and force them to be our mouthpieces; the jaws of the puppets work, but the only voice is the voice of the puppet-master. Well, if we do this, obviously we cannot be interrupted, if that is a good thing. But I am inclined to suspect the social theories of those who are so untender to the dead; I doubt if they would be much more kindly to the living. (21 June 1963)[1]

While undertaking this thesis I have tried to have respect for the past: neither to grovel before the gravity of its greater age, nor to sneer at its ignorance with the wisdom of hindsight.

Interpretation

The question of interpretation is particularly important here because, in a way, Van der Gucht has been at my mercy since she made very few written records. (When I was a graduate student in her department in 1968 I do not recall that she even carried a diary.) While she prepared formal lectures thoroughly, she seldom considered the notes worth preserving. As far I can ascertain she published only a handful of articles in her entire career. She was a prodigious and persistent letter writer, but to my knowledge her letters were seldom long or particularly professionally orientated; rather they served to keep her in touch with people -- past students, relatives and friends. Nonetheless, without formal publications to disseminate her ideas her influence has been far-reaching, and this thesis begins the search for reasons; checking myth against fact and so arriving at a fuller understanding. The view taken in this thesis is that there clearly is a sense in which Van

der Gucht did write, for many of her ideas are etched on the minds of her students and colleagues; and in the same sense she could be said to have published -- by means of stage presentations. She was an oral educator in the full sense of the term; and with all the ramifications that the idea carries.

By the term 'oral educator' I mean to point to aspects of her way of teaching that are implicit in that nomenclature. The Oxford English Dictionary (Second Edition) defines 'orality' as 'the quality of being oral, or orally communicated. Also, preference for or tendency to use spoken forms of language' (p.886) Van der Gucht's best teaching was done face to face, in lively interchange; employing, on her part, vibrant speech, a good use of advice and aphorism -- so infused with her world view and her beliefs that it was almost impossible to separate the message from the speaker and how it was said. At the same time I make no attempt to 'prove' the extent of Van der Gucht's influence by enumerating those students of hers who have 'achieved' in the Theatre or Drama professions, because I question the reasoning behind such an exercise in a work of this kind. Where students are mentioned it is to illustrate ideas in the text.

Scope of the study

Van der Gucht's life falls into clearly differentiated periods which provide the Chapter divisions. In most cases, each of her attributes as a teacher and play director will usually only be dealt with once. For example, comments made about her teaching style will be implicitly evident - but not discussed - in her directing, or her acts of leadership or friendships. The reader will detect overlaps and that is intentional, but in the interests of brevity I have tried not to restate the same point in different contexts except where it is essential to the achievement of a full picture. Appendices provide the reader with a record of plays that she directed, acted in, and initiated for young people; a very small sampling of her lectures on aspects of Speech and Drama teaching; details of those interviewed and theatre people referred to in the text (so that the reader can contextualise them); and a record of the many awards and honours with which Van der Gucht was showered towards the end of her life.

When I commenced this project I intended to cover only Van der Gucht's work in teacher training and educational drama, because that is an aspect in which I have particular professional interest. However it soon became clear that Van der Gucht did not compartmentalise her activities. To effectively study teacher education and educational drama with respect to Van der Gucht, I had to investigate her work as a play director and as a leader. And not long after this, her holism: her bonding together of people, drama, different contexts and needs, became the overriding impression of her; until it seemed more important to let the evidence suggest its own pattern -- in this case a holistic study -- than for me to pick out a figure from the tightly woven fabric of her life and work. Hence the chosen shape of this thesis.

Let me say at once however, that this thesis is not comprehensive. Teacher education has received the bias of my attention, and for good reason. Apart from my already expressed personal interest, the history of Educational Drama and Speech and Drama teaching in this country is a field greatly in need of documentation. Since Van der Gucht was a major pioneer in this field in this country because of the quantity of work she generated in Cape Town schools, it is important that her work in this regard is recorded. Conversely however, it does not adequately cover her work within the South African Guild of Speech and Drama Teachers for the following reasons. The Guild executive has announced that a history of the organization is being written, and many of the records are in Johannesburg at the Head Office - which presents obvious practical difficulties. More importantly however, the work of the Guild has contributed to the ongoing praxis of Speech and Drama teaching through the years, but on the whole, in the Cape it has not pioneered innovations, or disseminated teaching methods that differed significantly from those which Van der Gucht taught her students. Therefore, recording her contribution to the Guild in greater detail entails a risk of similarity and repetitiousness with other sections of the text. Similarly, Van der Gucht's leadership of, and relationship with the staff of the Little Theatre - as opposed to the staff of the Drama Department, from which the former has always had a certain autonomy - has only received the barest mention. Readers wishing to flesh out their picture of the Little Theatre in Van der Gucht's time

are recommended to Donald Inskip's Forty Little Years (1972); which, while it is not comprehensive of her contribution, certainly fills out the picture with respect to staff. While this study is concerned -- in general -- with the professional courses which she ran, in the sense of recording what the syllabi consisted of and why and how these changed; it became equally, if not more important, to examine and develop an understanding of her strengths as a teacher; and here it was clearly in school drama teaching and play directing that she shone. The evidence overwhelmingly supported the idea that I could not do justice to Van der Gucht as a teacher without discussing her work as a play director. But even here the bias has clearly been upon the process she employed in directing and why it was educative, rather than examining in depth her interpretation of any given play and assessing her contribution to our understanding of the dramatist. Perhaps this is because her productions are over, and apart from memories which -- the evidence corroborates -- remain in the hearts and minds of audience members, what is still alive is the impression Van der Gucht made as a teaching director upon those who were in her casts.

Virtually all the extramural work in examining, lecturing and adjudicating which Van der Gucht undertook has also been omitted for reasons of brevity.

Sources

Existing published records -- other than newspaper reports -- of developments and activity in Cape theatre and educational drama during the period which I was studying, are extremely hard to find.

Van der Gucht left her personal collection of papers and documents pertaining to her work to be held in the custody of the HSRC in Cape Town, who were kind enough to loan the entire unsorted collection to me for study purposes. The collection contains many letters of appreciation, notes from talks and lectures in various stages of preparation, several framed citations and memorabilia of different productions -- including the souvenir album (with programme and photograph of every production Van der Gucht did at UCT) which was presented to her when she retired. This collection in its entirety has

been a rich resource, yielding valuable evidence of the early years, and of other peoples' opinions of Van der Gucht over six decades.

The Little Theatre's collection of newspapers articles and reviews of its productions has been invaluable; especially in its contribution towards my understanding of the changing times, expectations and intentions surrounding and underlying the work at the Little Theatre.

The Speech and Drama Department has kept no minutes of meetings from that time. However other University records such as Faculty Board minutes and university calenders have been most useful.

The other essential resource which I utilized was interviews with Van der Gucht's friends, past students, colleagues and others with whom she worked. I worked roughly chronologically; starting with colleagues and friends whose association with Van der Gucht dated back to the forties or early fifties -- of whom I knew because Van der Gucht had frequently talked about them or because I had had associations with them -- such as Matine Harman, who had taught me movement. I followed the same process with the fifties, doing considerable cross referencing from one interview to another. Those whom I interviewed helped considerably by offering suggestions as to whom it was important to talk to. Obviously I have tried to use the evidence of people whom I consider to be of significance in some way or another, and they were all people who maintained contact with Van der Gucht until her death. In a sense the sixties was both easier and more difficult. Being a UCT BA Drama student of that era myself (1965 - 1968); on the one hand a great deal more information was readily accessible, on the other most of the students of this period are working overseas or in Johannesburg; and neither the time nor resources were available to make a journey. However I am content that while more material would have been intriguing it may only have extended what was already showing signs of becoming a problematically long thesis; so I was not motivated to search for further resources. I felt it was of more importance to seek out the opinion of persons who had worked with Van der Gucht but who had not been her students. For the years following her retirement from the University, I selected only a small sampling of people

to talk to who I was sure would significantly add to the full picture already available from written material and newspaper reviews.

In all I conducted approximately forty-five interviews; preparing questions in advance and writing down the responses in long-hand. I did not use a tape recorder because I am not good with gadgets and find the whirring of the machine intensely inhibiting -- as did the first person who I attempted to interview![2] Then Mrs Crighton (Prim Stevenson) looked apprehensively at me and said, 'You aren't going to use a tape recorder are you?' and I could happily reassure her. In the main I found people content to pause and collect their thoughts if I wrote more slowly than they spoke and thought. Those interviewees who were particularly helpful and have been substantially quoted in the text have had the opportunity to verify the accuracy of my text. Interviewees also assisted by passing me such things as personal papers and newspaper cuttings. It was by means of the interviews that my understanding of the texture, feeling quality and richness of Van der Gucht's teaching was deepened.

Names

A word about names: Florence Van der Gucht insisted that her daughter's first name be pronounced like Rosalind in Shakespeare's As You Like It. Her surname, Van der Gucht (of Flemish origin), is completely Anglicized -- hence the spelling. With the 'Van' and 'Gucht' stressed, it is pronounced as you might say 'Ban the Boot'. In South Africa the custom of a small 'v' is often mistakenly used for her surname -- as the reader will notice in a number of the newspaper reviews. While some of her friends called her Rosalie or even 'Roz'; many of them, her colleagues, and the students amongst themselves, called her 'Van' (the name by which her father was known), or even 'Vandy'; but in her professional capacity she was formally addressed. In private, Van der Gucht's mother continued to call her by her childhood name 'Aillie'.

Once Speech Training was independent of the College of Music and set up in the Arts Faculty of the University of Cape Town, it's official title was the 'Department of Speech Training and Dramatic Art'; but it was known in the early forties as 'Speech Training';

and in the fifties and sixties as the 'Speech and Drama Department'. The teaching diploma that was offered for most of the years that Van der Gucht was head of Department was called the 'Teacher's Diploma in Speech Training' in the forties and early fifties. In 1955 it was called the 'Diploma in Speech Training' and in 1956 it was changed to the 'Teacher's Diploma in Speech and Drama' -- which title it retained until this course was abandoned in favour of the Performer's Diploma in Speech and Drama in 1965. In addition to wording, the original writing (or printing) style of all letters, articles and documents quoted in this thesis has been retained in order to evoke the texture of past events and viewpoints.

Personal motivation

Rosalie Van der Gucht supervised the Speech and Drama students who taught me as a primary school child, adjudicated my work as a secondary school pupil, and tutored and lectured me throughout my year as a post-graduate teaching student. Thereafter she gave me my first opportunity as a professional director; and as she did with countless of her past students -- she always kept in touch. She offered advice when it was asked for, support when it was needed and stimulating conversation every time we met. Her influence upon my career has been seminal and was the first reason why this study seemed worthwhile.

The bulk of my professional career has been spent training teachers of drama and actors. From personal experience I know how difficult many South African students find it to root their praxis in the South African experience. This has much to do with their schooling but is also largely to do with a failure to contextualise the dramatic discipline in South Africa -- historically, sociologically, aesthetically, textually and critically. Part of the problem is the paucity of written records; and part is the failure to fully utilize those records -- oral, videoed, recorded and written -- which have been made. Undertaking this

research project has taught me more of those skills and introduced me to the necessity of learning how to read one's environment. I hope that the record which I have made of Van der Gucht's work will prove to be a useful historical resource -- at least for students of drama and theatre at the University of Cape Town.

1. SCHOOLING AND THE FIRST WORKING YEARS

Picture before you the photographic portrait of a small girl -- poised, alert, blue eyes staring directly at the camera. Great care has been taken with this tinted sepia photograph, so that one sees soft brown curls hugging a small head, round pink cheeks and mouth, attentive blue eyes, a beautiful lace frock to the knee, delicate gold necklaces set with precious stones against creamy lace, long white socks and small white button slippers set with pom-poms. Inside those very pretty clothes is a child with both feet planted firmly and a beautifully lengthened back. The set of the head on the neck is like an enquiring bird -- easy but alert. The small hands, a little bit clumsy but soft and tender, are holding pink roses. The picture is of Rosalie van der Gucht, taken in Bayswater London, when she was four years old (Miscellany). That was the year Aillie [aei:] -- as she called herself because she couldn't correctly say her name -- was brought to England to go to school.

The early years

In the halcyon days of the Edwardian era when the British Empire's export trade was growing[1] -- especially to India and the Near East -- Claude van der Gucht was manager of the Bombay - Burma Trading Company, one of the biggest teak and rice trading companies in the Far East -- with branches in India, Burma and Siam.[2]

It was in Siam that he met Florence Roberts, born in Hobart, Tasmania, to a school teaching father and an Irish mother. Her elder brother, George Quinlan Roberts sailed over and settled in England and sent for his siblings as he could afford it; so when she was eighteen Florence left Tasmania to live with her brother and sister-in-law in London. Relatively young though she was, Florence was outspoken on most questions -- including her brother's upbringing of his two sons -- and fortuitously she went away to study French and German at the Sorbonne. In 1898 she took up an appointment in the Royal School for the princesses of Chulalongkorn, Supreme King of Siam.[3] It seems Florence was a

success as a governess for she was well-liked by the head Queen, Saowabha, to whom she told fairy stories while crouching on her haunches so as to be lower than the royal personage (Van der Gucht, Miscellany, Information).

Here in Siam Claude van der Gucht and Florence Roberts decided to marry, but not without opposition from the families in England. The well-to-do Van der Gucht family, originally Flemish, came to England in the reign of William of Orange as court engravers, and Claude was at one time an honorary British Consul in Burma. He was a gentle, even tempered man, whilst Florence was 'terribly outspoken, utterly honest, very kind, yet intolerant; she didn't suffer fools gladly at all -- a strong personality indeed' (Prim Stevenson, Interview). Was this the reason for family disapproval? In spite of it, c. 1906 Florence resigned her appointment and the couple were married and settled in Burma; where on 27 October 1908 Rosalie Else Van der Gucht their only child, was born. In the South African Cultural History Museum at Cape Town is a collection of small, ivory figurines that Florence collected which depict for the viewer the strange, stimulating world to which this Edwardian toddler was exposed. There are elephants with their mahouts (drivers) hauling and shoving heavy teak logs to the river. Sometimes in the course of a day's transporting, ivory was accidentally chipped off an elephant's tusk and Claude would take it home. Out of these chips Florence commissioned some of the figures to be carved. The highly polished ivory surfaces gleam and seem to ripple as if the muscles of the workers were real. The small dancing figures with flexed knees, their torso's well grounded and closely draped with skirts, and their heads crowned with elaborate headdresses, seem to squirm with life. The musicians alongside them seem a quietly cheerful group with their harp, cymbals, xylophone, shawm and clappers (Miscellany). These figures seem to presage the colourful and theatrical way in which Van der Gucht would spend her adult life. However Victorian parents did not consider the Far East a suitable educational environment for a child, and so when Van der Gucht was four she was returned to England to commence her education.

She was left in the care of her Roberts uncle, who was secretary of St Thomas' Hospital in London, and whom Van der Gucht called 'Nunkey'.[4] His wife, 'Aunt Tat', was

strict with Aillie; but in spite of that and the unmerciful teasing of the Roberts's boys who were considerably older than Van der Gucht, 'she was never cowed' (Prim Stevenson, Interview). Perhaps too, in accordance with the times, 'the bringing-up of children ... was strict; and the overt decencies of family life and relationship were maintained, whatever went on under the surface' (The Pelican Guide to English Literature, Vol 7, p.16). Besides which, life had its fair share of interest. In a recorded interview in 1982, Van der Gucht recalled:

> When I was about five I used to sit on the knee of the mother of Granville-Barker.... He used to give me sweets; but the old lady was, what was known in those days, as a *diseuse*; in other words she did shows where she spoke verse and did little sketches and things. And so she used to teach me, and I used to sit on her knee and ramble through all these little monologues which she taught me.... And of course when my parents came home on leave they were great theatre-goers and we always trotted off to the theatre. And a lot of the varying people who looked after me used to take me to the theatre a great deal.

Nicolas Bentley says of the Edwardians:

> Theirs was perhaps the last age of innocence, a time when the perfectability of man, however remote, could still have seemed believable; a time in which human beings were still recognised as more important than political theories; a time in which governments existed to serve the needs of their people, not people the needs of their governments; a time that would have had no truck with the illusions of the permissive society. (p.60)

Perhaps both in Burma and England Van der Gucht's enthusiasm for cricket was nurtured; for while her father was an accomplished tennis player, her cousin captained the MCC and her Mama cherished enjoyment of the game throughout her life. Here again, Bentley's comments are appropriate:

> The mystique of cricket ... was comprehended in its highest form only by the upper and middle classes, to whom the simile of the straight bat exemplified the correct way of playing not only against the opposing team, but also the larger game of life.... The Anglo-Indian colonel in his blazer and panama hat, seated silent and attentive in the Members' Stand, epitomized the order and tranquility that characterize the sacred rites of the game. (pp.58-9)

World War I changed all this; and any small battles with cousins in their London home; or the fact that Van der Gucht's 'parents weren't around' although 'they were always quite interested in my doings' were probably overshadowed by the whole of Europe at war (Van der Gucht, Tape recording, 1984). And so the young child from Burma probably came to view her private situation with greater equanimity. This was the time when women came out of domestic service and became an indispensable part of industry and the economy. The hue and cry of the Suffragettes had to be heeded and in 1918 women over thirty with land or tenancy rights gained the right to vote.

In 1919, with the war over and business booming, Van der Gucht went off to a well known expensive school for young ladies, Tudor Hall in Chislehurst. From 1921 the British economy began its long slow decline and the export trade to the East faltered. One wonders how sensitive this girl from the colonies was to the changing fortunes of many people beyond the gates of her school. Meanwhile her mother insisted that her natural left-handedness be 'cured' and that she be taught to write with her right hand - being the correct hand for writing as any Victorian parent knew. Friends have speculated whether some of the 'all thumbs' quality which Florence was later to bemoan in her daughter, had not to do with this enforced change. Nonetheless she did well at school. Van der Gucht recalled that 'I used to take part in the school plays.... We did Twelfth Night ... and I starred as Malvolio and that was one of my first parts' (Tape recording, 1984). The headmistress's letter of reference says, 'She was an excellent pupil, both as regards her school work and conduct. Her abilities were well above average' (Field, 29 May 1926).

While a good boarding school education was essential for a young girl, rounding it off abroad would have seemed the perfect finale. So in 1924 Rosalie was sent to Paris as her mother had been before her. However, the change was not without its sacrifices. Field added a slightly acid postscript to her glowing letter of reference. 'Aillie was in a class working for the Cambridge School Certificate when she left us & would have passed this examination I feel certain had she taken it'. Because Van der Gucht never obtained this Cambridge certificate, she was not eligible to try for the second part of the University of

London Diploma. Perhaps, later, having no University degree made her decide to focus her endeavours upon practical action rather than scholarly writing.

At sixteen Van der Gucht found herself in France which was hard at work rebuilding after the appalling devastation of the war. Finances and governments rose and fell while she studied in Paris. First she was at one of the very best boarding establishments, the Lycée Victor Duruy; and February 1926 found her the proud possessor of a Diplome D'Etudes de Civilisation Francaise 'avec la mention' -- a special diploma for foreign students at the Sorbonne (Papers). But she not only increased her general education, she obtained 'special lessons in *diction* with a famous old actress' from the Comedie Francaise; and she 'used to have to learn the whole of the great French classic dramatists off by heart' (Van der Gucht, Tape recording, 1984). Her teacher, Mme M Thouvenel, wrote to her on 23 May 1926:

> Ma chère élève,
> Vous voilà sur le point de repartir en Angleterre. J'espère que les lecons de diction que j'ai eu le plaisir de vous donner vous serviront. Si vous désirez faire du théâtre dans votre pays, vous connaissez assez l'art théâtral pour en faire en Anglais.
> Je trouve que les deux années passées en France furent bien employées par des études sérieuses. Je regrette bien sincèrement votre départ et croyez que je penserai toujours à vous avec affection. N'oubliez pas de réciter souvent les belles poésies que vous savez.

> [Dear pupil,
> So, here you are on the eve of going back to England. It was a great pleasure to give you speech lessons -- I do hope they will be of some use to you. If you wish to go into acting in your own country, you certainly know enough about the art of the theatre to perform in English.
> In my opinion these two years in France have been well spent indeed through your hard work and application. I am really sorry to see you go. You can be sure I'll always think of you fondly. Do not forget to recite the beautiful poems you've learnt]

So Van der Gucht returned to England; and as was customary for a young girl of her station, was presented at Court. The question then became, what should she do next? It was the turn of her Roberts uncle to have an idea. He was a friend of Elsie Fogerty, founder of the Central School, because she had started, and for many years had been

running, the Speech Clinic (the first of its kind in London) at St Thomas Hospital where Roberts was Secretary. Van der Gucht recalls:

> So he said to me; well I don't know, you better do something with yourself -- I'll give you an introduction to Elsie Fogerty. So I trotted around to see her -- a very redoubtable, frightening lady -- who looked at me and said 'open you mouth and show your teeth' .... But after that she then said 'yes, all right you can come'; and so I went to her -- in fear and trembling -- and stayed -- in fear and trembling -- for most of the time that I was there! (Tape recording, 1984)

Elsie Fogerty and the Central School

By the time Van der Gucht enrolled, in 1926, at the Central School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art, located in the Royal Albert Hall Kensington, it was well established. Founded by Elsie Fogerty in 1906 with Sir Frank Benson as President and chief examiner, the School had achieved much. In 1906 Sir Frank Benson presented a mere two week season of Shakespeare's plays at Stratford-upon-Avon to mark the Bard's birthday, but 'the short season there was followed by a tour which gradually lengthened until it really became a year's engagement', writes Fogerty (and quoted) in Marion Cole's book about her:

> 'Frank Benson kept his young players working as students, but was not satisfied with the standard they attained in the basic technique of speech and movement: and, as the Tour grew longer and the Stratford season more exciting, he felt they needed more preliminary work.' (Cole, p.37)

To serve this need Benson joined forces with Fogerty.

> So came into being The Central School of Speech - Training and Dramatic Art -- in 1906. We chose our title to indicate the intention of finding a definite central body of principles for a stage training, avoiding extremes of theory or practice: and we held to our conviction that a proper training in Speech must come first. (p.38)

The two year stage training was followed, fairly shortly, by a special third-year course for teachers, as Fogerty -- ever a realist -- looked to the job potential of her students. I quote at length from Cole because of the bearing it will later have on Van der Gucht:

> Most of her students became very good actors; but some lacked the sheer physical strength to stand up to life in repertory theatres, or the long, ill-paid grind of small-part playing till the big chance came. Very few young people could hope to leap immediately to fame in those early days, when there was no B.B.C. and even films -- still silent -- were made largely in America and seldom used stage-actors.... Therefore Fogie never encouraged anyone to take up a stage career until she had pointed out all the difficulties. (p.44)

And it was not long before she realised that some of her students had a gift for teaching. Says Cole:

> She had taken her most experienced students to help her with classes and rehearsals because she needed them.... and these should be adequately equipped and qualified to go out and teach on their own. (p.43-4)

Thus Fogerty developed the 'first comprehensive training-college for Teachers of Speech Training and Dramatic Art' (p.45). Fogerty sets out her intentions clearly in the passage on pages forty-five and six:

> Both Stage- and Teacher-students were expected to be successful in the practical side of acting, movement and verse-speaking, a training which took two years. But the Teachers needed to know how and why the theatre had developed, and to have a more scientific knowledge of how things were done. So eventually our Teacher-students had a third year's training: undertaking the backstage work of scene-plotting, lighting, prompting and conducting stage-manager's rehearsals during all student productions. Finally, as in an ordinary college training course, they went out to teach in practice-schools all over London, where their work was supervised and examined by experienced teachers .... As the years passed there were naturally many developments and improvements: more subjects were added, elementary anatomy and psychology, phonetics (through the invaluable work of Professor Daniel Jones and the meticulous teaching of Walter Ripman, who also became our French Professor in later years), and when, in 1919, we enjoyed the help of Herbert Norris, History of Costume and the making of costumes added to our interesting study on the History of Drama. When, therefore, we finally approached the University authorities for our Diploma, we could present them with a comprehensive syllabus already tested and proved -- at what Bernard Shaw loved to call "A University for the Arts of Movement and Rhetoric".

Fogerty battled tirelessly to develop her work and to obtain academic recognition for her courses. Some of the ways her teachings spread, were not only through the talents of outstanding students such as Laurence Olivier, Peggy Ashcroft, Edith Evans and John Gielgud, but through what today we might call 'outreach programmes'. The London County Council employed first Fogerty and then her students, to teach Elocution and Dramatic Literature in the Evening Institutes (Cole p.48). She founded the Dramatic Circle Competitions which were amateur play festivals. It was the Pivot Club -- whose membership consisted of Fogerty's past students, with her as the literal and metaphorical 'pivot' -- who administered the Dramatic Circle competitions which afforded interested amateurs and would-be professionals opportunity to direct and act (Cole p.49-50). (This was an opportunity Van der Gucht used to the full once she started upon her professional career.)

Spurred on by Fogerty, the British Drama League instituted a Summer School at Statford-upon-Avon which attracted students from as far afield as America (Cole p.147-9). It was there that a resolution calling for a National Theatre was mooted (Cole p.133). At Oxford an annual verse speaking Festival was instituted and in 1928 Sir Barry Jackson started the first of his summer theatre festivals at Malvern in Worcestershire -- just two years before Van der Gucht took up a Speech and Drama post there (Cole pp.51-190). (All the administration for these summer schools was handled by the Central School.) The myriad other aspects of Fogerty's outreach cannot be encompassed here, except to remind the reader of her work in the treatment of speech disorders. She set up the first speech clinic in 1914 at St Thomas' Hospital and following that she did an enormous amount of theory and practical research into (what we now term) Speech Therapy (Cole pp.23-163).

Fogerty's training for the stage was soundly based upon a firm knowledge of verse and dramatic forms, and belief in a simple, unaffected delivery. She tirelessly researched and published numerous books on all aspects of voice production and speech, of which The Speaking of English Verse and Rhythm are the most notable[5]; and she worked with the best contemporary physicians and voice researchers. Dr W A Aiken held voice classes at

the Albert Hall for twenty-five years and wrote The Voice, It's Physiology and Cultivation (1900) and approved a revision, The Voice : An Introduction to Practical Phenology, by H St John Rumsey in 1951. Walter Ripman who wrote The Sounds of Spoken English and Specimens of English (1921), and Daniel Jones who first wrote The Pronunciation of English in 1909, worked closely with Fogerty. These books, and others written more recently by Fogerty's students, were prescribed by Van der Gucht for her students for many years; and even today books such as Gwynneth L Thurburn's Voice and Speech : An Introduction and Clifford Turner's Voice and Speech in the Theatre (last printing 1987) have yet to be improved upon. Both authors were pupils of Fogerty's.

Undaunted by the war, in 1916 Fogerty persuaded the Royal Academy of Music to grant a Licentiate in Speech -- the LRAM (Elocution) -- and Fogerty herself was one of the first recipients (Cole, p.67). In 1923 the University of London finally approved a two year course for a Diploma and the first students were examined only a year before Van der Gucht enrolled (Cole, pp.94-5). This was an enormous and creditable achievement for Fogerty. After all, she was a woman who had only just earned the right to exercise a vote, and a woman without a university degree herself. Possibly, without World War I which changed values so remarkably, it wouldn't have happened at all. In this time before audio visual aids, microphones, tape recorders, music-centres, televisions, sixteen millimetre film projectors -- indeed films of any kind -- were not to be found even in the grandest classrooms. And so for the teacher who wished to 'colour' the classroom, the best and only audio-visual resource was her/his own voice: and the more variation of tonal colour, poetry, prose and descriptive material to hand the better the teacher could communicate. In 1928, at the request of teacher training colleges, the University of London instituted a Certificate for Proficiency in Diction and Drama which was for any classroom teachers who wished to improve their oral English (Cole, p.128). So Great Britain slowly wakened to the educational need for training in oral English.

Van der Gucht goes to the Central School

Circumstances had altered for the Van der Gucht parents. Persuaded by Florence of the need to keep an eye on their growing daughter, Claude took early retirement and they returned to England in 1926 or 1927 and settled in at 40 Palace Mansions London W14 where Rosalie was to live during her student years. Did she have opportunity to experience the Roaring Twenties -- to be madcap and frivolous and dance the Charleston? Van der Gucht herself confessed that when her mother organised, packed and sent over Burma's contribution to the 1924 Wembley Empire Exhibition, it was not the ivory exhibits that interested her so much, she 'found the marvellous funfare with the grand wheel more exciting!' (R. Van der Gucht, Information, Miscellany). How she envied her friends who had more freedom boarding, since such freedom was not to be hers now her mother was back to look after her. Her mother was indeed an overpowering personality; highly intelligent, outspoken and well spoken, well meaning certainly, deeply fond and proud of Rosalie to be sure, but also certain of her ineptitudes. Rosalie's friends would sit politely watching Rosalie's hands shake as she attempted to pour tea upon receiving the command of her mother (M Gibson, Interview). Rosalie's father was now a silent and withdrawn man. Caught in a London flat -- after the challenges and freedom of the East -- with nothing to do, depression and melancholy closed in upon him; and before his daughter had completed her studies he had been moved into an institution where she dutifully visited him from time to time (M Gibson, C Roberts, Interviews). However her Roberts uncle had taught her to drive; and so she had one big advantage as a student -- the glorious possession of a car. With groups of girlfriends she could escape her mother and dash off on day trips when time allowed. Her class at the Central School had only three men students in it and plenty of women. It seems that this was characteristic of London between the wars and so the girls made their own fun. Rosalie became friendly with the Honourable Molly Gibson shortly after they both enrolled at the Central School and Gibson described her in interview. 'Dear old Ros - terribly unsophisticated looking - no dress sense - not an attactive voice ... not a good body ... and yet she did so well!' She was certainly considered one of the 'clever ones' whose examination answers everybody

wanted to know, because Rosalie's would almost certainly be the most accurate. She was open, friendly and popular, and in her final year was elected Head Student. She was a natural leader. Because she had not sat the Cambridge entrance exam at Tudor Hall, she could not achieve the second part of the University of London Diploma; but as far as she possibly could she gathered qualifications (Gibson, Interview). Her second year teacher's course Dramatic Certificate was in the first class (Miscellany), Walter Ripman, (authority on the teaching of voice production) supported her application for appointment to the Evening Institute Panel of Instructors of the London County Council (letter, 26 February 1929), she was recommended for membership of the Association of Teachers of Speech Training (ATST) founded by Fogerty in 1914 (Gulick, letter, March 1929); and her report from the Headmistress of the school where she did teaching practice says:

> Miss Van der Gucht has a charming and gentle way of teaching - and her methods are sound. She takes endless pains and spares herself not at all.
> The performance of the play was quite delightful. With more experience Miss Van der Gucht will, it is hoped, gain the firmness which will make her work easier. (Grosby, letter, July 1929)

Elsie Fogerty's opinion of Van der Gucht is worth quoting in full:

> 28 February 1929
> Miss Rosalie Van der Gucht has been a student at this school for three years, and has proved herself a most excellent student. She comes from very scholarly surroundings, and has a real grasp of her subject. She holds the first part of the Diploma in Dramatic Art of London University, and her clinical work, which has been done at the Speech Clinic of St. Thomas's Hospital, has been particularly distinguished. Her phonetics are excellent, and she holds a first class certificate in practical dramatic work. She has had practical teaching experience at the Clinic of St. Thomas's Hospital and in teaching under supervision. I consider her extremely well qualified. (letter)

What lends Fogerty's last statement credibility is the fact that, upon completion of her course, Van der Gucht went straight to Malvern Girls' College -- a highly reputable school -- as the resident Speech and Drama teacher. Teachers trained by Fogerty had preceded Van der Gucht and an established tradition of speech and drama existed in the school (Cole, p.60). As such, it would be a good job to have obtained and it was no doubt Fogerty who recommended her. But what did Van der Gucht think of Fogerty? In 1951 she wrote in Fogie:

> I think one of the greatest things about her was that her ideas remained always, even when she was old, in advance of those of everyone else; and she was never afraid of scrapping an old idea and trying something new. The impact she made on me as a student was enormous: her ideas were a revelation -- but her personality overwhelmed me. I fluctuated between fear, admiration and amusement in all my contacts with her. But, unfortunately, I could never approach her, even after I left, as a friend; to me she remained someone to be admired, but always distant. Perhaps the fault was mine. Perhaps it was part of the price she had to pay for her immersion in her work that her admirers were many - her personal friends few.
>
> As I was destined to become a teacher of students, I am everlastingly grateful that I passed through her hands. The little I know she taught me, or pointed the way for me to further learning. She was a great woman and a great pioneer, and it is indeed true that we will never look on her like again. (quoted in Cole, p.102)

Malvern

While she was at the Central School, Rosalie gained the right to vote - granted to all women of twenty-one in 1928. In 1931, as depression gripped the economy, the Statute of Westminster dissolved the British Empire and the Commonwealth of Nations was formed. Just as the economic depression commenced, Van der Gucht took up her appointment as Speech Mistress at Malvern Girls' College in Worcestershire. And there, life went on; every summer she went to the Theatre Festival and heard once again the lectures of Elsie Fogerty -- as well as those of Tyrone Guthrie and Norman Marshall.

The next ten years saw Rosalie Van der Gucht put into practice what she had been taught, along the lines which had been suggested to her. She was nothing if not a good student and in her turn she served her pupils well. She taught for seven years at Malvern Girls' College where she was 'in charge' of all dramatic work. Her 'pupils were aged 8 [sic] to 21 and were taught individually, in small groups or in classes of about 15 to 25'. Each year she directed a nativity play for performance to the Christmas Confirmation candidates and their parents; and she produced other plays with each age group. She coached speech choirs and entered them for Verse Speaking Competitions, and individuals were entered for elocution examinations. The seniors were drawn into the Debating Society and Reading Aloud Competitions which she started. She also directed plays and gave speech lessons for the staff of Malvern College (Van der Gucht, letter, 18 January 1940). Thus was spoken English promoted by this young teacher. Van der Gucht said in a recorded interview in 1984:

> The headmistress, who was a very strange lady, but a very fine woman in lots of ways ... was madly keen on drama in the schools and she pitched me into production; and that's really when I began to think seriously of directing plays, and thought I'd better learn how to do it.

At the Malvern Amateur Dramatic Society a committee member, C Ralph Allison, was 'struck with her ability to get the most out of a part, and her faculty for turning a haphazard collection of individuals into a cast working successfully as a team' (letter, 10 June 1936).

London

London and wider horizons were calling - although it meant that she must return to live with her mother. Van der Gucht continued in the recorded interview:

> Consequently later on I left the school and was in London and I did a lot of direction for various clubs, societies, groups of all kinds, a little bit of professional acting thrown in and quite a lot of teaching all over the place. (1984)

From the evidence it seems as if Miss Van der Gucht was avidly gaining experience -- knowing that soon everything would change (Van der Gucht, letter, 18 January 1940 and attachments). But she had spent World War I in London and now it seemed right, that if there was a second war, she would spend that one in London too. What a change it must have been to return to London after seven years in rural Malvern -- although the professional link had been maintained for in 1933 she was placed on the London County Council's Senior Panel of Instructors in Elocution and Dramatic Literature and she worked at the Stanhope Women's Evening Institute until she left the U.K. Once back there she took up London's challenge full time. In June 1937 she obtained the Licentiate of the Royal Academy of Music (Elocution); and in December of the same year she was elected to the British Drama League Panel of Adjudicators. She joined Questor's Theatre, a leading Amateur Theatre club and started directing and acting there. She also took on a formidable succession of more or less temporary, and more or less part-time jobs -- at Notting Hill and Ealing High Schools, Clapham High School Training College for Teachers, Bromley County School, the School of Domestic Electricity, Ivy House School at Farringtons, Chislehurst (where she remained rather more permanently and entered the pupils for the Royal Academy and London Academy of Music exams). She impressed the Headmistress 'by her ability to get the best out of the girls without strain, by her versatility in treating the very varied scenes of which the pageant was composed, and by her artistic groupings of the performers. The results were really beautiful, and the clear diction of the speakers was especially commended' (Davies, letter, 6 July 1939). Croftdown School where she worked at the same time found her work as a producer of plays with six to twelve year olds 'outstanding' (Marshall, letter, 5 July 1939). She even returned to the Central School for a term to teach voice production and verse speaking for the new principal Gwynneth Thurburn, and she was elected to the Council of the Association of Teachers of Speech and Drama - along with Thurburn and Rose Bruford.

Testimonial after letter of reference from this period testify to the enthusiasm Van der Gucht evoked in her pupils, to her tact and patience, her skill at getting the best out of

raw beginners and to her vigorous, inspiring and excellent dramatic work in play production, choral verse and acting.[6] Before coming to South Africa in 1940, she directed forty-five productions (see Appendix A), and acted in others (see Appendices A and B). Clearly her capacity for work was prodigious, and despite her considerable personal diffidence, her interest in people ran deep.

War; and Van der Gucht moves to Grahamstown, South Africa

On 3 September 1939 war was declared and Van der Gucht sprang into service. She joined the London Auxillary Ambulance Service and drove an ambulance in eight hour shifts. Knowing London was essential because of the blackout. A newspaper photograph shows Van der Gucht in her uniform -- obviously several sizes too large and badly cut -- but the jaunty angle of her cap and her broad grin redeem the erect figure from utter outlandishness (c.August 1940, 'With Elsie Fogerty'). The hectic life of war torn London didn't, however, last long for Van der Gucht. Towards the end of 1939 Elsie Fogerty sent for her and said directly, 'Would you like to go to South Africa? There is an interesting post going at Grahamstown Training College and they have asked me to recommend someone for it' (Sunday Chronicle, 11 July 1965, P. Storrar).

That Fogerty was asked to recommend someone was no chance occurrence. The prevailing concept of Speech and Drama in the Union of South Africa at this stage was British. Past pupils of Fogerty were working or had worked all over the Union. (See Van der Gucht in Fogie p.101-2 and Harman, 'Pioneers of Speech Training in the Cape Province') Minna Freund started speech classes in the South African College of Music before it was incorporated into the University of Cape Town in 1919; Rose Ehrlich did pioneer work in Bloemfontein at the Training College, Eunice Girls High and Grey College; Pauline de Wet opened her own studio and passed on Fogerty's ideas to her pupils (amongst whom were Joyce Bradley, Margaret Inglis, Ralph Felbert, Gordon Bagnall and Bertie Stern); Marda Vanne became one of the pioneers of NTO. Thereafter teachers trained by Fogerty worked in many of the foremost educational institutions: Ruth Peffers at UCT, Aileen Steer at Good Hope Seminary, Nancy Body at

Collegiate School in Port Elizabeth, Ruth Kenny at Diocesan Girls' School; and both Honor Meintjies and Joyce Burch at the Training College in Grahamstown.

In April 1940, in the period later called 'the phony war' and just before Germany invaded the Benelux countries, Van der Gucht sailed for South Africa. In the Pivot Club newsletter Viva Voce, she wrote :

> When I sailed for S.Africa in 1940 I little thought that I would be away for five years - such momentous years for us all. My life during this time often seemed horribly detached from the common experiences of everyone over here and with many others, I often longed to take a more active part in the war, away from the sun-drenched, peaceful country I had come to, somewhat unexpectedly. However, my own work seemed the most useful thing I could do, and it was certainly not lacking in interest.

Grahamstown Training College, founded by the Community of the Resurrection (an Anglican Order), was headed by Sister Frances Mary. A beautiful woman, with penetrating blue eyes, she ran a college that was both progressive and religious. Compared with the Rhodes students across the road, the college girls were required to be very respectable, but the education offered there was forward thinking and innovative. Sister Frances Mary lectured in psychology and wrote three books during her working years in South Africa -- the first on psychology and two on religious education.[7] To some of her staff she was an inspiration with her modern ideas about trying to understand people and the reasons they do the things they do (Prim Stevenson, Interview). Perhaps her educational orientation was more child or student-centred than was usual at that time. This context afforded Miss Van der Gucht the space and opportunity to build upon what already existed of a speech department and develop it. She wrote in Viva Voce:

> Grahamstown is a pleasant little town, full of educational centres, of which the Training College is one of the most progressive. My work there consisted of lectures and practical classes on voice and speech and private lessons. Each student has a speech grade: She must be able to speak and interpret adequately at least four poems by the end of a year and in her second and final year must be capable of teaching a little verse speaking and have knowledge of simple speech training exercises for use in English lessons. There is a third year School Music Course which includes more advanced speech and dramatic work. The value of choral speaking is stressed. Each class speaks a choral poem to the External Examin[er]s at

> their annual visit. The S. African students enjoy choral speaking. Many of them, of course, have lovely voices and a strong feeling for words and rhythm, though a tremendous variety of accent and grasp of English often proves a difficulty.
>
> The college has a flourishing Dramatic Society, which produces at least one big play a year and recently they have taken part in some local Drama Festivals which aroused much interest and been very well supported.

Now, for the first time, Miss Van der Gucht concentrated on the teaching of student teachers and she was fortunate in having a principal who had the foresight to encourage her further. Van der Gucht said to Pat Storrar in the Sunday Chronicle, 'I learned, mainly from Sister Frances Mary ... a great deal about teaching people to teach others' (11 July 1965).

Van der Gucht also met Isolde Gerdener, whose work in the music and movement department at the college she grew greatly to admire. Isolde Gerdener had originally trained at the Grahamstown college. After some years of teaching at SACS Junior in Cape Town, she trained with Jacques Dalcroze and later with Medau, and so developed her Dalcroze-Medau system of Rhythmics which she taught when she returned to join the staff of the Grahamstown Training College in 1939.[8] Gerdener lost her parents tragically early and was a rather austere, serious-minded woman of German stock. Yet she was an exceptional teacher, possessing genuine musical skills and absolute control of her pupils -- even in lessons that were fresh, creative and satisfying to the student. Her rock-like stability was welcomed by Van der Gucht, for 'she was strong and brave and very precise' and the two became firm friends and remained so until the former's death (Margaret Pagden, Interview).

In Europe meanwhile, Paris fell, and sections of London were bombed to the ground, Italy invaded Egypt, and Hitler was busy 'rearranging' the Balkans; and then Germany completely overran Greece. In June 1941 Germany invaded Russia so that by 1942 the Nazi empire stretched from Bordeaux on France's west coast, up to Norway through Finland, Estonia and the Ukraine to Sevastapol on the Black Sea -- in fact across all the Balkan states and including Austria, Italy and Germany in the heart of Europe. It was

this devastating state of affairs that prompted Miss Van der Gucht once again, to go on active service and she made her application. Sister Frances Mary, on 25 April 1942, wrote 'we are releasing her for the duration of the War ... Miss Van der Gucht could be strongly recommended for any position of special trust in confidential work' (Papers. letter) However, at that time Ruth Peffers suggested that Van der Gucht apply for the post of her assistant at UCT, and the latter did so, saying in her application of 26 April 1942, 'I shall not be free on the 1st of July as I am joining up in the Signals Corps on that date. I am, however, venturing to send in my application in case there is a possibility of it being considered after the war.' On 8 May 1942 the Board of the Faculty of Music at UCT 'resolved to recommend the appointment of Miss R Van der Gucht as assistant in Speech Training' from the list of twenty-five candidates before them and in spite of the brackets under her name, '(Enlisted for active service. Application for consideration after war.)'. However she was not accepted into Radar because her eyesight was not good enough and 'Sister Frances Mary thought that I shouldn't stay in Grahamstown if I could get to Cape Town ... and she said "You go"' (Van der Gucht, Tape recording, 1984). Sister Frances Mary wrote her the kind of testimonial which surely helped her obtain the post and it offers the reader a well observed portrait of this teacher at thirty-three years of age:

> Miss Van Der [sic] Gucht is a conspicuously able teacher of all speech work. She does enthusiastic work with individual pupils, in drama, lyric, and in the theoretical and technical branches of voice production, and she has also dealt successfully and sympathetically with several cases of speech defect. She has for the work of training teachers the great merit of a thorough knowledge of classroom technique; she handles demonstration classes easily and with splendid results, and she is able to impart the like skill to students. Her gifts lie not only in the range and subtlety of her own vocal powers, but also in the keen intelligence which enables her to analyse and formulate the methods of teaching her art. Another appeal to students lies in her wide knowledge of English literature, including contemporary writings, and her appreciative insight into verse of many schools.
>
> These gifts are exercised by a dynamic personality which always plunges wholeheartedly into the task of the moment, with an abandonment which soon destroys self-consciousness in her pupils. Miss Van Der Gucht is always even-tempered, cheerful, friendly and considerate, and neither class nor individual pupil can fail to respond with enjoyment to her infectious energy. This is especially noticeable in Choral Speaking, in which she is an expert, and in dramatic art.
>
> Miss Van der Gucht has done extramural work with The Dramatic Club, from a Shakespeare play to a modern mime. She has been in considerable demand at local functions and at The Broadcast Studio.

> In all her arrangements Miss Van der Gucht is businesslike, plans well ahead, and avoids all unnecessary fuss and trouble. She works indefatigably, mixes well and is very acceptable among her colleagues, whilst students, have the highest respect for her. (27 April 1942, letter)

This is thorough-going praise, and appropriate to the qualities that Van der Gucht brought with her to her new post at the University of Cape Town.

Eighteen years had passed since Van der Gucht had commenced diction classes at a Parisian Maisons d'Education and not a moment of the time since then had been wasted. The breadth of knowledge within the subject areas of Speech and Drama in which she had gained skill is notable, for she had been no generalist. Perhaps unconsciously at first - she had seen to it that she gained theoretical and practical knowledge and experience in the area of vocal technique and oral interpretation - while not avoiding the more specialised and related areas of phonetics, the treatment of speech defects, and the speaking of a host of different verse forms. Directing plays -- dramatic, comic and tragic, both modern and classic, with young and old, who may be sophisticated or plainly unpretentious -- had been tested and tried by her.

Van der Gucht had had powerful models whose inspiration, talents and abilities she was an astute enough student to absorb, but she was of sufficiently resolute will and breadth of vision to set her own course within the educational contexts in which she found herself. Thus while her mother may have been a model of unswerving personal integrity, initiative and resolution; Elsie Fogerty a model for speech education and of scholastic and artistic vision; Sister Frances Mary an educational model, Van der Gucht had the intellectual ability, artistic sensibility and human will to absorb these lessons, transform them and make them suit the educational context where she made her mark. The next test of her ability was to be at the University of Cape Town.

2. THE FORTIES : STARTING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

What was Cape Town like when Rosalie Van der Gucht came to live and work here in the middle of the war? Francis Brett Young's book In South Africa provides us with a nearly contemporary portrait which may shed some light on the question.[1]

> In spite of its size, its modernity and its commercial activity as a great port, Cape Town always seems a remarkably quiet city. How much of this quietude may be due to the dominating influence of the towering mountain ... I cannot say. The fact remains that at the very heart of the city, in the Botanical Gardens, originally laid out by Van der Stel more than two hundred years ago, providing a green-shaded oasis where squirrels scamper ... it is hard to believe oneself within a few yards of a busy shopping-centre. ...
>
> It is undoubtedly this air of unhurried leisure ... which has made ... the Cape Peninsula the most popular holiday resort .... It has an admirable and well-chosen Municipal Orchestra .... Indeed the only thing it has lacked in the past ... is a Living Theatre; and this deficiency has now been made good by the establishment in Cape Town of a National Theatre which will supplement the work of the existing Little Theatre ... and the efforts of several Repertory Companies which have courageously kept the Art of Drama alive, yet, so far, have lacked a suitable home.
>
> So much for the city's organized entertainments. There are plenty of ways , however, in which the observant visitor may entertain himself. There is an enormous variety of interest and colour to be found in its mixed population. The Malays, for example, are a community which, since the old slaving days ... have generally kept themselves to themselves ... preserving their own habits of life and manner of dress.... These veiled women may be seen ... mingling with the good-humoured throngs of the Cape coloured people: a community which is rapidly climbing the economic ladder.... They have a humour that is all their own, and are endowed with ... a natural delight in music and an acute sense of drama, all of which may be seen at their best in the ballets and plays produced by the Eoan Group. (pp.31-3)

This extract reminds the reader of a latterday Cape Town (where racism was nonetheless present and affected Van der Gucht's endeavours shortly after she arrived). When she reached Cape Town everyone was keenly following news of the war. Ergang says that the Germans were engrossed in an all-out attempt to win Stalingrad but by the end of January 1943, they had been all but annihilated. Much of the Far East including Burma, had already fallen to the Japanese. June 1942 saw a change when the Japanese suffered heavy losses at sea and were driven from the Guadalcanal (pp.610-17)

Settling in at the College of Music

In this world riding topsy turvy on the events of war, Van der Gucht moved herself into Meg Wilson's house in Claremont.[2] The two had met in a boarding house where they both had lodged in Grahamstown. Now, the friendly disarray which prevailed in Mrs Wilson's Cape Town house became a secure environment from which Van der Gucht could report for work at the College of Music.

> I still remember her, walking briskly into the College of Music, her heels tapping on the wooden floor -- so lively -- and with a wide smile; and Ruth Peffers saying, 'This is Miss Van der Gucht -- my assistant.' And at once one was conscious of her vitality, her friendliness, her interest. (Stevenson, Interview,)

Primrose Stevenson (called 'Prim' by all her friends) trained at the Grahamstown Training College and then qualified at the Royal College of Music in London, and having taught for several years in the U.K. returned to South Africa to take up a school teaching appointment in Pretoria. In 1942, at the invitation of Professor Eric Grant, she joined the College of Music staff as lecturer in Class Music -- in which speciality Professor Grant had seen her at work. Prim Stevenson started the College of Music choir and the University choir; played the piano (and viola for the College of Music quartet 'very badly!'); but first and foremost she was committed to effective, classroom music teaching. She obtained permission from the Cape Education Department for music students to do practical class teaching in any school who would have them -- provided they were supervised by Miss Stevenson. Van der Gucht had the same privilege for drama, and the two women quickly discovered that they shared complementary educational interests. Van der Gucht would enlist Stevenson's services as a composer of music for her productions; and she took little time to persuade Stevenson to act. Stevenson's theatrical career up till then had chiefly consisted in playing Malvolio (like Van der Gucht) in a school production of Twelfth Night -- where she had distinguished herself by falling into the footlights.

The Honorable Molly Hamilton Russell (née Gibson) had married and settled in Cape Town -- with an ever-growing brood of children about her. With the support of such friends -- old and new -- Van der Gucht quickly settled into Cape Town and the University community.

Ruth Peffers was her immediate superior and nearing retirement. She was a shy yet commanding woman, strict with her students, but fair. Not inclined to make friends easily, she nonetheless had a quiet charm and a good sense of humour, and Van der Gucht became very fond of her (N Bromilow-Downing, A Kipps, Interview). Leonie Pienaar was already in charge of the Afrikaans work (and she remained so until the late fifties). 'She was delightful -- always correctly turned out, and correct in her approach to students, she was well liked and did worthwhile productions -- however nothing really innovative ...' reflects Matine Harman in interview. Between them, the former three were responsible for all practical teaching in the speech training courses. Now let us examine the nature of those courses, and let us begin by considering how Speech Training and Dramatic Art had evolved at UCT.

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THE HISTORY OF SPEECH TRAINING AT UCT

The British influence

From being a British colony during the first half of the twentieth century the Union of South Africa had achieved sovereign status. But during the second World War South African soldiers fought alongside the British 'for King and Country'. Under these circumstances, in spite of relatively newly acquired sovereign status, educational mores and aspirations which evolved in Britain continued to be fostered among South Africa's English speaking population. Many British subjects -- Van der Gucht and her friend, Molly Gibson among them -- had seen it as an exciting and worthwhile challenge to spread their British education abroad to the Commonwealth. In this way, just as the missionaries had done before them, many young men and woman came to South Africa to fulfill educational tasks and to take up challenging professional opportunities perhaps not

as readily available in Britain. Such were Donald Inskip, who came to UCT to take up the chair of French; Sister Frances Mary, who went to Grahamstown Training College; and Miss Celia Evans, who founded Children's Theatre in Johannesburg. Thus educational aims, originating in Britain in accordance with British aspirations and needs, found their way to South Africa. This was certainly the case with the Diploma in Speech Training at the University of Cape Town.

In Cape Town : the College of Music becomes part of the University

Since 1909 when the College of Music was first constituted, classes in elocution and diction were offered by Frank Holt; Mina Freund took over from him before the first World War (and Miss Helen Webb taught dancing and fencing).[3] In 1912 Mr W H Bell became Director, and during the next ten years the activities of the College of Music dovetailed with the University until on 1 July 1923, the former became part of UCT. Following the union, Speech Training was removed from the Music Faculty and situated in the Education Faculty. But in 1931 Professor Bell converted an old chemistry laboratory in the Orange Street grounds of the University into a theatre. Then he motivated for Speech Training to return to the College of Music, and when the Little Theatre opened its doors on 18 August 1931 with a performance of Chekhov's The Seagull; Ruth Peffers, lecturer in charge of Speech Training, played Arkadina. Later that year she directed her own students in Euripides' Hippolytus at the Little Theatre. Since there were no male students, university lecturers, dramatic society members -- or even boyfriends who could be prevailed upon -- were brought in to take the male parts.

Elocution was naturally at home in the College of Music because recitation was considered a worthy cultural pursuit, as was singing and playing the violin or piano. Many students who enrolled for music took some classes in elocution. Students who had been fired with an enthusiasm for play-acting or recitation at school were the ones who registered for the Speech Training Diploma. Professor Eric Grant -- then Director of the College of Music -- called the Speech Training students 'the moo-moo girls' from the sound of their voice classes (Inskip, Interview, 28 March 1988). Most of these young women were from families who could well afford them this opportunity to round off their

education at University, -- and to possibly meet a suitable husband. It was called 'the marriage school' according to Nan Bromilow-Downing who was a student from 1931-1933.

Over the years, the changes of Faculty (and lecturers) affected what courses were offered. In 1924 the Education Faculty offered three courses: firstly, a general course in voice production and speech correction for all student teachers; secondly, a Secondary Teacher's Lower Certificate with Elocution as a special subject; and thirdly, a two year diploma course in speech training 'intended to provide for private teachers of elocution and others who do not seek a course of preparation specially for school work' (Robertson, p.91). When Speech Training returned to the College of Music, general speechwork for primary and secondary teachers nevertheless continued in the Education Faculty; but the special endorsement course in elocution, and the Diploma -- which was developed into a three year course and could be taken bilingually -- were moved. It was substantially these courses which Van der Gucht taught ten years later.

In the thirties Speech Training students started their morning at lectures in the Arts faculty at Rondebosch, which were followed by practical classes at the College of Music (Bromilow-Downing, Olorenshaw, Interview). Then the girls caught the train to town and a pleasant walk through the Cape Town gardens took them up to the Little Theatre so that rehearsals could begin. Although the students were teachers in training, at first there was no teaching practice or teaching method, the emphasis was more on elocution, choral verse and performance. (At that time, Speech Training and Dramatic Art were taught in South Africa only at the Universities of Cape Town and Stellenbosch -- where it was in the hands of Sister Hyacinth Skene, in the Konservatorium vir Musiek. In 1940 Joyce Burch, who had been Van der Gucht's predecessor at Grahamstown, took over. Later on, in the forties, Elizabeth Sneddon established speech and drama at the University of Natal, Durban.)

After Leonard Rayne's Opera House was pulled down in the early thirties, apart from the University's Little Theatre, Cape Town possessed no other theatre (as Brett Young points out); so UCT's Little Theatre was influential. Not only speech training students,

but professionals such as Andre van Gyseghem, who later became resident director of the Nottingham Playhouse; and Leontine Sagan, who directed the first National Theatre production, brought experience and quality to some of the productions at the Little Theatre. The intention was that 'the School of Music, the Art School and the new Little Theatre would be training grounds for young South Africans who would be given the opportunity of building up a true South African culture' -- thus Inskip reports the University of Cape Town's first principal, Sir Carruthers Beattie, in Forty Little Years (p.17). This vision matched those held by some universities in the United States rather than England -- at that time. As Van der Gucht explained (over half a century later) to Noreen Alexander:

> Cape Town's got the oldest Department in Speech and Drama -- apart from America -- anywhere in the British-speaking world. There.
> The first people who started it were the Americans (I mean at a University of course) ... but the next is here -- long before Britain or any other country like Australia got going. (Tape recording)

THE CURRICULUM OF THE TEACHER'S DIPLOMA IN SPEECH TRAINING

In the forties curriculum of the Speech Training Diploma therefore, we can detect a combination of influences -- both South African and British. It had what could be termed a 'tapestry' format: a number of practical subjects or classes, together with a collection of theoretical half-courses, were offered the student who, experiencing them all, could weave of these many strands a web of meaning. The theoretical subjects, Anatomy, Phonetics and Poetics, were taken in the first year while Special Psychology was taken in the second. History of Drama, of Costume and the Theatre were conducted over all three years, as were the indispensable rehearsal classes and Speech Training, which included articulate speech and its development, verse and choral verse speaking, and remedial work. By the third year students were practice teaching in schools (Faculty of Music, Prospectus, 1942). From this body of knowledge and experience it was intended that professional understanding would emerge -- like the picture on a tapestry. Voice and speech training

sketch the outline, theoretical aspects of theatre provide the background colour, and practical production and performance complete the figure. I shall discuss each of these separately, and begin with speech training. I will begin by considering the state of speech in England.

English speech

As the first and second World Wars promoted industrialisation in Britain, so the bourgeois and petit bourgeois population increased and became more educated. 'Culture' became accessible to the middle classes who aspired to 'better themselves' and English speech -- a language spoken in more countries than any other -- deserved to be nurtured, its beauty and eloquence fostered, in the face of so many poorly educated and/or second-language speakers. It was assumed that some ways of speaking English were better than others, since some accents, dialects and figures of speech promised upward mobility in the English economy and society while others did not. This theme is beautifully explored in Bernard Shaw's Pygmalion. 'Correct' English was not only a matter of pronunciation and grammar but also of vocal quality. Therefore those who set an example must effortlessly produce a voice that is expressive, pleasing on the ear, and loud enough to be heard by a large noisy class. Speech Training must teach this and in this regard the speech training syllabus at the University of Cape Town was little different from Fogerty's syllabus at the Central School, which included daily voice, verse-speaking, prosody and poetics; and for the teaching students: Phonetics, Elementary anatomy, Elementary Psychology, Speech Therapy and Clinic (Cole, p.85-6). The UCT course included anatomy which investigates how the voice actually works. Phonetics taught the desirable placing and correct pronunciation of the English vowels, and (importantly) how to adjust the articulators so that deviant sounds could be improved. Daily practice in voice production and the speaking of verse should then improve the student's efforts so that, in accordance with Fogerty's aims expressed in Speech Craft, the student aims for 'understanding and using this threefold standard: 1. The standard of perfect physical use. / 2. The standard of phonetic accuracy. / 3. The standard of beauty' (p.8). Where greater

remediation was called for there was a special course for the '...recognition and correction of speech defects and disorders...' (Faculty of Music, Prospectus, 1942).

Theoretical study of the theatre

The 'background colour' for the Speech Training syllabus at Cape Town was theoretical studies on aspects of the theatre. The reasons why, and in what ways, study of the theatre was linked with Speech training are to be found in European theatrical developments.

In the period from the mid-nineteenth century to the outbreak of the First World War, flamboyant melodramas, comedies and music hall entertainments were gradually sharing the stage with a new kind of play: the searing, realistic, human dramas of Ibsen, Strindberg and Chekhov.[4] An ardent disciple of Ibsen, Bernard Shaw's witty plays on social issues were prominent on the English stage. In the 1906-7 London season Harley Granville Barker produced eleven of Shaw's plays at the Court, which even then was known for its innovative, outspoken theatre.[5] In an unpublished lecture, Van der Gucht points to the significance of Granville-Barker's work:

> As a director Barker was really the Stanislavski of England. He strove to make actors creative, and to make audiences feel they were living thro [sic] a life like experience. He could inspire actors, taking them thro every detail of their characters. He disapproved of clever technique -- all had to come from the inside. Ensemble playing was his ideal. Everything [must be] subordinate to [the] intention of [the] playwright.'

Granville-Barker was an actor and a theatre manager, but more significantly he was part of a changing theatre practice that lead to the rise of the director in twentieth century theatre (Van der Gucht). These theatrical developments demanded a different kind of actor from the nineteenth century 'declaimer'. A knowledge of the theatrical heritage, an understanding of historic costuming, a grasp of the increasing complexities of set construction and lighting, and the insight, intelligence and vocal powers to interpret understated, suggestive dialogue, became necessary demands to be made upon the fledgling actor. Thus the need arose for theatre training schools where a process of intellectual, imaginative and creative training could be initiated. As pointed out in

Chapter I, this was the motivation behind Fogerty's establishment of the Central School in 1906; and it was just as surely the motivation for Professor Bell recalling Speech Training back into the Faculty of Music at the University of Cape Town -- so that people could be trained to adequately perform and stage significant plays in the Little Theatre.

Practical production and performance

In the light of the above the third aspect of the Speech Training curriculum, practical production and performance, speaks for itself. On the stage the student can put into practice all that has been learnt. As Professor Bell said:

> the theatre is as essential to a performer in speech as the concert room is to the music student. The debased vowel-sounds and the clipped consonants to which we are so accustomed in South Africa may remain comparatively unnoticed in the class-room or in ordinary conversation, but the theatre exhibits them in all their naked horror ... and the teachers of speech-training ... must hear their pupils in actual performance on the stage. (quoted in Robertson, p.194-5)

Bell's belief in beautiful speech is implicit here, and it is clear that he considers the stage the best place to develop it. Thus the marriage of Speech Training and work in the Little Theatre at Cape Town was justified; and in making this really effective in practice Rosalie Van der Gucht was the crucial pivot.

Van der Gucht becomes part of it all

> The most important thing that Rosalie brought was her out going and persuasive personality -- her dynamism and width of interest. (Inskip, Interview, 23 March 1988)

Justine Dixie, who was one of Van der Gucht's first students at UCT, remembers:

> She took over from Miss Payne, a tall dignified woman -- we were terrified of her! Then Vandy arrived, and as far as we were concerned she was king pin! We weren't terrified of Vandy, we respected her -- she had total discipline but we adored her. There was never a dull moment in class with her; one respected her obvious ability, her wonderful sense of humour.

> With Vandy there was a kind of lightness. She started our Eurhythmics classes with a German woman.[6]

So Van der Gucht's enthusiasm, energetic vigour and broad experience of drama and theatre quickly made a strong impression. Encouraged by Ruth Peffers, she acted in a number of plays, produced extensively, and threw herself into the teaching task -- all the time suggesting improvements and small innovations which improved the quality and interest of the work.

As soon as she had unpacked, she found herself acting in Costa Couvara's production of Kesselring's Arsenic and Old Lace, for the Repertory Theatre Society. One of the leading actresses was suddenly unable to play, and Van der Gucht writes that she 'went through...the agonising experience of taking over one of the murderesses... at ten days notice' (Viva Voce). By all accounts she survived this baptism by fire with honour. Ivor Jones, the Cape Times critic said that the actresses playing the two old ladies 'presided with genteel benignity over three acts of high comedy without once sliding into the prevailing note of farce'. With this performance as a start, Van der Gucht contributed to many worthwhile productions at the Little Theatre during the war. Inskip says in Forty Little Years:

> The sinking of *Renown* and *Repulse* off Singapore brought the war quite close to Cape Town and Coastal Command had to establish itself somewhere in a great hurry.... all the University's buildings at Orange Street except the Little Theatre itself were taken over. (p49)

The University however, not suffering the financial and casting strictures under which the amateur dramatic societies were operating at this stage, produced, in Inskip's view, 'work of imaginative quality and some serious purpose'; and Van der Gucht was involved in both the amateur activity and in directing students (p.49). In 1943 (just after the start of the long Italian campaign which involved so many South African soldiers) she directed Shaw's Mrs Warren's Profession for the Little Theatre players in aid of St Dunstan's funds, and the Cape Times critic said:

> "Mrs Warren's Profession" ... is one of Shaw's castigatory plays.... In it Shaw is the hard-hitting social critic and indicter; as he himself puts it, the villain of the piece is Society.

Since Shaw wrote this play about a practitioner of the 'oldest profession' small wonder that the critic continues:

> At the beginning of the century when the play was first performed critics and public threw their hands up in horror, and shrunk from his exposure of a "flinty" social problem. We are not so likely to shrink today, but moral and social problems of human exploitation are still very much with us (just three days ago we had a denunciation of some of these by Bishop Lavis), and the plays moralising values remain high.'
>
> ...
>
> "Mrs Warren's Profession" makes a visit to the theatre both a pleasure and a duty, provided "you dont leave your conscience and your brains at home".

Miss Van der Gucht had the following to say:

> "Mrs Warren's Profession", was, I think, my most successful production -- both artistically and financially though one of the most interesting was "Tobias and the Angel" with a "coloured" cast. The angel gave a remarkably fine performance. He had a magnificent voice. (Viva Voce)

Helen Southern Holt asked Van der Gucht to direct Bridie's play for the Eoan Group. Holt herself played Anne, George Veldsman played the Angel, and a very young David Poole played Tobias -- just at the time when he was beginning his ballet training. Sir Seymour Hicks saw this production when it toured to Somerset West and was not without praise for it (Plaut, Interview).

Van der Gucht however, was busy with her students too. She says in Viva Voce:

> In February, 1943, I started a month of concentrated theatre work, with no other lectures, culminating in the production of a play. We had movement classes daily, instruction in make-up and rehearsals. The students were encouraged to take an interest in the decor and costumes -- as far as possible carrying out their own ideas. All publicity was also in their hands.

> They were extremely enthusiastic and their work resulted in an interesting production of "Noah", chosen because of the importance of the group and team work. "Heart of a City" ... followed in 1944 and "Pleasure Garden" in 1945 (produced by Ruth Peffers).

Traditionally lectures at UCT only begin at the end of February, so early February was a time when students could fully involve themselves with theatre -- and Van der Gucht utilized this opportunity. She made the project mandatory for all second and third years; and also introduced a course in practical lighting as well as the eurhythmics classes that Dixie mentioned. It seems her enthusiasm was infectious, because students initiated their own productions:

> At the end of 1943 and '44 the students put on an original revue devised and rehearsed entirely without the aid of staff. The first one, given privately, was so successful that we boldly opened the second to the public and asked them to pay to see it. Luckily, "Now and Then", a satire on drama down the ages proved quite a slick, original show and drew very good "houses". (Van der Gucht, Viva Voce)

Because she infused activities in the Little Theatre with intelligent vigour, Professor Inskip declares that she was 'the strong impulse given to the Speech Training (department) to become a department of Drama' (Interview). She did not effect advances alone, but because the University believed that she could carry through the adjustments, they were effected; and she did carry them through. So the work of the Department expanded and links were forged with the greater University community. In this way potential means of employment for students were opened up -- as we will now discuss.

A drama course within the BA

Plans were set in motion to develop a combined BA and Speech Training Diploma course. Professor Inskip says:

> I conceived the idea of starting this Drama course in the Faculty of Arts. I approached all these Departments and got them to lecture.... because if you go to all the different departments you get a mine of knowledge at your disposal; and there is the question of loading that weight of lecturing onto

> Van der Gucht or Peffers and that would have been unconscionable. (Interview)

Thus the Classics, English, Nederlands and Afrikaans, French, and German departments lectured on the new Drama course to third year BA students, while practical classes were conducted by the Speech Training Department at the Little Theatre twice weekly. Van der Gucht wrote in Viva voce, 'The aim is to awaken general interest in drama and equip teachers with the necessary knowledge to produce school plays'.

New ideas for the Diploma

And as soon as this course was approved in 1946 Van der Gucht suggested minor adjustments in the Diploma course to enable those students to work with the BA students as from 1947. So the door opened for a combined BA and Teacher's Diploma course. In April '46 she got mime and movement officially approved as part of the curriculum, and in 1947 she made arrangements to employ a part-time lecturer in Speech Therapy (Faculty of Music, Minutes, 11 April 1946, 10 March 1947). She also extended the Poetics course (prelude to the third year Drama course and taught by the English Department), into a two year course in 1949.[7]

A course for radio announcers

Around this time the SABC requested the Universities to be on the lookout for Announcer-Producers. In response, the Speech Training department at UCT set up a special broadcasting course and persuaded the SABC to lend old equipment to furnish a broadcasting studio (Inskip, Interview). Students who enrolled for Broadcasting took a specially fashioned version of the Speech Training Diploma together with a BA which included the new drama course (Faculty of Music, Minutes, 30 October 1945).

A visit home

Come the end of 1944 however, Van der Gucht had fulfilled her contract and was most anxious to go home.

> "If you really want to go" said Ruth Peffers, "I'll get David (David Alexander her husband) to help you get a passage". He held a wartime position controlling civilian ship passages. In January 1945 I was given sailing

> instructions. It was all very secret. The night before boarding I went to a party given by Rene Ahrenson. I was introduced to an officer -- "We may meet again soon" he said casually, "be outside 'Information' at 6 p.m. tomorrow". It was a large ship -- packed with troops and carrying a small number of civilians. We were five in my cabin. I found my way to 'Information' -- the officer was there. Because of him I had an excellent seat for meals, pleasant company and help throughout the voyage. I also got roped into entertaining the troops! I've always been thankful to Rene for that introduction! (Van der Gucht, Untitled, unpublished lecture, 1976)

Van der Gucht wanted to see her mother, and visit her father (who was very ill) in the institution to which he had been sent. The war had certainly offered Florence her own challenges. While sitting up in bed one morning the front of her flat was bombed away, and Florence was left looking out at wartime London through an enormous 'picture window'. Therefore Rosalie had good reason to be concerned about her mother, but although her flat was in ruins and her furniture and possessions along with it, in the long run Florence was none the worse for this disaster -- as time would show. 'The rockets were falling over London'; Van der Gucht continued her story. 'I found plenty to do - teachers were needed -- and one just kept one's fingers crossed and did all one could.' Besides which, Van der Gucht was in England for VE day. Having missed so much of the action it must have been a very special experience to have shared that day with her fellow countrymen. She says:

> Early summer brought peace in Europe, South Africa seemed far in the past. Then came a letter from Ruth Peffers. She was ill. She wanted to retire. She had recommended that I be appointed in her place. Donald Inskip was backing the recommendation. I must return. David wrote -- he had got me to England -- to help him and Ruth I must return for a while. Perhaps I should, I thought -- just for a couple of years. I enquired about a passage. South Africa House laughed at me -- "hopeless". "Ah, that's settled" I thought. I wrote to Ruth "No hope of a passage". David and Donald acted quickly. By September 1945 I was back in South Africa "granted a passage by special request". (Untitled, unpublished article/lecture, 1976)

Van der Gucht was appointed Head of Department without applications being invited and her staff was increased to a permanent and a temporary assistant (for three years); with the proviso that between them they produce four plays a year in the Little Theatre

(Faculty of Music, Report). In this way the bonds between the Little Theatre and the Speech Training Department were strengthened. The Music Faculty Board memorandum on the appointment of Van der Gucht said (amongst other things):

> Miss Van der Gucht joined the staff of the University in 1942 and very quickly showed her worth as teacher, organizer, and producer.... as a teacher she has an enthusiasm which she communicates to her pupils, and she gains their interest and devotion. As an organizer she had built up the teacher-training work with great efficiency. As producer she has staged in the Little Theatre plays whose success has been the best proof of her ability. Her work in this field is outstanding....
> The number of students in the department has shown a large increase in the last two years.... her appointment would be in the best interests of the staff, the students, and the University. In fact, it would not be possible at present to find anyone else more thoroughly suitable for the post. (Report)

Back at work

So by August 1945, when even Japan was having to capitulate -- Van der Gucht was back at work in Cape Town -- directing Christopher Fry's The Boy with a Cart. Ivor Jones said in the Cape Times:

> Its story of Cuthman, a Cornish boy inspired by deep religous feeling to build a church to the glory of God, takes on the speed and exhilaration of an impressionistic drama in verse. Last night it was movingly spoken and acted by a cast with no member of which, for a change, one could pick a quarrel! (5 September 1945)

Shortly after the opening Van der Gucht received a fan letter which pinpoints her qualities as a director.

> My Dear Producer ....
> Rarely have I enjoyed a theatre production so much, and the sheer beauty and exquisite treatment of the play remain to be treasured in memory's store for the rest of my life.
> ...
> In verse and prose the treatment was equal to the nobility of the theme, and the reverence and restraint of the production were admirable. Not least was I struck by the subtle but forcible power of suggestion throughout the presentation: this was especially well done during the oxen incident & the whirlwind.
> How splendid too the groupings during "crowd" scenes; groupings so simple, so varied, never maintained a moment too long and blending the

> formal and the natural so skilfully. The lighting enhanced these groupings still more, and the moments of near obscurity which made the players appear almost as silhouettes, were most striking, while the contrast achieved impressed as words and action never could have done.
>
> A special word of praise too for the chorus. They spoke so clearly so unitedly and with such varied speed and rhythm. Was the device of having the verse spoken by six, then three or two or one your own or the author's?
>
> ...
>
> I arrived from England just two months ago and this introduction to the S. African theatre is an unforgettable experience.... Today when commonplace and often degrading themes are the framework of plays, when the stark, the grim, the unnatural and the ugly are too extensively used to grip an audience, it is excitingly refreshing to see a play so beautiful, so tender & so ennobling.
>
> ...
>
> Yours most sincerely
> f. Ninian McManus o.p.(Rev.)[8]

VAN DER GUCHT IS IN CHARGE

> As Head of Department, Rosalie kept a firm hand on the reins. We were all trained at the Central School, -- myself, Nancy Body, Matine Harman, and in teaching all developed both practice and theory on Central lines -- particularly in sound Voice Production theory and practice, [and] the development of practice teaching in various local schools.... (Burch, letter to the writer, 27 September 1988)

> Van was a wonderful person to work under; she allowed you your head, she always encouraged you -- drew the best out of you ... (Harman, Interview)

In January 1946, at the age of thirty-eight, Van der Gucht become head of the Speech Training work at UCT. Joyce Burch, who had preceded her at Grahamstown, was appointed as her Permanent Assistant and Matine Harman as her Assistant for three years. Both of them had trained at the Central School. Concurring with Burch's comment quoted above, Harman, who was a student of Fogerty just before her retirement, said:

> The syllabus was absolutely identical here at Cape Town -- it was terribly English. At Central there was a tremendous accent on Voice; you had to have five honours to pass and you had to have either voice theory or vocal interpretation.
>
> In the begining of your course it was as if Fogerty had decided you had to be moulded. Later on in your training you were perhaps allowed more

> individuality. One hadn't developed as a person with one's own ideas in the Central School training -- you didn't get much opportunity for expressing yourself...'

But at Cape Town Van der Gucht was in charge, and gave Harman the kind of encouragement she needed to develop her talents. Lecturing and teaching was fairly divided between the three of them, and Van der Gucht saw to it that each did more in those areas in which they had the greatest expertise: Miss Burch concentrated on all aspects of voice production and costuming, Miss Harman on mime and movement, and Miss Van der Gucht on Teaching method and rehearsal classes. Houghton says:

> The three of them were a most effective team. Each had something that the others didn't have -- they weren't always worrying about being outdone....
> 'With Joyce Burch you had to speak beautifully, move well and be intense; Matine Harman did productions that were extremely suitable for students; with Van you had to think -- she worked on your creative ability. It was not comfortable having lessons from Van, she didnt praise easily. (Interview)

Perhaps this was because, as Harman pointed out:

> She was a wonderful listener. We always took our problems to Van because she could sort them out, she had clarity of thought. She could ascertain where the problem was leading and could solve it without bringing in any emotion -- she was objective. (Interview)

Van der Gucht concentrated when she was communicating, and she looked out for the particular talents of those with whom she worked. When Leonard Schach, who had acted and directed as a student at UCT, returned from abroad fired with new ideas, she arranged for him to conduct improvisation classes (which he had learnt about in America) with the students. This was highly uncommon in the forties, but Houghton says:

> Because of this, I was among the first teaching students to go into schools and teach creative drama: I became the itinerant Speech and Drama teacher at Goodhope Girls school where I offered afternoon classes in creative drama.' (Interview)

Harman notes the same talent in Van der Gucht for spotting the best of what people have to offer, when she says, 'She drew things out of people; she was able to manipulate people for their own good -- never for self-aggrandisement'. Houghton commented:

> She was everywhere; [one felt] her control over the different aspects of the Department -- the workshop, the movement room, the costumes and the three teaching rooms -- she had it all under her hand and she ran it and ran it <u>well</u>. (Interview)

And so the full time teaching staff worked easily and effectively together -- to the point where the students noticed it. Houghton pointed out that the 'party piece' of the time was the senior students, Job Stewart, Nigel Hawthorne and Tony Holberry doing a prankish cabaret 'take off' of Van der Gucht, Burch and Harman while the other students guffawed their appreciation. She says 'it was such a "trio" that it called for that kind of send-up'.

Professor Donald Inskip was continually in and out of the Department, since throughout Miss Van der Gucht's headship he was Controller of the Little Theatre. He had considerable administrative and university experience and in addition to being Professor of French, was a reputable scholar of the theatre.[9] His dedication to the Little Theatre and his considerable business acumen combined with Rosalie's personal warmth, leadership qualities and theatrical skills, made both more able to execute their visions of what a university theatre ought to be. The Little Theatre had been created by interested university lecturers (and students) who wished to explore theatre in the theatre, and Van der Gucht was well aware of this. She encouraged participation in the activities of the theatre, and gave freely of her own advice, energy and expertise. In <u>Forty Little Years</u> Professor Inskip, describing his participation in her production of <u>Noah</u>, provides insight into their relationship:

> <u>Noah</u> has a very special place in my affections because it was the first play -- first of many -- in which I acted for Rosalie. That I did so was an accident and I feel compelled to indicate why, since this reveals at one sharp stroke two of her greatest qualities -- frankness and a strong sense of reality. For a couple of weeks rehearsals struggled on with nobody cast as <u>Noah</u>, and

> myself reading the part to fill in: I had no ambitions to play it and Rosalie, I am sure, no intention of allowing this to happen. However, time went marching on and one morning she said, 'Oh well, you've been reading it so long now I suppose you might as well play it.' Thus indeed it was, and happily we brought off a considerable success for her -- this is how her players have always felt about their work under her direction. Few things could have served better to launch a friendship of nearly thirty years during which moments of strain were almost entirely absent -- in fact I cannot recollect any such. (p.52-3)

In the opinion of this writer, one of the hallmarks of Van der Gucht's career was her honesty in responding to others. She was thoroughly professional in her demeanour, and suffered her own feelings with dignity. She had small patience with jealousies and rivalries, and while many times she may have felt envious of one or intimidated by another, she managed to avoid turning it into a personal 'kvetch' (Berkoff). This is surely how such an effective, friendly, working relationship as she and Professor Inskip enjoyed, was maintained over the many years of their association.

The association was close, not only because of the Little Theatre, but also because the Defence Department returned the Hiddingh Hall buildings to the University after the war, so in 1947 Speech Training could move to the Orange Street campus of the University -- right alongside the Little Theatre. Then Van der Gucht and Inskip motivated for Speech Training to move out of the College of Music and into the Faculty of Arts where, in 1948, it became the Department of Speech Training and Dramatic Art (Memorandum, 22 July 1947). As Inskip said, Van der Gucht had the ability to lead a Speech and Drama Department.

<u>Play director</u>

> She made it her business to keep up with modern methods, going to courses in England at Dartington Hall and probably other places, and was an avid theatre-goer overseas. Her choice of drama was always forward looking.... She got the rights of Thornton Wilder's Our Town very early, was generous enough to give it to me to produce and encouraged me to make use of auditorium as well as stage (a great innovation in those days -- 194[7]). (Burch, letter)

This comment from Burch points to Van der Gucht's constant search for new knowledge -- in this case new plays -- and new ideas with which she could upgrade the work of her

department. However her first production after her appointment as Head was not a new one, but a classic -- The Tempest -- which was staged in the City and Woodstock Town Halls (March - April '46). John Dronsfield designed the decor and costumes for this, his own independent production. The dances were arranged by Dulcie Howes. Basil Warner writes:

> Breaking with tradition, Dronsfield and van der Gucht cast a woman, the late Chris Paulse, as Caliban. This highly competent actress cheerfully submitted to an astoundingly unflattering costume, in addition to an alarming makeup which took nearly 2 hours to apply. Undeterred, she gave a magnificent performance, assisted by Rosalie van der Gucht who helped her lower her voice to a menacing growl. (letter, 27 September 1988)

Afterwards Van der Gucht received a letter from Denis Hatfield:

> I want to send you the grateful thanks of Jack (Dronsfield) and me and the cast for the immense amount of interest and time and help you gave to it. We were lucky that you agreed to direct the production and I do feel that it has had a great influence on the point of view of a big proportion of the five thousand odd folk who saw it. (15 July 1946)

The latter enigmatic remark was prompted by the fact that the cast of this production was composed of 'coloured' folk. Stevenson says, 'Prospero was played by George Veldsman, and General Smuts was there and made a speech that he was delighted; since for the first time, a Non-European (cast) had played' (Interview). Returning to Warner's letter, he writes:

> Through her friendship with the theatre designer John Dronsfield, Rosalie van der Gucht became directly involved with the hitherto largely neglected Cape Coloured theatrical talent. In 1947 she cast the late George Veldsman as the Prince of Morocco in her production of "The Merchant of Venice", breaking the longstanding tradition of "white" actors playing "coloured" characters in "blackface" makeup. With her guidance Veldsman then went on to found his own, highly successful coloured acting group.[10]

By the time Van der Gucht received Denis Hatfield's letter she had already completed another production -- this time for her own Department -- Thornton Wilder's The Skin of

our Teeth. She had seen the play in London in 1945 and brought the performing rights of this new and radical work back with her to Cape Town. Typically, she chose production of this play to be her first as head. If one looks at her comments in Viva Voce, written just before she took up her appointment, her sense of direction is clearly discernible:

> Conditions permitting, I am to return to Capetown, [sic] to take over, in due course, the direction of the Little Theatre. This involves shaping a policy, producing, and giving classes in acting technique....Now that we are lucky enough to have Gwen Ffrangcon Davies and Marda Vanne directing an English professional theatre in South Africa (there are already several Afrikaans professional companies), we are hoping that this will lead to the development of a truly good South African national theatre and provide opportunities for those English speaking students who want to go on the stage. But we need constant contact with other countries to help keep up our standard.

In confirmation of what Van der Gucht states, Olga Racster observes in Curtain Up:

> South Africa desires theatrical independence.... and there are those who are trying to see she gets it. Such names as André Huguenet, Mathilde and Hendrik Hanekom, with P.P. Breytenbach, have been standing as sponsors for the Afrikaans part of the organization; and now mingling with its Afrikaans brothers are Marda Vanne and Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies, whose tours with their own company during the Second World War kept the culture of the theatre alive in the Union.
> ...
> They can bring their valuable knowledge ... to bear on the National Theatre. And though there is a vast amount of talent ready to contribute, much of it being trained by Miss Rosalie Van der Gucht at the University, experience of stage professionals does help to make perfection. (p.196-7)

And so Van der Gucht staged Wilder's bizarre and zany The Skin of Our Teeth which thoroughly rattled her audience. The Argus reviewer said:

> The mystery about "The Skin of Our Teeth" ... is why the author ... has thought fit to turn a serious play, on the not inconsiderable theme of man's struggle for existence, into a three-ring circus.
> It is true that "The Skin of Our Teeth" is described as a comedy, but it is really a philosophical fantasy in the Shavian manner, conceived by a mind aloof from, yet sympathetically attuned to, the pathetic deficiencies of the human race, and it derives no obvious benefit from humour consisting of irrelevant interruptions of the action, a Crazy Gang techique amusing in a music-hall but incongruous in a theatre.

> The Antrobus family -- homo sapiens and his offspring -- is first shown at the end of an interglacial period, with the terror of the approaching icefield upon them. So convincing is the production here that a sympathetic shiver shook the audience when the household pets, a dinosaur and a mammoth, were turned out to perish and thus to make way for the few human survivors whose task it was to remake the world.
> ...
> In spite of its insistent flippancy, the play is deeply moving and thought-provoking, and Miss van der Gucht's imaginative production is superb. (5 May 1946)

Teacher training

When Van der Gucht became Head of Department, students could register for the Teacher's Diploma in Speech Training, a BA with the Diploma in Speech Training, a Primary Certificate with a Special Endorsement in Speech Training (or a Certificate in Speech Training: offered for students who didn't have the entrance qualifications for the Diploma). (The special version of the Diploma for Broadcasting was added just a year or two later.) What we have read of Van der Gucht's activities in the theatre must not obscure her extensive work in teacher training. From when she began at UCT she campaigned for better employment conditions for teachers of Speech and Drama, to achieve official recognition for the Speech Training Diploma, and for the teaching of speech in schools. In the Viva Voce article, she says, 'We are very anxious to provide more outlet for our students whose numbers are greatly increasing. Some have obtained good positions but we need far more support from educational authorities.' Earlier in the same article she states:

> To stimulate the interest of the education authorities in Speech, we gave, in collaboration with Zonnebloem (the school and training college for coloured students), a Special Demonstration. It was opened by the Inspector General of Education and attended by a large number of teachers and school inspectors. It consisted of classes of children of various ages, taken by students and designed to demonstrate different aspects of Speech Training, including acting.
> We also had a display of books and "apparatus" such as vowel and consonant charts, original jingles and rhymes, etc.'

In December 1945 she wrote to the Provincial Administration requesting full recognition for the Teacher's Diploma in Speech Training. They replied:

> With reference to a letter dated 6th December 1945 received from Miss R. van der Gucht ... I am directed to state that the Department will be prepared to grade a teacher who secures this diploma one category higher for salary purposes. (Minutes, Board of the Faculty of Music, 3 June 1946)

In effect this meant that the UCT Diploma was refused substantive recognition since it was only recognised as a single year of study for the purposes of salary calculations. Van der Gucht never did achieve recognition of the Teacher's Diploma as a valid three year qualification, and so without another recognised teaching qualification, it has been difficult for her diploma holders to enter or retain posts at government schools. While this was a battle she lost, nevertheless on the level of actual praxis in Cape schools she gained significant ground.

She forged and strengthened links between the Speech Training department and schools in the Cape by increasing the practice of sending students into these schools to try out their teaching skills. This strategy educated not only the student, but the schools which were visited; most of whom experienced Speech and Drama teaching for the first time. Stevenson pointed out that the 'schools definitely enjoyed the teaching of drama being introduced -- they wanted the students back.' (Interview) She also sent her students to so called 'coloured' schools and colleges (such as Zonnebloem mentioned above) and, as Burch writes, 'She always encouraged coloured students to come and train and to work with their own people (anything further was not possible for them in those days)' (letter).

Visiting schools was also a major means employed by her for the intricate task of teacher training because it taught her students to cope with the realities of teaching in a school: not only how to survive, but also how to refine the classroom experience for the children. This strategy worked because each student was supervised by her 'tutor' -- that is, the lecturer who conducted the student's private lessons. (These 'individual tuition classes', wrote Van der Gucht, 'are an essential and most valuable part of their training and follow the best overseas practice' (Memorandum, 3 May 1948).) This tutor came to the schools to observe those students (who were allocated to them) practise their teaching

skills -- so not all the students were supervised by Van der Gucht. But in spite of this, and with the benefit of hindsight, Houghton reflected:

> 'Van was able to teach you to teach. She was trying to make the best of each of us as she saw us....
> I do believe that Van put an imprint on a lot of her students because of the way we were not taught, but educated in drama. One was conscious of being controlled but you knew it was for your own good... She tried to find out what your potential was: she would look at you and decide: acting? directing? teaching? The purpose was to turn out either performers or teachers. It was essential that you be pointed in the right direction. Those who were not talented enough to act could become adequate teachers. There was dignity in being a teacher -- Van showed that. She was a model for teachers ... She made us be like her; we learnt how to find things, how to be imaginative and independent. (Interview)

Florence Van der Gucht comes to Cape Town

In the middle of 1946 Florence Van der Gucht announced to her daughter her firm resolve to seek a passage to South Africa. Van der Gucht anticipated her mother's arrival with exceeding trepidation, not to say dismay. Perhaps she feared it would mean the end of her hard won freedom and she did her best to suggest the disadvantages of the scheme to her mama -- who wouldn't hear of such nonsense. Florence had found a berth on one of the first yachts to leave England after the war. No sooner had they weighed anchor than the cook 'became indisposed' (the apochryphal version of this is that he was too drunk to move) so the passengers had to fend for themselves; they apparently washed in soda water. Unscathed by her adventure, Florence sailed into Cape Town and then moved into Meg Wilson's house with Van der Gucht. Meg was a 'vague, dreamy sort of person' and she relied on Van der Gucht (Stevenson, Interview). 'Whatever Van did -- theatres, walks, holidays -- she dragged Meg along.' Meg's children, then at Roedean school and University respectively '...were erstwhile hippies: carefree indulged and undisciplined' (Stevenson). Not surprisingly, Florence couldn't abide the set up in the Wilson home and so her daughter decided to buy a house. On 1 February 1947 she and Florence moved into No.8, The Triangle, Pinelands. A few of her friends tried to persuade Van der Gucht not to live with her mother; to retain at least a degree of independence; but she wouldn't hear of it. 'Her sense of duty, of loyalty, of caring made

her stick to her mother'; and her mother in turn had come to South Africa 'because in her strange, hard way she had a tremendous affection for Rosalie'. (Stevenson, Interview)

Prior to her mother's arrival, Van der Gucht had already added to her family. In December '46 she directed the opera Iphigenia in Taurus at the behest of her superior at the College of Music, Erik Chisholm. The opera came off most successfully and the run was extended. Inskip avers that Professor Chisholm was apparently surprised and pleased with what his 'Speech and Drama ladies' had managed to achieve. However the cast expressed their appreciation to their producer in more concrete form: they presented her with a small dachshund puppy which she christened 'Gluck' -- after the composer of the opera. When Florence Van der Gucht arrived, she developed a deep dislike of Gluck and flatly refused to look after the puppy when her daughter was gone at work. Basil Warner writes:

> This state of affairs accounted for "Gluck's" presence at lectures, rehearsals, performances and, on one memorable occasion, a broadcasting studio.... The little dog ... developed the unfortunate habit of running away in Government Avenue, and students and actors at the Little Theatre frequently accompanied "Van" on frantic searches, mystifying passers-by with rapidly-repeated cries of the composer/dachshund's name...."Gluck" lived long and happily...

and when he died '...Rosalie would never replace him with another dog'. (letter)

Using directing to teach

The 1949 February Theatre Work project -- by this time an established institution -- was Van der Gucht's production of Robert Mitchell's The Match Girls. All second and third year students were involved, although as Helen Houghton said, 'not everybody got the opportunity to act; people with talent were favoured' (Interview). Students were encouraged to submit designs for a set, from which the 'designer' was selected by Cecil Pym and Van der Gucht. For the first time a student -- Houghton -- was entrusted with this responsible task. Houghton says:

> She tried to draw from you what your potential was. Her techniques were not experimental but she stretched you... After I had completed this design task I remember Van looking at me thoughtfully and it was as if her look was saying, 'You did that all right'; and I think then began her decision that I should be a director. (Interview)

Matine Harman says:

> She was tops in directing, in bringing things out of people. She cast the student who was an unlikely choice for a role -- whom no one would have thought of in the part -- and they would succeed because Van saw to it and she made it work. (Interview)

Thus Van der Gucht harnessed her departmental productions to the educative task: her teaching was individualised -- honed to the particular needs of the students she was dealing with at any particular time. But I mention The Match Girls, not only for the choice of a student designer, but also because it again demonstrates that the choice of worthwhile subject matter provoked thought and sometimes even action. The play is about a strike organised by female workers in a match factory who have been inspired by the renowned Annie Besant. Van der Gucht received a letter; this time from Alfred Holtzer -- who had founded the Owl Club and been extremely active in school play production in Cape Town for many years.

> 6th March 1949
> Dear Miss van der Gucht,
> I am looking forward to your production of "The Match Girls" .... I noticed that in Bateman's preliminary notice of the play in the Argus he said that Annie Besant was a "most unglamorous woman". I wonder if he ever saw her, or if he did, hear her speak! I first heard of her when she was associated with Bradlaugh (M. P. for Northampton) on the Free Thought platform. She left Bradlaugh when she came under the spell of that remarkable woman Madame Blatvasky the Theosophist and author of "The Levant Doctrine". I heard Annie Besant speak on Theosophy in the St James Hall to a packed house -- I have never listened to a more impressive speaker. A little woman but she simply radiated magnetism. She had a beautiful voice and a wonderful command of language.... Forgive this long scrawl but the play recalls to me so many memories. The horrible disease the match girls suffered from called "Phossy jaw" caused through working at ... match factory with crude sulphur -- A. B. and the strike -- Her wonderful organizing power and her compelling eloquence. "Unglamorous"? Well good luck to you and your cast.

With Van der Gucht directing so many productions in the Little Theatre one could convey an impression to the reader of increasing succcess and influence for her in Cape Town theatre. This would be inaccurate. There were many unfavourable opinions and aspersions cast at the work of the Department; in fact at all times a healthy spirit of criticism prevailed. For example, The Match Girls recommends itself to the writer for its worthwhile theme and the acting opportunity it gave many female students -- since there were nineteen in the cast. But for theatrical reviewers of the day other factors had to be considered. Phillip Bateman's review said:

> "THE MATCH GIRLS"... is a play of the 'nineties, not the naughty 'nineties but the earnest, Fabian, nineties when the name of Bernard Shaw was beginning to irritate the smug late Victorians and unskilled labour was daring to resent exploitation.
>
> Many playwrights of today, incapable of producing a well-constructed play, resort to the episodic film technique, which gets them out of many difficulties but destroys any sense of suspense. Robert Mitchell does this with his "Match Girls", and thereby fails to extract all the drama inherent in his theme of factory girls awakening at last to a sense of their wrongs and finally righting them with the aid of a gallant leader, Kate (Helen Houghton) and a crusading reformer, Annie Besant (Gloria Walters).
>
> This should have been a moving piece, but in spite of clever grouping and -- sometimes -- effective lighting, it somehow failed to grip. One was always conscious of the too obvious fact that the girls were a bunch of students, too many of them unconsciously reminiscent of Fred Emney's immortal Mrs. May, and there were only occasional flashes of sincerity when Helen Houghton as Kate let herself go.
>
> Gloria Walters strove bravely to make her Annie Besant convincing, but youth and beauty were against her.
>
> One is grateful to the speech-training department for offering unconventional plays, but in this case one feels that there was something lacking in the manner of presentation. '

In the light of Bateman's expectation that Besant should be unglamorous, it is hardly surprising that he found Walters unconvincing. One may suspect that he was also unaccustomed to a play which was not written in three 'well-made' acts. However Ivor Jones in the Cape Times said:

> It is most effective theatrically, well supplied with drama, pathos, and what someone has called the unbuttoned humour of the working classes.
> ...

> There is much to admire in Rosalie Van der Gucht's production. She has handled her large cast with great care, and they respond well whether in acting or in those crowd movements and groupings which are essential to the establishment of the temper of Mr Mitchell's documentary pattern.

Returning to Rosalie Van der Gucht's production of The Skin of Our Teeth in 1946, Inskip's comments in Forty Little Years make pertinent reading:

> 'The two Thorton Wilder plays put on by the Speech and Drama Department in 1946 and 1947 ... gave clear notice that the "well-made" play in three acts and with one or more realistic settings was losing ground before the impact of a new stage realism, that of acting, character and allusion, with scenery as such almost absent and replaced by properties or symbolic elements whose function was to support and underline mood and motive....
>
> ...
>
> This trend was underlined yet further when in April 1947 Rosalie and Joyce Burch together produced Jean Anouilh's Antigone, the famous play from the days of German-occupied Paris. (p.58)

Acting

Van der Gucht and Burch together produced Antigone just as soon as the rights were obtainable, and Van der Gucht played the name part Antigone. This part was the first in a series of lead roles that Van der Gucht undertook in the late forties. Although extremely prone to stage nerves, Van der Gucht enjoyed acting. After Antigone in 1947, she was most successful in Leonard Schach's production of The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams. She played Amanda, who passes unrealistic social aspirations onto her crippled daughter and fills her with hopeless longing. The production was a resounding success at the Little Theatre and was later revived -- without Van der Gucht -- for a National Theatre tour (see Little).

In that same year the institution in which Claude Van der Gucht had been looked after informed his daughter that he had died. Florence and her daughter did not communicate a great deal on this question.

The evidence before us suggests that the effects of renewed, close involvement with her mother were reflected in Van der Gucht's theatre work. Antigone's struggle with her uncle King Creon for independence and honour, the guilt, anguish and final suicide which close family bonds evoke in Ibsen's Wild Duck (directed by Van der Gucht in 1948),

Amanda's overly high hopes that crush her daughter's spirit (in The Glass Menagerie): perhaps these theatre pieces helped Van der Gucht come to terms with her own personal circumstances, and provided that artistic mirror which could reflect aspects of her real life.

In November 1949 she played in Audrey Pearce's production of The Old Ladies which is a dramatisation by Rodney Ackland of Hugh Walpole's novel. Denis Hatfield writes:

> The curtain, as it rose on The Old Ladies, uncovered at once the privacies of three lives -- forlorn, and blowsy, and tremulously brave....
> ...
> Rosalie Van der Gucht played *Miss Beringer* with complete understanding and poignance. The desperate bright chatter, the total incompetence, the forlorn retreats into the past -- all were beautifully conveyed. She recreated for us a twitter of vague childish happiness, a later impoverished existence sustained (till its death made loneliness complete) by her little dog, and the friend who brought some meaning to her fading years. This performance moved me deeply.
> Leonie Pienaar was less poignant, as indeed she should be, for this widow and mother has at least known life and can still hope for her son's return.... and she played most sympathetically with Miss Van der Gucht. (Cape Theatre in the 1940's pp.142-3)

Immediately after this portrayal, Van der Gucht played Lady Bracknell in René Ahrenson's production of Wilde's wittiest of all comedies The Importance of Being Earnest for the Little Theatre Players. Again I quote Denis Hatfield's review from the same source:

> Rosalie van der Gucht, should, I think, have swept and swooped more than she did as *Lady Bracknell*: she might have carried the war more into the enemy's camp, but she achieved, nevertheless, a glorious, if rather static, command of every situation. Her Lady Bracknell was magnificently prepared for every littleness of life; her gorgeous gorgon croak -- the very essence of outraged and outragous dignity -- was employed with vast comic effect. This was a grand example of skill allied to instinct -- it was a triumph of technique. (p.145)

Stevenson played Miss Prism in the production and says that Van der Gucht's mama, noticing that Lady Bracknell seemed rather too like herself, questioned her daughter who replied, 'Well mother, she is a bit like you'!

While not mentioning any of her 'outside' involvements here because they are discussed in Chapter Four -- Rosalie Van der Gucht's first eight years at the University of Cape Town were spent constructively, and cause the writer to gasp at her phenomenal energy. And this was only the beginning.

3. THE FIFTIES : LEADING THE SPEECH AND DRAMA DEPARTMENT, UCT, FROM THE FRONT

> The most important thing you can sift off is her spirit. I didn't teach in any way like Van, but the spirit of what she did inspired me ... (Taylor, Interview).

After the challenge and delightful silliness of portraying Lady Bracknell in the Christmas production of The Importance of Being Earnest, Rosalie Van der Gucht opened the new decade by directing Richard Nash's The Young and the Fair for the February Theatre Work project. This play was 'chosen by the International Theatre Institute of UNESCO to be produced throughout the United States in 1950 to "express ideas of international understanding, human rights, and world peace"' (Theatre programme, Little Theatre). In this, the third year of Nationalist government in South Africa when H F Verwoerd had just entered the Cabinet as Minister of Native Affairs (the possible demerits and merits of which Van der Gucht loved to argue vociferously with her friend Isolde Gerdener) she would have staged this play probably because it was an appropriate and alternative affirmation of human rights; and also because it had twenty-one parts for her women students.[1] With hindsight it also serves to demonstrate how she was in touch with trends in international theatre. To this end she joined the British Drama League in 1950 as a Life Member. In South Africa, international theatre trends counted in this decade of increasing cultural and residential apartheid -- promoted in a series of governmental legislative acts between 1952 and 1957. Cultural interaction 'across the colour bar' was made very difficult and thus models for this established University Theatre, which is what the Little Theatre was, continued to be drawn from overseas, from the United States and Europe.

The Speech Training Department started the decade, in staff terms, in a state of flux. Joyce Burch had married in 1949 and her reception was given in the Little Theatre foyer

by Van der Gucht and Matine Harman (in the midst of float building for the University Rag which became part of the wedding reception, or vice-versa, depending on the point of view); and Burch was no longer on the full-time staff (Burch, letter). Instead, she, Leonard Schach and Hazel Casson were all employed on a part time basis, together with Matine Harman in whose hands the Department was left when Van der Gucht took leave (Faculty of Arts, Memorandum, 29 September 1949). For the decade also had its share of fun for such an adventure loving spirit as Van der Gucht. In June 1951 she and Prim Stevenson bought a brand new car, a Morris 1000, shipped it over to Britain and went off on a grand continental tour. Back on home ground in London, Van der Gucht's energy knew no bounds. 'Oh do let's go and see that concert!' she would cry. 'But that's right across London' Stevenson would point out weakly...'It doesn't matter, I know the way!' and they would be off on an adventure, although the weather was growing very cold with the approaching winter (Stevenson, Interview).

Staff

Naturally not the whole of Van der Gucht's 1951 furlough was spent holidaying. The resignations of Matine Harman and Joyce Burch (both were expecting babies in 1952) meant that Van der Gucht was looking for staff. She attended an American theatre Summer School at Dartington Hall where she met up again with Mavis Taylor who was also on the course.[2] Because Van der Gucht's eyesight was so poor Taylor did her make-up; and in this way the two made contact during the course (Taylor, Interview). Van der Gucht was wanting someone in the place of Joyce Burch. Since Taylor had majored in Art and Psychology in her BA and showed definite talent for design, she would be able to take over Burch's work on costume, props and design and did so throughout the fifties. Taylor had the added asset -- not only of a University degree -- but also a Teacher's Diploma from Natal University. Gretel Mills -- whom Van der Gucht interviewed and contracted at the same time -- offered rather different talents. British by birth and education, she was her peer and very experienced.[3] Accounts of her by former students vary greatly, for it seems that she was painfully shy and very intense. She had long red hair, beautiful hands and an other-worldly air -- which some put down to her interests in

spiritual matters.[4] To her, fell Matine Harman's task of teaching Movement and Mime, and she did Teaching Practice supervision, Voice and Acting teaching. Taking into account the steadying influence of Leonie Pienaar who was still responsible for the training in Afrikaans speech, the impression made upon students by this new fifties threesome was somewhat different. Certain observations would be appropriate.

While the British influence was still present, all three lecturers had received their basic training at different institutions, and Mavis Taylor's was not British but South African. So the three were not from the same stable and what they offered to students was individualised and differentiated. In the fifties Mavis Taylor was only a few years older than many of her students but in spite of this she insisted they develop their own ideas, think for themselves and learn to use a library. She was interested in the motivations of the students and asked uncomfortable questions. She wanted them to do the work and refused to do it for them. Where Mavis Taylor was vague and creative and a heavy smoker -- of which Van der Gucht thoroughly disapproved -- Gretel Mills was painstaking, painfully unconfident, but extremely thorough. Students testify to the many helpful things which she taught them; such as bringing the pitch of a high voice down, mastering classroom teaching technique, and so on. In spite of their interesting differences, the three of them worked together all the time. Both assistants acted in Van der Gucht's productions, Mavis Taylor designed many of these, and Gretel Mills wrote and directed plays for children under the auspices of Children's Theatre and Theatre for Youth (see Chapter 4).

Overall policy

At the vanguard of Taylor's youthful creativity and Mills's intensity, stood Van der Gucht. Always dependable and absolutely straightforward, she selected and carried through policy during the fifties with a firm hand. In the forties she had been a paragon of trained British talent, obedient to the needs of the theatre and her University superiors, efficient, effective, energetic, innovative and very popular. In the fifties we begin to measure her durability, persistence and determination in the cause of education. Her policy for the Department was formulated in response to post-war international theatre

trends, the nature of theatre then offered in South Africa, and the prevailing educational climate here. The fact that most of the Diploma students were 'white', well brought up young women (as they had always been) was no reason for offering a course which which was merely a glamorous 'rounding off' of their education. In curriculum, ongoing improvement and revision of existing courses was undertaken. (The prospecti from 1947 through the fifties reveal a constant refining of course content and nomenclature for greater accuracy and methodicalness.) But the theory courses were not majorly innovative, rather Van der Gucht achieved her significant upgrading in play production. The choice of plays was more comprehensive and of higher calibre, therefore the theatre training was more rigorous. She also developed and expanded the practice of educational drama. In manner, there was an insistence upon discipline, self respect and professionalism. In action, Van der Gucht taught by example, and she reached out to ordinary people beyond the confines of the University, be they so-called 'Coloured' or 'African', or too young for university education. These are the chief themes which will be pursued in this and the following chapter.

The choice of plays and their production

Inskip's Forty Little Years contains a list of all productions at the Little Theatre from 1931-1971. The reader should note that a distinction needs to be drawn between plays offered at the Little Theatre (under the directorship of Donald Inskip), by 'outside' professional or amateur companies; and plays offered by the Department of Speech and Drama (under the headship of Van der Gucht) for the purposes of student training: this discussion is confined to the latter. No doubt Van der Gucht and Inskip discussed production policy at length, so his influence can not be discounted, but with the headship of Van der Gucht the change in play choice of the Department is so marked that it must be ascribed to her.

Apart from the many Shakespeare plays which Van der Gucht directed in this decade, classical plays from ancient Greece, English Rennaissance drama and Restoration comedy, modern American and European drama, and indigenous Afrikaans and English plays, were offered to students on more or less a rotating basis. Whereas between 1931

and 1945 (fourteen years) Peffers and her staff staged three classical Greek tragedies, a handful of plays by European dramatists such as Maeterlinck, Claudel and Martinez Sierra -- whose 'religous and romantic plays were often more popular abroad than in his own country' (Hartnoll, The Theatre, pp224-5) -- a handful of Afrikaans plays (mostly translations), a notable Pirandello (Henry IV), a single Chekhov (The Cherry Orchard directed by Van der Gucht), and a multitude of contemporary plays most of which have fallen into obscurity: under the headship of Van der Gucht a marked contrast in choice is apparent. This is heralded as early as 1944 where Peffers directed scenes from Lavender Ladies by Daisy Fisher (for the students), while Van der Gucht directed scenes from Much Ado About Nothing (Shakespeare), The Rivals (Sheridan) and Murder in the Cathedral (T.S. Eliot). From 1946 until 1960 (fourteen years), apart from eight Shakespeare plays, Van der Gucht saw to it that the substantial classical canon and the many contemporary plays with popular appeal -- were interspersed with indigenous works, plays for children and the plays of Thornton Wilder, Shaw, Ibsen, Tennessee Williams, Garcia Lorca and Bertolt Brecht.

Nor did she only consider students, the particular capabilities and talents of the staff were also taken into account. Matine Harman said Van der Gucht would suggest plays for her -- possessing insight into what Harman would direct well. Mime and movement were Harman's strong suit and we find she undertook plays with a *Commedia del Arte* flavour, such as Goldoni's The Fan (1949) and Moliere's Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme (1951). Inskip said, 'Once she got Gretel and Mavis then she had a powerful team of directors and she wanted to suit their talents and give her directors the chances they needed' (Interview). Gretel Mills did children's theatre, and -- intense and private person that she was -- the tragedies of Lorca, Schiller and Strindberg; while Taylor (in the fifties) concentrated on designing for productions and directed pre-twentieth century classics in the main -- where she quickly demonstrated a bold creativity. Thus it would seem that Van der Gucht artfully combined the strengths of her staff (and sometimes guest producers) with the needs of her students, and what emerged was a vibrant mixture of 'comfortable' contemporary, modern innovatory, and classical plays.

Van der Gucht's own productions

Two of Van der Gucht's own most notable productions: The Oresteia of Aeschylus (translated by Gilbert Murray) produced in 1952 for the Little Theatre's twenty-first birthday celebrations, and Brecht's The Good Woman of Setzuan in 1958 point to pertinent aspects of Van der Gucht's capabilities as a director/teacher. Colleen Fowles (one of the three stage managers on The Good Woman of Setzuan) made a comment which is a good place to start our evaluation:

> There were lots of scene changes and a prima donna in Eveline Garret (who played Shen Te). Here you saw Van at her best; this was the sort of play she could really move with. As a stage 'manager', she was superb: disciplined, organized and knew exactly what she wanted....
> I found she was very good at delegating: she picked her people -- she chose well -- she made quite sure that the people would deliver for her. (Interview)

Van der Gucht was indeed an outstanding leader: an organizer who knew how to delegate. In this way she was able to set up opportunities for others to try out talents and extend their capabilities; others who -- if Van der Gucht had not taken the initiative and especially the responsibility in the first place -- might never have achieved what they did. In The Oresteia of Aeschylus Van der Gucht undertook not a single play from the Aeschylean trilogy but all three -- cut and moulded by Professor Baldry into a single work. Starting with the acute dramatic tension of Clytemnestra's scheme to destroy Agamemnon in the first play, moving into the heightened lyric intensity of ritual mourning in The Libation Bearers, and finally into the maddened agony of a large part of Eumenides; staging such an 'epic' was a mammoth undertaking and could not be done without help. The programme contains a note:

> The Speech and Drama Department would like to thank Professor Baldry and the Classics Department, Barbara Eyre and the Art Students of the Cape Town Training College, Eleanor Esmonde-White and the Students of the Michaelis Art School, and the many other friends who have worked to make this production possible. (September 1952)

Help had been forthcoming from Prim Stevenson who arranged the music and Phyllis Kimpton and Anne Kinsman who played it; and from Phillip Segal and Trevor Whittock -- university lecturers who acted in the production. In passing responsibility for certain tasks on to other shoulders, there was a sense in which Van der Gucht agreed to share it, sometimes with experienced and wise colleagues, but sometimes with the very young and inexperienced. This takes both courage and faith; faith in others, and the courage to trust that, if you step back, others will come up with the goods. This kind of courage and belief in others is at the heart of the educative act, and was clearly the purpose behind having the newly appointed Mavis Taylor design both the sets and the costumes for this' prestigious production of The Oresteia of Aeschylus. It is certain that the enormously experienced and entrenched workshop manager Cecil Pym would have been a far safer -- and in that sense easier -- choice. But then Taylor would not have had the same chance to develop, and development, advancement was what Van der Gucht really wanted. Whether the production would finally be a credit to her was always a lesser consideration than the teaching she achieved through it. May we note therefore, that teaching can be just as much a matter of not doing, as of doing. Nonetheless Van der Gucht had the task of staging this ancient Greek masterpiece; and M S P of the Cape Times said:

> One of the largest casts ever assembled for drama of worth in Cape Town react most loyally to Miss Van der Gucht's instruction. The Grecian beauty, the Grecian gravity of diction, the Grecian dignity of movement, the histrionic possibilities and the profound philosophy of "Oresteia" receive at all times adequate and often memorable simulation. (n.d.)

Not forgetting that she was in South Africa -- the significance of which emerges in newspaper reviews which we will examine later in this chapter -- how Van der Gucht used her international contacts and her breadth of theatre understanding is well illustrated by her production of The Good Woman of Setzuan. Immediately after her Carnegie Grant study tour in the United States in 1957, she received a letter from a contact she had made there. The letter makes interesting reading in the light of the subsequent newspaper

reviews of The Good Woman of Setzuan -- especially with reference to the music.

Herbert Blau, of The Actor's Workshop of the San Francisco Drama Guild, writes:

> June 17, 1957
>
> Dear Miss Van der Gucht -
>
> Very pleased that you came across the Mother Courage article, and liked it. I sent it to ETJ, hoping that it would be helpful to people interested in producing it. Sorry you weren't around for the production itself.
>
> We obtained the original Dessau score from Eric Bentley, who is very hesitant to lend it. But I now have a copy of the full score myself, and our musical director has his version, orchestrated down to our three instruments, which were remarkably effective on the songs. We taped all the marches and background music with the full ensemble called for by Dessau. In our pit we used thumb-tacked piano, trumpet, and -- this is real alienation -- a Hammond organ, specially picked and pedalled by Wendell Otey, our musical director.
>
> If you decide to do the play, we could probably arrange to photostat our copy of the full score for you, altho it's thick and could be expensive. It's possible that Brecht's secretary at Theater-am-Schiffbauerdamm would be able to dig up some music for you....
>
> Courage is no simple production, but I hope you do it -- it's an overwhelming experience to do & to see. Wish I could see Brecht's own company do it myself....
>
> Sincerely,
> Herbert Blau (signed)
>
> PS -- Godot closed last Saturday -- played all the way thru to large audiences, a commercial surprise!

Well, she did not do Mother Courage, perhaps because Robert Mohr, lecturer in English Speech at Stellenbosch University, staged the play in Stellenbosch before she could start rehearsing. His was the first production of a Brecht in the Cape. Her production of The Good Woman of Setzuan was the second, and what she had experienced in America no doubt influenced her production by this father of the modern theatre. Stephen de Villiers who designed the decor and costumes for her, says:

> What Brecht did in the theatre reminded me of Cezanne's role in the post-Impressionist time in France. He cut his painting down to the bare structure of things, and this is what Brecht achieved in the theatre and Van's production in turn -- the bare structure of things. It had a 'theatrical' type of lighting, no character make-up or colour messing; all was cut down to the bare minimum. It was done with conviction, no fuss; Van wasn't going to bend her knee to Brecht before she knew what it's about. It wasn't a dramatically detailed production, but then the parts aren't written that way. (Interview)

The following extracts from the reviews demonstrate how unfamiliar Cape Town theatre critics of the day were with Brecht's political convictions, his concept of 'epic theatre', the influence upon him of the Chinese theatre and Shakespeare, and his *alienation technique*. Van der Gucht knew these things, but it seems they did not. W E G Louw says in the Burger:

> Die opvoering ... was baie soos die inhoud van 'n besonder duur en deftige Krismiskous: 'n mooi, met die hand gesnyde stukkie ivoor én 'n tiekiefluitjie, 'n egte kantsakdoekie én 'n koperringetjie met 'n goedkoop steentjie.
>
> [This production was very like the contents of an expensive and delightful Christmas stocking: a beautiful piece of hand carved ivory and a pennywhistle; a pure lace-edged handkerchief and a copper ring with a cheap stone.]

In the Argus, M G introduces the play to his readers in a manner which, looking back, demonstrates a delightful, latterday irreverence for Brecht.

> The problem is (to quote the epilogue) how to be good though rich -- or is it perhaps rich though good? ...
> Mr Brecht takes three hours, 14 scenes and about 30 characters to reach this inconclusion. In the process he distils some rather muddy symbolism, frequent and quaint humour, and an occasional lapse into the stickiest sort of Teutonic sentimentality.

If the Argus reviewer didn't make sense of the style of the play, the Burger commented on the acting:

> Die regisseuse ... was besonder gelukkig om die dienste van die besoekende speelster Eveline Garrat te kry. As Shen Te, die gewese straatvrou en die enigste "goeie" vrou (én slegte sakeman) ... het sy kop en skouers bo die ander uitgesteek. Afgesien van 'n oormaat hier en daar van toneelmaniertjies was 'n lang passasie soos haar solomimiek met haar **denkbeeldige** seuntjie [my emphasis] buitengewoon goed ... gespeel.
> Dieselfde kan ook van haar dubbelgangerrol, dié van Shui Ta gesê word. Die veranderinge van gestalte en stem -- voortreflik gehelp deur die masker van Elizabeth Humblecroft -- het aanvanklik waarskynlik selfs die gehoor bedrieg.

> [The director was exceptionally fortunate in having the services of guest actress Eveline Garrat. As Shen Te, the erstwhile streetwoman and the only 'good' woman (and 'bad' businessman) of Setzuan, she stood out head and shoulders above the others. Apart from rather too many stagey gestures here and there, long passages such as the solo mime with her imaginary son were played like a virtuoso.
>
> The same can be said of her second identity as Shui Ta. The transformation of appearance and voice -- excellently assisted by the mask of Elizabeth Humblecroft -- initially even appeared to deceive the audience.]

The reader may already have noted Fowles's comment that Garret was a 'prima donna'. Van der Gucht, following the practice of American university/community theatres, had employed a professional to play Shen Te. Mavis Taylor recalls that concern was then expressed to Van der Gucht that Eveline Garret's 'rich, theatrical' language and temperament might perturb some of the students, and the openness of Van der Gucht's response: "'Well," she said, "it will do the students good, *there* - they will get a taste of what the theatre is really like"' (Interview). A public discussion of the production was held one evening, and both Percy Sieff and James Blanckenberg who were in the cast recalled that in the face of all the excitement about *alienation effect* versus the American 'Method' acting; perhaps because she had worked with so many young actors and actresses who were more often 'alienating' by accident than design; Van der Gucht's comments were characteristically practical. To Sieff she said 'I don't know what all the fuss is about!' (Interview). She could say this because she understood the texture of Brecht's work. However those who were not so sure certainly made a fuss. In his review Louw said:

> Net één vraag: waarom het die regisseuse -- of die spelers? -- dit nodig gevind om straatlopers en bedelaars van Setzuan in China met so 'n verskeidenheid van plat, dialektiese Engelse aksente te laat praat? Daar was Cockney-, Yorkshire- en selfs één min of meer breë, Malmesburyse Afrikaanse brei-aksent. Persoonlik sou ek meen dat alle spore van provinsialismes hier vermy moes geword het.
>
> [Just one question: why did the director -- or the players? -- find it necessary to allow vagrants and beggars from Setzuan in China to talk with such a variety of flat, English accents and dialects? There was Cockney-, Yorkshire- and even one more or less broad Afrikaans, Malmesbury 'brei'. Personally, I would have thought that all traces of provincialism should have been avoided here.]

The Cape Times reviewer had read his programme rather more carefully, for he states:

> A programme note states: "No attempt is made in the writing of this play to portray stock realism, and in the production the same freedom has been used as the author permits himself. Accents, objects, clothes and movement have been used in accordance with their powers to stress or convey the play's meaning as we have seen it."
> Fair enough!

However Louw was not only puzzled by the accents, but also by the music:

> Die musiek van Stefan Wolpe was vir my gevoel van tyd to tyd eerder 'n hindernis as 'n dramatiese aanvulling: 'n soort quasi-Chinese musiek uitgevoer op 'n nogal harde en blikkerige klavier, 'n viool en 'n tjello. 'n Mens wil aanneem dat dit die outentieke musiek vir dié stuk is; maar dan sou ek die drie instrumente in die orkesruim versteek het. Agter daardie skermpie regs vóór vernietig hulle van tyd tot tyd die illusie volkome.
>
> [From time to time the music by Stefan Wolpe, for my part, was more of a hindrance than a dramatic aid: a sort of quasi-Chinese music executed, what is more, on a hard, tinny piano, a violin and a cello. One can only assume that this is the authentic music for the piece; but then I would have concealed the three instruments in the orchestra pit. Behind that little screen right in front they utterly destroyed the illusion from time to time.]

In essence therefore, Brecht's use of elements of the Chinese theatre was new to the majority of this Cape Town audience, who perceived the production through the filter of aesthetic criteria with which they were familiar -- the three act, 'well-made play' and the Gilbert and Sullivan operetta. Brecht is neither of these, and the model ill becomes him. The Cape Argus critic says:

> I nearly forgot the music, written by Stefan Wolpe and, I was assured by someone who should know, 'genuine Chinese music.'
> Played by Erik Chisholm (piano), Stirling Robins (violin) and Ishbel Fraser-Munn (cello), its jolly strains put me immediately in mind of a cross between 'The Mikado' and 'Chu Chin Chow,' an association which probably coloured my approach to the whole drama.

These reviews show Van der Gucht's strength as an educationalist. She did not let such misunderstandings or disapproval from her audience stop her taking risks in her productions, and she refused to let the opinions of critics or public dampen her convictions. Percy Sieff said, 'She was interested in the theatre; not in how it reflected on her or me or anyone. If one got a good review one used to wait to see if she'd comment and she never would! I don't know if she read them' (Interview). Isolde Gerdener's numerous translations of the Afrikaans reviews in the Van der Gucht Papers testify to the fact that Van der Gucht read her reviews very carefully. She did not let them put her off though.

TRAINING ACTORS THROUGH SHAKESPEARE

It is almost a truism that for training an actor in the Western theatre, performance in plays from the Classical repetoire is a *sine qua non*, and no doubt this is why Van der Gucht instituted a practice of staging Shakespeare's plays. The fact that on the English stage in the post-war years the foremost acting reputations were being created in plays from the classical canon probably influenced her decision as well (Hartnoll, The Theatre, p.252-3). Van der Gucht gave a 'Talk on the Theatre' shortly after her return to South Africa in late 1945 or 1946 and she wrote:

> The first thing that struck me on arriving from South Africa was the prosperity of the theatres.... Secondly, I was struck by the fact that a number of so-called 'classic' plays, including Shakespeare, were having a big popular success, plays which before the war would probably have appealed to only a limited audience....
>
> This happy state is largely due to the establishment in the West end of London of two major Repertory Companies .... They each consist of a band of players headed by such famous actors as John Gielgud at the Haymarket and Lawrence Olivier and Ralph Richardson at the New.... At the Haymarket, Hamlet, A Midsummer Night's Dream and The Circle by Somerset Maughan, have been running for some weeks and the Elizabethan 'horror' play The Duchess of Malfi, which I have not yet seen but I hear it is beautifully acted, has just been added to the repertory.... Hamlet, & The 'Dream by the way, have been produced by University professors, which suggests the possibility of interesting developments in the way of links between the theatre and the University.
>
> The Old Vic has just finished its present season of plays .... Uncle Vanya ... lost none of the tears and laughter of Tchekov and was full of poignant

> atmosphere. It brought back to me vividly our recent struggles in Cape Town to interpret The Cherry Orchard by Tchekov. I wish that all of you who were interested in the production could have seen with me, Uncle Vanya. You would have learned so much.

In 1943 she staged scenes from As you like it and in 1944 scenes from Much Ado about Nothing. In 1947 she directed The Merchant of Venice for the Speech and Drama Department. This was the very first Shakespeare to be produced with the Speech and Drama students at the Little Theatre. In the sixteen previous years of its history, seven Shakespeares had been staged, four by Alfred Holtzer with SACS school boys and the other three by amateur groups. But from 1947 to the end of the fifties, Van der Gucht either directed herself -- or in a few cases had others direct -- a Shakespeare play with the students nearly every alternate year.[5] This could not have been easy for a number of reasons.

Casting the play

The first hurdle to surmount would have been casting the male parts, but Astri Muldal said, 'She always had a thousand young men' (Interview). One assumes that she obtained them by using those who enrolled for the new BA Drama course, by a carefully timed personal invitation, sometimes by newspaper advertisement, sometimes by word of mouth in the University community and amongst the amateur theatre enthusiasts; and sometimes by sheer coercion. To return for a moment to a non-Shakespearean production, Louis Franks recalls the 'auditioning process' for The Good Woman of Setzuan where, he avers, Van der Gucht asked him, 'Can you sing?' 'No', was his reply. 'Nonsense!' she told him, 'Of course you can sing'; and in The Good Woman of Setzuan sing he did. Come the next production and its auditions, all the hopefuls were seated in a row and Van der Gucht went down the line asking, 'Can you sing?' and awaiting the reply of each candidate. However when she reached Louis Franks, she simply said, 'Oh dear no! You can't sing!' and in that show he did not (Conversation).

Accepting the challenge of Shakespeare

A more serious problem to overcome lies in the nature of a Shakespeare play, its sheer volume; not only the size of the cast, but its length and multiplicity of plot lines and

themes. And most of all, a depth of emotional understanding and maturity are necessary to do this foremost playwright justice -- not to speak of physical and vocal technique adequate to serve interpretation. These were the challenges facing Van der Gucht as a director and teacher, and these the educative challenges for her students: which was why she undertook these classics. Matine Harman said, 'She put the students first. She would cast the unlikely student and the student would succeed because Van saw to it. For example, she cast Hilda Shapiro as Juliet (Romeo and Juliet, 1950), whom no one would have thought of and she made it work' (Interview). Newspaper reviewers of the day had the following to say of her performance:

> The Juliet of Miss Shapiro was an excellent effort for an inexperienced actress. She spoke her lines intelligently (if a trifle too slowly) and with delicate feeling, she moved easily and used to effect a winning smile. Her potion scene was undoubtedly the highlight...(Cape Times, 15 June 1950 Ivor Jones)

And Phillip Bateman of the Argus said:

> Miss van der Gucht obtained her effects with one brilliant set, two front drops and clever lighting ....
> Hilda Shapiro's Juliet, I felt, was a *tour de force* rather than an expression of genuine passion. She moved well, and spoke her lines with beauty, but neither she nor Pietro Nolte, as Romeo, quite inspired me with feelings of compassion and sympathy.

Astri Muldal pointed out:

> Van dared to put people in parts because it was good for them. She stuck her neck out, her students came first. When I was cast to play Hermione in The Winter's Tale, the afternoon before opening night she took me to one side and said to me, 'You are very young and Hermione should be played by an older person, but within the bounds of what you are capable of at your age, you are doing well'. She had prepared me for it; she knew it would happen -- when the crits laid in to me. (Interview)

Of this production Ivor Jones wrote in the Cape Times on 21 June 1956:

> The large, youthful cast quite obviously put some hard work into its performance, but there was a confusion of acting styles and astonishing accents that often sounded a jarring note.
> Though [The Winter's Tale] is notable for some of the blankest verse that Shakespeare ever wrote, this rambling moor of jealousy, remorse, resurrection and final family reunion atones for its many stretches of dead wood with a fascinating variety of characters, of whom my own best-beloved is the winning rogue Autolycus....
> Astri Muldal was too coy to plumb the depths of feeling as the misjudged, much abused Hermione,..

While M G of the Argus commented:

> Rosalie van der Gucht's production was always competent, but I could not help feeling that much of the acting was a trifle wan....
> Percy Sieff was a strenuously jealous Leontes. At first his emotional efforts obscured his diction, but this improved as the play progressed.
> Astri Muldal made a dignified queen. (21 June 1956)

How accurate these reviews were is not really significant, but we can assume that Van der Gucht chose student education before she worried about success. This choice had its price -- which is evidenced in these reviews. But in support of her choice, performing Shakespeare demands of the student that s/he exercise all the talent s/he can muster. That is how actors of calibre are nurtured and were developed by the Speech and Drama Department.

Training for professionalism

Percy Sieff was a keen young amateur actor in the fifties when Van der Gucht asked him to play Leontes in The Winter's Tale. In interview he remarked to the writer:

> The first thing that was striking was that she showed absolutely no fears about using me for The Winter's Tale and her confidence gave me confidence. I knew that her attitude was: this is a student production and if there was a student she would certainly have cast him. For example, I was dying to play Hamlet (1959), but Karl Oettlé was a student so I played Horatio -- which is an extremely unrewarding part!
> She treated you like one of the students and talked to you as though you had experience -- as though you knew what you were doing -- and she gave the impression that she expected you to know.... When I say she treated me as a student that is no slight, because Van respected her students sufficiently not to make differences with guest players....

> Her praise was coveted: When she said she thought you were good I thought I was wonderful. If she said you were 'very good' you were over the moon, because you see you knew she meant it. One's relationship was such that you knew her opinion was an honest one.

The evidence collected by the writer overwhelmingly affirms the completely straightforward honesty which Van der Gucht brought to all her interactions including, of course, those with her students. This is no doubt one of the chief reasons why she was able to instill in them the importance of professionalism, responsibility, and discipline in the theatre. Pam Gundle says:

> She taught us things like being on time for rehearsal, ensemble work, the dedication, the preciseness you have to accept when you come into the theatre. She taught us about the structure of the theatre. We had to do backstage work, costumes, lighting. She didn't work with people individually -- it was ensemble. She would encourage you to try your own variations. (Interview)

Cherry King recalls:

> A lot of us weren't from Cape Town and coming to Cape Town was a whole experience in itself; being at University was another whole experience; being at Drama school a further one.... It was very exciting having the theatre there and it was a focal point for the whole course. We knew that's where we were going to be. We were working towards that with our prop-making, costumes etc.... We felt special, different, 'cut off' in one way, gypsy in another. We were all bundled into the dressing rooms together; the control and discipline had to be excellent.
>
> She (Van der Gucht) felt a tremendous responsibility for us as young people in a number of ways.... She was also a kind of mother figure when she wasn't being cross and angry; she had a tremendous warmth underneath this barrage of purpose (which was) to get the best out of us, to achieve high standards in anything we did. I remember once I had a tiny entrance and I skipped a weekend rehearsal; *she quivered and she shook* with anger; I thought she would never forgive me. She was very strict, a very intense person, she did everything intensely. (Interview)

'When she didn't like something, she shouted and her eyes popped out with anger. She had the real virtues -- honesty, courage, kindness, justice' comments Muldal. Joan Seeliger, who was a student along with Muldal and King, said:

> I shall never forget the time during rehearsals for The Rivals ... there was a weekend rehearsal and Cherry didn't come. She decided to go out with Doc. At the next rehearsal Van absolutely blew up, tore a strip off her. Then in the car going home -- she gave us a lift to Hibernia -- Cherry kept apologising, begging Van to forgive her.
>
> Van said in a very firm and very serious tone, 'Cherry I'm very sorry but I shall always remember you as the kind of person who missed a rehearsal'.
>
> It seemed to me, who was uninvolved, that in fact Van had forgiven Cherry already, for she was very fond of Cherry -- she was definitely one of Van's favourites -- but she couldn't let her, fond of her though she was, get away with this -- you simply didn't miss a rehearsal. She expected students to sacrifice anything for the play, she really did; she was trying to instil a discipline, a professionalism, a sense of duty ... where one put aside one's personal feelings for the job in hand. (Interview)

Colleen Fowles, who sacrificed opening the run of Hamlet (playing the part of Ophelia) because she too had missed a rehearsal, said to the writer:

> She couldn't tolerate a lack of discipline, she was so disciplined herself. A lot of us were frightened of her, I didn't see her as a warm person at all. Van never showed that other side to her students. If you were one of her favourites she would expect an enormous amount of you -- as she would of herself. These were the ones she would give the responsibility to. (Interview)

Seeliger says:

> This business of being honest to the point of brashness: when my course was coming to an end and I was thinking about a stage career, my mother and father came to have an interview with Van -- with me present. I was rather too plump at the time; especially if I wanted to act, and Van simply said to my parents, 'And what are we going to do about her figure?'. My mother and father were incensed! (Interview)

Expertise and inspiration work together

Perhaps the complexity of the impression which Van der Gucht had upon her students is well captured in this recollection of Seeliger's:

> During my years as a student this is the impression I had of her: a woman of enormous intelligence, breadth of vision, absolute integrity; deeply shy as well. And what I remember, is her putting her hand up to her hair, in a

> gesture that expressed some uncertainty... There was a kind of image, a veneer of not caring how she looked... that was hiding a very sensitive interior. (Interview)

Van der Gucht's presence conveyed a combination of authority and vision. Her authority was vested not only in her acute sense of responsibility, but in her knowledge. She was a deeply cultured person; widely read, with an extensive knowledge of the theatre -- amongst other things -- knowledge which she could easily access to clarify a point for a student. Her vision was of the future, and sometimes so powerful that it then made her seem, or indeed be, quite abstracted. This could be rather comic and the fact that her abstraction came out of the power of her concentration made it more comic still. This was no more apparent than when she was directing, when she was caught up with trying to create a reality on stage from words on a page. She would stand firmly, her weight evenly balanced and her feet planted, almost parallel -- as no doubt she had been taught at the Central School, perhaps even before that in Paris -- her back so straight and her bosom so well carried that her behind seemed to protrude a little; and her head slightly tilted as she considered a problem of staging; sometimes, distractedly, she would fidget with her clothes or pull at the strap of her petticoat while her cast waited -- almost breathless -- for her next idea. Astri Muldal, describing the movement plotting of scenes in The Winter's Tale where Van der Gucht had brought in

S A C S school boys to play court attendants, said:

> She'd *plant* these people. She'd grab a young man by the shirt front and ferry him across the stage asking, 'Now where shall we put you? -- There !' as she let go a handful of shirt and allowed him to come to rest on a step or against a pillar or some other convenient position; and for some reason it worked! Nobody seemed to mind... (Interview)

Playing opposite Muldal in the same production, Sieff's comments are apposite here:

> I was really keen and learning as much as I could on the side, and having read all the editions of The Winter's Tale I could find, at first I was taken aback, she (Van der Gucht) didn't seem to have a plan -- I was quite appalled!... And then slowly during the course of rehearsals, it seemed to

> come together and you realised that, after all, it was her pulling the strings.... I think she felt she didn't have the need to justify anything to us. Then again, she would tell you exactly what she thought -- it was never hurtful because it was honest. (Interview)

Returning to Muldal's description of the movement plotting of The Winter's Tale, she says:

> She (Van der Gucht) got herself into the most peculiar positions because she was so interested in everybody else -- she didn't see herself in it.... Van was demonstrating for me the reconciliation moment when Hermione kisses Leontes. She (Hermione) had to come down the steps and taking Leontes's head in her hands, kiss him gently. Van did this, then paused; 'No, no that's not it' she muttered and returned to the top of the steps. Caught in the bigness of the moment (for Hermione), down she came again, clasped Percy's head and kissed again and this was repeated several times until she felt the timing and movement to be just right. That night, on the way home from rehearsal, Percy said, 'I don't think any other guy has been kissed so much by Van!'. (Interview)

As Muldal has pointed out, nobody minded Van der Gucht's eccentricities of manner because her intentions for those under her tutelage were so clear; she was determined to provide the best framework she possibly could for learning how to act, how to interpret a play text, how the theatre worked. Muldal says:

> Van was an intellectual. She had a rich strong background which showed when she was directing. She directed with logic instead of hysteria. She backed up the points she made with examples and explanation.... She wasn't so much an artistic person as she explored within the bounds of honesty and logic rather than magic ... you know how easy it is to go over the top? Van clamped down on that kind of thing. (Interview)

Perhaps Van der Gucht longed for the magic of creative inspiration. Mavis Taylor recalls when she was directing The Learned Ladies:

> It had rather an imaginative beginning. Van was watching and then turned to me and said 'I wish I could think of things like that'. (Interview)

And yet as Fowles says, 'The productions were happy ones; there were no atmospheres; she wouldn't tolerate hysterias, little bitchinesses' (Interview). And if she sometimes felt herself to be less than highly creative, nonetheless she took great pains with her productions. King says:

> Her enthusiasm, her appreciation and love of her work rubbed off on us, the special way she went about doing something. For example, we were walk-ons in As You Like It [1954] and there were four of us who had to come in playing with a ball -- there was a delight and care in how she wanted that little scene to be. (Interview)

The newspaper reviews of the day confirm for us, who have the benefit of hindsight, some of her strengths as a director of students that have been noted above. Says the Argus critic on 7 June 1954:

> 'As You Like It' in the Little Theatre on Saturday was a splendid production that richly deserved the extended applause given by a full house.
> Clearly most of the credit for this success must go to the producer, Rosalie van der Gucht. Her impeccable taste and sense of style were apparent throughout; and, one feels, it must have been largely by her influence that the whole cast moved with an easy confidence not always found on the classical stage in Cape Town.

E F of the Cape Times on the same date says:

> In her presentation of "As You Like It" ... Rosalie Van der Gucht has chosen the historical approach. But let no one delude himself that this makes for the dry as dust academicism which that approach often involves. On the contrary, this Elizabethan "As You Like It" provides as entertaining and rewarding an evening as any we are likely to encounter in the Little Theatre. The almost total absence of scenery and props (Cecil Pym's admirable set is that of an Elizabethan stage) has enabled the producer to concentrate on speech, gestures and grouping -- with results that are as welcome as they are successful.
> All the leading players speak Shakespeare's glorious lines with remarkable clarity and understanding and most of them move about the enlarged stage with freedom and grace. There is a spirited briskness about the whole production that never allows interest to flag and makes the most of the play's humour.

The necessity of vocal technique

Van der Gucht was insistent on the extensive benefits -- both to the teacher of speech and the actor -- of mastery in speaking Shakespeare. (Readers may well like to consult her article 'Shakespeare's Verse and the Actor' in Occasional Papers and Reviews (1987), which is to be recommended for its good sense and breadth of references.) Naturally a production is the best opportunity to work at vocal interpretation, and here she insisted on sense as well as aesthetic quality; however she did not focus on vocal interpretation over and above the interpretation of the whole meaning of the play -- through physical staging and costume, character delineation and movement, and the orchestration of the total effect.

Introducing school children to Shakespeare

Van der Gucht taught not only University student casts through her Shakespeare productions. Hamlet (1959) and Antony and Cleopatra (1960) were also performed to many scholar audiences, both in the Little Theatre and on short Peninsula and Boland tours. In marked contrast to some of the other reviewers, W E G Louw of the Burger noted this with appreciation, and specifically chose to watch a performance of Hamlet attended chiefly by Afrikaans-speaking scholars. After mentioning several of the production's weaknesses, by way of contrast he then accurately sums up the benefits to the young:

> ...dié gehoor, ondanks die voor die hand liggende taalmoeilikhede, (was) aangegryp.
>
> Op dié verhoog -- knap gehanteer -- het die vir die gewone Matriekleerling enigsins verwarrende opeenvolging van onsamehangende tonele, één deurlopende geheel geword. (Die skerm is slegs twee keer getrek.) Op dié verhoog het gebeurtenisse wat tot dusver slegs aanwysinge in 'n boek was, lewende handeling, met kleur, beweging, kontras en ritme geword. Op dié verhoog het die woord van Shakespeare geklink, soos dit reeds eeue lank in alle beskaafde lande van die wêreld geklink het.
>
> Vir baie van dié gehoor was dit miskien hul eerste Shakespeare-opvoering. Vir dié wat weet, is dit nog altyd die enigste geldige manier om so 'n drama -- of dit voorgeskryf is of nie -- werklik te begin begryp. (27 Mei 1959)

> [This audience, in spite of patent language difficulties, was captivated.
>
> On this stage -- well done! -- this slightly confusing succession of unrelated scenes became one continuous whole for the ordinary Matric pupil. (The curtain was only drawn twice.) On this stage, events which until now had merely been indicated by a book, became lively transactions with colour, movement, contrast and rhythm. On this stage the word of Shakespeare resonated as it has echoed down the centuries in all civilized lands on earth.
>
> For many in this audience it was probably their first Shakespeare production. For those who know, this is still the only constantly valid way to begin to comprehend such a drama -- whether or not it is a setwork. (27 May 1959)

Van der Gucht would surely have heartily endorsed these sentiments. I have no doubt that it was the touring to schools initiated by Theatre for Youth -- of which she was Chair and which I discuss fully in Chapter 4 -- which was the impetus to the Little Theatre to bring in school audiences for the Shakespeare plays. The value of this has subsequently been proven at Maynardville, where Cecilia Sonnenberg and René Ahrenson first directed a Shakespeare play in 1956.

In summary therefore, when Van der Gucht directed in the fifties she was a teacher first and then a director -- the educational choices pre-empted the aesthetic ones.

The mid-fifties see some important changes

On 1 October 1954 Van der Gucht was promoted from the status of Lecturer to Senior Lecturer on personal merit. Her own file in staff records notes that her new post is not part of the permanent establishment of individual departments. (While this ad hominem promotion was an honour, it was hardly surprising since in 1951 the Board of the Arts Faculty had recommended that the Head of the Speech Training and Dramatic Art Department be a senior lecturer, and that there be a 'Chair of Drama to take over and expand existing Drama course for B.A.' (Minutes, 12 April 1951).) In fact her staff at that time consisted of the two full-time assistants, Mills and Taylor; Leonie Pienaar for Afrikaans speech, Dorothy Green for Speech Therapy, and Cecil Jubber for Broadcasting on a part-time basis.

Van der Gucht, the British citizen, was becoming increasingly entrenched in her South African career and life -- a South Africa increasingly dominated by an Afrikaner Nationalist ethos -- far from the English mores to which she was used. In fact the Nationalist government had been returned to office with an enlarged majority in 1953 and was resolutely pursuing a policy of *apartheid* -- which affected what happened at the University. On the one hand conditions improved, for in 1953 'coloured' students could be admitted to the University for the first time. However in other spheres of education, facilities were increasingly segregated. Within these constraints Van der Gucht did the best she could to offer educational opportunities on as broad a front as possible.

The mid-fifties was also a time of change for her friend Prim Stevenson for she became engaged to be married. Van der Gucht was delighted but her mother was furious and wanted nothing further to do with Prim -- who was taken aback, to say the least. After all these years, it would seem a hard way to treat one of her daughter's closest friends. Perhaps Mavis Taylor's remark to the writer is appropriate here, 'What she (Florence) wanted out of Van was for her to make the right marriage' (Interview). In this respect Van der Gucht was not only a disappointment -- as it seemed she frequently was to her mama -- she was a downright failure. But time cooled Mrs Van der Gucht's indignant spirit and her daughter begged Prim to 'please come and have a drink with mother, and bring George with you' (Stevenson, Interview). And they did, and Florence was very impressed with George Crighton -- perhaps because of their mutual enthusiasm for cricket -- and the breach was healed. After all, Florence could boast to George Crighton of her nephew Paul Van der Gucht who was being schooled to Captain the MCC.

In the mid-fifties Van der Gucht suffered a kind of loss as well. In December 1955 she played in Leonard Schach's production of Tiger at the Gates by Jean Giraudoux -- along with Gretel Mills, Hansell Hewitt, Bertie Stern (of the Masque Theatre, Muizenberg), Neville Dubow (now a professor at Michaelis School of Fine Art); and that was the last time she acted at the Little Theatre. Her mother was eighty-five years old and almost blind. She needed her daughter's help more, and Van der Gucht told me in a

conversation in 1982 that she had to cut down her activities in some way, and acting seemed to be the most expendable of them since it took her out at night more than was absolutely necessary; and so she gave it up.

TRAINING TEACHERS OF SPEECH AND DRAMA

During the fifties, all those students with whom Van der Gucht worked on productions she was also training to be teachers of Speech Training and Dramatic Art. (Apart from the Teacher's Diploma in Speech Training, there were also the few students who enrolled for the Special Endorsement for Holders of Primary Certificates -- which course was only of a year's duration -- but it followed a similar, if truncated, format (Faculties of Arts and Science Prospectus, 1950).) Method of Teaching was studied in the second and third years and students practised teaching school children in the main. From extensive enquiry conducted on this subject, a clear pattern of this Method of Teaching curriculum emerges which is set out below in a point form summary.

The purposes and/or content of the teaching task:

1. Inform pupils concerning the production of vocal tone and the functioning of the organs of speech.
2. Using the knowledge gained in 1, correct and improve the quality of the pupils' speech with respect to clear, Standard English (and Afrikaans -- in the case of bilingual students) pronunciation.
3. Practise, improve and facilitate pleasing vocal tone and expression by implementing the knowledge acquired in 1 and 2.
4. Through aural training, make pupils sensitive to, and knowledgeable about, poetry of different ages and authors.
5. Provide methods which facilitate group skills and intra-group communication.
6. Develop the imagination by providing the stimulus and the opportunity for its use.

7. Develop dramatic skills in the pupils by the enactment of dramatised stories, improvised and scripted plays; and involve the children in play production.
9. As part of the above, introduce physical and vocal characterization, dramatic shaping and interaction.

Practising how to teach in the schools

The instructional format was that Van der Gucht lectured (informally) to her relatively small group of second and third year students on methods of teaching -- including play production with school children. At the same time the students would go into schools to observe professional teachers at work. Mrs Lily Jean Satusky, who taught at Good Hope Seminary in this period, was frequently host to her friend and colleague Van der Gucht's students. They would be recommended to reference books and would bring back into lectures with Van der Gucht their observational notes and ask any questions to which these gave rise. In the third year they would commence teaching and would frequent, in groups, a number of Cape Town schools for this purpose, where they would watch the occasional demonstration lesson given by Van der Gucht. They would also watch their classmates teach and try it themselves. In this context, as discussed in the previous chapter, each student's tutor had the task of visiting their allocated students at the schools and refining the student's teaching skills. Cherry King says:

> We went to those schools who would have us; they tended to be the modern, experimental schools, who allowed us to take the children outside, move the desks, make a noise; they didn't simply think of us as disrupting the school and the pupils. (Interview)

In fact the schools who hosted students changed little -- give or take one or two -- from the forties through to the sixties. In the fifties it was usually Oakhurst, Micklefield and Rustenburg Girls Schools in Rondebosch, Simon van der Stel and Greenfields towards Wynberg; and for senior pupils Observatory, Good Hope Seminary and Zonnebloem College. The reader will notice at once that the schools were mostly white and mostly girls' schools. By the nineteen-fifties, school education in the Cape Province was racially segregated. In 1905 the Cape School Boards Act had made primary schooling compulsory

for 'white' but not 'coloured' children. In 1951 the Eiselen Commission devised the notion of differentiated 'Bantu Education'; and the Bantu Education Act of 1953 excluded the missionaries from 'black' education -- which in effect meant the exclusion of many 'white', well qualified teachers. Separate schools, of very varying quality, were provided (or not) for 'white' English, 'white' Afrikaans, 'coloured', 'Indian' and 'black' children; and where at all possible, each race group was to be taught by teachers of that group. Paradoxically, in 1953 'Non Whites' were admitted to Universities. Van der Gucht's students however who were nearly all 'white', were usually therefore preparing for teaching posts in 'white schools'. Probably Van der Gucht found it easier to link up with headmistresses than headmasters when finding schools because they were the ones who favoured Speech Training for their pupils. Perhaps the more frequent use of girls' schools was more by accident than design -- since none of the past students made the point to the writer and many expressed surprise when the observation was made.

As a junior school pupil in the early fifties at Oakhurst in Rondebosch, I experienced Speech and Drama classes with students on Teaching Practice at first hand. We -- the pupils -- eagerly looked forward to the arrival of the Speech students (sometime after the school year had started) for then the dramatisation of stories and poems, the making up of plays would begin. And the 'lady in charge' (Van der Gucht) was always there, mostly observing the student teacher and our class from the edge of the activity. In this context my memories of Van der Gucht are vivid. She was an extremely upright figure, but in no way bold. She wore a macintosh that hung rather shapelessly to well below the knee, and small, neat, sensible shoes. I remember our class rehearsing the story of 'Tandaubwe, the Spider' (Elliot) when I was in Std One. The story of Tandaubwe's growing power as a spider fascinated me and I loved the clawing movements I made. I remember 'entering' as Tandaubwe and becoming conscious of this figure watching us purely by the power of her concentration and her approval. She loved watching the drama unfold even in this naive form, and we the school pupils -- young as we were -- could feel her presence and her enormous interest. When she commented on the work we had done she said useful intelligent things, not all of which was usually complimentary, but she communicated to us

a belief in the doing. It seemed to me then that she had a funny voice, unpitched and squeaky yet deep -- a rather uncomfortable voice, and so she had to make expression beautiful in spite of it, but this was not always successful, and yet she conveyed a sense of beauty in what she said.

Van der Gucht's lectures

Cherry King had this to say about Van der Gucht's Method of Teaching lectures:

> There was a lot of emphasis on format; what you were going to teach, for what age, in what shape. You had to go according to the format which included the title of the lesson, its aim, what steps you take to achieve your aim and then how you round up the lesson.
> Points for discussion arising out of this were how you presented your lesson, whether you stuck to your intentions? your approach? your material? improvements you might have made? (Interview)

Colleen Fowles's Method of Teaching lecture notes, taken from the lectures of Van der Gucht in 1958, verify Kng's statement and nicely demonstrate the emphasis Van der Gucht placed on the precise techniques whereby the content could be communicated to and comprehended by the children. I shall now quote extensively from those notes, drawing particular items to the reader's attention by means of my comments *in italics*. (The full text of Fowles's lecture notes are in Appendix D)

> 2/4/58.
> Method of Teaching -- elements of it.
> 1) Sub A -- Std 2 one's approach is through games & stories.
> 2) Std 3 -- 5. more formal in approach.
> 3) Std 6 -- 10. very formal.

Attention is drawn to the variation in teaching technique required for different age groups.

> A danger is everyone playing around and no concrete work is done.

At the start of the lecture Van der Gucht alerts her students to the foremost difficulty in teaching an oral subject. One of her particular strengths was her ability to think and discuss clearly and intelligibly, kinaesthetic processes such as speech teaching, and make herself

understood and the teaching context therefore a little less vague for the student. This is probably why Astri Muldal said, 'So much of what she said has stuck' (Interview)

a) Aim is to get fluency and flow from the children's speech.

Van der Gucht gave the whole picture before she dissected it up into parts.

b) Encourage speech books from an early age but don't let it become a writing lesson. Can provide typewritten copies.

Again, Van der Gucht is concretising what tends to be an ephemeral subject. She is also suggesting a time saving solution to the potential danger she has suggested. Now she develops this further:

c) Children like finding and writing their own exercises.
d) Good idea to have a class speech book [*to which the whole class contributes*]
e) *[Speech*] Sound of the week *[for practise*].
f) Pictures to illustrate sounds and poems.

Now she introduces methods of starting the lesson:

Relaxation
Aim: To clear the mind of what has gone on before, make the children receptive. Hilda Adams books.

Notice the reference to a text; later in the same lecture she refers her students to a particular London bookshop. Now she offers the student ways to make what she attempts with the children actually work in practice.

Do not expect the children to stand for too long. Dont go on for too long with one exercise. Choose relaxation exercises carefully.

Having then dealt with relaxation and subsequently breathing, she goes on to introduce vocal tone:

Introduction of the Note.
a) Breathe in and give them a hum if you can set a note for them.

Many students, especially when faced with a class of small children, may well have difficulty producing a true note.

> b) Small children -- make them be aeroplanes, bees etc.
> c) Never make them go up the scale let them go down. Range of work is from A - C. Children find[ing] "ing" sound hard must be encouraged to make their voices ring. They need resonant practice. Don't make them shout resonance, or lower pitch, or get coarse and harsh.

In the above we notice Van der Gucht passing on knowledge about resonance in the voice. She is clearly anxious that her students should avoid doing more harm than good! More advice about teaching technique follows. In the experience of the writer there are many students who believe that, 'If I've taught it, (i. e. if I have said it out aloud in the classroom) then the children have learnt it', and it is difficult for such students to distinguish between their activity as a teacher and the children's activity as learners, so Van der Gucht says,

> Learn to listen, don't do it yourself.

Below, we notice the introduction of the notion that learning is a social activity -- that the teacher needs to identify herself with the task she sets for the class -- that the teacher should not make her own desires the 'raison d étre' of teaching:

> Always use "we" not "you" and "I".

From these notes we thus can see that Van der Gucht was painstaking and -- on a content level -- simple, in her guidance on teaching. The thread running through the lecture is the marriage of the content with the experience (and learning readiness) of the pupils. There can be no teaching without pupils and there can be no teaching without subject matter. There can be no good teaching where there is no good marriage of pupils and subject matter. This point is so obvious yet it is very easily forgotten; and then, for example, the would-be teacher marches off down the corridors of history leaving her class languishing in their Std 7B desks several centuries away, and no effective teaching has been accomplished.

The content of the Speech and Drama curriculum for schoolchildren

Throughout the fifties, while the foremost topic of lessons was Standard English speech sounds and vitality of expression, it was a love of the language and a joy in using it in verse, prose and drama, which received much focus. Cherry King says:

> If you picked up that the 'oo' sound was poor, then that is what you focused on. Your lesson was a theme; your aim was speech correction and improvement. What Van would have liked was freeing the body [and] the mind. Teaching good speech: you could come and do something and speak it perfectly but that wasn't what it was about. You must convey the meaning of what you said so that it doesn't only sound good but you also understand what the poem was conveying.... Get the child to experience the word, the sound, the rhythm, develop the senses so that [they develop] a sensitivity and awareness ... of colour, sound, shape, so that when they (the pupils) are saying something they can see it in the mind's eye -- use their imaginations....
>
> They loved acting things out -- their bodies were incorporated by this. For those who weren't allowed out of their desks one did something in rows. (Interview)

During the decade a gradual movement in the Speech Training work from the formal, exercise structure to a teaching method which employed more imaginative strategies, is discernible. On her American travels Van der Gucht met Winifred Ward and Geraldine Siks who presented her with their books.[6] Colleen Fowles's method lectures mention their freer, more improvisatory approach and her file also contains summaries of parts of Peter Slade's Child Drama who was the first really influential British exponent of an improvisatory approach to the teaching of Drama. However the evidence reveals that with respect to Van der Gucht's students, a shift towards improvisatory drama depended upon the disposition of each student who varied the structure to suit her individual talents. The pity of it is that, in the absence of any South African journals, The South African Speech Teacher having ceased publication, these shifts of emphasis were only as widespread as could be disseminated by word of mouth.

Pam Gundle summarises the content of the syllabus as Standard English, Choral Verse, Improvisation, which she says was:

> for developing imagination, for getting the children to communicate, and talk out their ideas -- that were not 'school structured' -- so it was not necessary always to give the right answer. Schooling was very structured, and here they could say what was important to them -- it was innovative in its time, you know. (Interview)

Sheila Weinrich attended a course convened by Van der Gucht in 1950, where she talked on play production and play making with children. Weinrich's record of Van der Gucht's lecture sums up her teaching on these questions briefly and simply:

> [The] child in Primary school [is] a group animal & not ready to be put on the stage and shown off. Everything should be done to improvise and act out [his] own play in the classroom and in its own group. The teacher should guide and direct a little. Children [should] not be introduced to scripts till 10 or 11 yrs. Not learn parts before this. Should be their natural imaginative selves acting out a fantasy of their own. Mime in groups, not individually, should be encouraged as mime plays such a big part in their education and development.
>
> Children of tender age strain their voices when put on a stage too early, & they lose the fantasy & enjoyment of acting.
>
> After 10 yrs. can introduce plays but even then it would be better to keep it to the classroom, & build up plays on scripture, history etc. Then child more ready to take part in the school play, technique & learn Shakespeare about 14 yrs ... & develop their acting and creative ability.
>
> In secondary group the school play helps a great deal as it forms the basis of marvellous co-operation. The more in it the better. Drama [is the] place where all arts can meet, and in Secondary School all sections of the school should co-operate.
>
> Speech work should combine with Drama plus mime.

Finally Pam Gundle says that Van der Gucht 'started to teach what would be called D I E: we taught History and we taught it through drama' (Interview). Colleen Fowles's lecture notes bear this out. In the section devoted to the secondary school, it is suggested that there are 'types of creative dramatics', 'quick improvisations' on the one hand, a 'finished and polished play' on another, and working around a theme as the third. Fowles records:

> Give a choice of subjects -- idea - story - history etc. Great Trek (or) 1820 Settlers.
> a) Family - story of them trekking - what are they - Father, Mother, children etc. Put up on board with names.

> b) Start - children will give ideas - child intrigued with a chair that went thru (sic) great trek. Granpa tells the child about it - What is Granpa like - looks, walk etc.
> c) Home with these trekkers - what were they doing. Clothes, implements etc, waiting for news as to whether they are going on the trek or not. Father arrives & says "Yes" to go soon - Packing etc. Granpa insists on taking chair.
> d) Native attack - stylised to prevent chaos. Chair stood on for shooting etc.
> e) Neighbours come over & have a party end with dancing. (Method of Teaching, 1958)

We can thus safely assume that the curriculum consisted of speech education, interpretive speaking of poetry, creative dramatics (or improvised drama) and playmaking. The straight forward simplicity of the notes above is typical of Van der Gucht, and apparent in her article 'Notes on Choral Speaking' (1947), and in the notes taken by Fowles on Story Telling (see Appendix D).

The question of quality

Commenting on the stark simplicity of the Teaching Method course itself, Avril Chiat says:

> The Diploma courses were quite thin. You wrote these little papers on voice; but it didn't really compare with doing (for example) an English 1 programme. In terms of practical time, you can't compare it with the theory loading in a B.A. We learnt from the practical ... the basis of our teaching was always linked to play and our experience. We moved during my training, away from rigorous speech teaching towards an imaginative basis for the lesson, movement, choral verse were important....
>
> I never really thought how I trained, it was sheer participation in the classes. In the teaching we were told one, the level of the class; two, we had to know what we were doing; and three, we were told to go ahead and do it. (One had to) be prepared, equipped, punctual; there weren't great theories. (Interview)

Joan Seeliger goes even further:

> The Course? It was really inadequate. Teaching was largely about -- take a few vowel sounds and weave a lesson around them. You repeat the sounds as often as possible and you repeat them right and you dramatised stories; that was about it as far as teaching skills went....
> I remember Van going on endlessly that we had to read; which made us feel as though reading was something other people do and not as though reading belonged to us. (Interview)

Seeliger gained her Diploma with distinction so it possibly would not be accurate to say that her disparagement arose out of a lack of interest. Inevitably therefore, if the content was so simple and straightforward and without sophistication -- in marked contrast to Van der Gucht's training for acting -- one wonders why this teaching course made such an impression on students. The suggestion is that it was not so much the course as Van der Gucht's influence upon it. But Fowles says that 'of the teachers that were there (in the Speech and Drama Department) I can remember the least of what Van taught me.' And yet she also says:

> I wasn't a serious student until my final year and yet I enjoyed the course, I was very happy. Any teacher that can actually give an education and a student can say it was one of the happiest times of my life -- that is really great. (Interview)

Teaching the student, rather than the subject

Perhaps the experiences of Avril Chiat provide something of an explanation:

> What was particular to me was Van's interest in individuals. I was at Goodhope Seminary where the Headmistress, Thelma Tyfield (an English teacher) invited her to tea to discuss my future. Lily Jean Satusky worked at Good Hope and was a friend of Van's -- that's probably how the tea party came about. I was very keen on drama, speech was my favourite subject and I was good at English. The Headmistress wanted me to choose an area of study with due regard to what would serve me best. The drama didn't have the academic credibility. I subsequently did both -- a BA with an English major and a drama Teacher's Diploma over four years. While I was in the Speech and Drama Department (1956-1959) I was the only student to do so. Maybe that funny little tea party was the motivation for me to make it work.... (Van der Gucht gave) tremendous encouragement, but she rapped you over the knuckles if you did something careless or which lacked preparation. (Interview)

In contrast to her remarks about the course, Seeliger has this to say about Van der Gucht -- which bears out the importance she had for students:

> As a student I idolised her... she was enormously just. What shone for me was her integrity, I never heard her say anything that was not totally honest.

> What surprised me about her was that, definitely in our year, she had favourites and less than favourites... Van had enormous insights, but she had a couple of blank spots. (Interview)

The evidence overwhelmingly suggests that at this stage Van der Gucht took a particular interest in some students, perhaps two or three in each class. She tended to be more demanding and harder in her criticism of these students than of others. Although not in every case, they usually were aware of her particular interest. Chiat said, 'I was one of her favoured daughters, she kept close tabs on everything I was doing'. It can be argued that this favouritism was part of a paternalistic approach to her educative task at this stage. Authoritarian role models had been a formative part of Van der Gucht's development so it is hardly surprising that she -- probably both unconsciously and consciously -- groomed young people in whom she spied a particular talent for leadership in the spheres of education and theatre. Chiat says 'when I did Masses and Man (Ernst Toller) she sent a letter wishing me well and saying that it was the first time a student had done a full length production before graduating' (Interview). Does the idea that Van der Gucht had favourites imply that other students were disadvantaged? Again, the evidence suggests that she was too fair for that; however there is little doubt that some students irritated her -- and these poor lasses no doubt received rather more than their fair share of the acerbic side of her tongue. Van der Gucht would not have been human if she had not had her preferences. On the other hand there was many a floundering student in need of personal help or support on whom Van der Gucht spent every kindness and consideration. Prim Stevenson said, 'Van loved people, the contact (that her work gave her) with people, and, in many cases, making people. She was determined that the good that they had was going to be nurtured at drama school' (Interview). And perhaps she made such a powerful impression on her students because, as Pam Gundle says:

> Van's strength was opening one; by questioning, allowing experiment, allowing interpretation. She was the only staff member who listened to the students. She listened carefully, she listened behind the question -- to what you weren't saying and so she allowed each one to grow in their own way -- (and so) she touched one's spirit....

> There's superficial teaching which most people do and there's a sort of spiritual teaching which lasts for life....
> The strength of her teaching was that she imbued in her students a belief in themselves and what they were doing. She taught the most difficult thing of all; a self confidence, a sense of worth by her intrinsic belief in us, by her positive instruction. She rooted out anything that was untrue.... Through this came confidence and positiveness, she was quick with her praise, you were nice and relaxed in her honest appraisal. Students would rely on her to get them right -- with teaching, acting, personally -- her door was always open. (Interview)

Avril Chiat puts a rather different slant on it, but makes a related point when she says:

> She was an enormously vital person. She influenced me enormously because of her positive approach; she did anything, she was totally independent -- that kind of involvement and interest I found an inspiration. Talking about America: [Van der Gucht's 1957 Carnegie study tour] I became excited by her international flavour. For example, she observed some training schools where they separated movement and voice training [into separate departments entirely], and she found their categorization of the various facets [of theatre work] extremely strange. However, what she did say: she recognised that everybody is different; she recognised the positive in it, and she pointed out that what she observed in some centres might not necessarily apply all over America. [Thus she signalled to me] temper your judgements with discrimination. She was very fair, very democratic. I trusted her implicitly, respected her enormously.

It is clear therefore, when discussing Van der Gucht's teacher training, that not only the curriculum but also her interpretation of it and her interaction with her students when engaged in this teaching task, must be examined. Let us summarise the chief points raised in connection with her Method of Teaching course so far.

The curriculum and the hidden curriculum interact

The didactic skills which Van der Gucht emphasised included those related to lesson planning, the collection of material suitable to the age of the pupils, and teaching skills to conduct the lesson responsibly, effectively, and logically. Bearing the above in mind, the aim in the educative task was to make the lesson meaningful for the children. This was achieved by making the student notice the interplay of the pupils with the content of the lesson -- or the inadequacy thereof; or the lack of content with which pupils could 'play'; or the deadening effect of too much content. Thus the indivisibility of content and method -- what the student was teaching together with how it was being taught -- received

constant emphasis. This was teacher training for the acquisition of skills and techniques, to enable the teacher to conduct a satisfactory lesson. However, what lifted this curriculum above the level of the utterly pedestrian, was, in the opinion of this writer, Van der Gucht's hidden curriculum. Dr J R Kriel, in his book, Innovation in Higher Education, concludes his enumeration of the facets of the hidden curriculum by raising a point which is relevant to our discussion. He says:

> But it is especially the manner in which the teaching staff fulfil their teaching and professional role before the eyes of their students that has the most dramatic and formative affect on those students, projecting to the students an image of what education, his chosen profession and even life itself is all about. (quoted in Education Newsletter, February 1984, Finbarr Murphy)

As much as Van der Gucht's curriculum was concerned with improved English speech and the development of the powers of the imagination and verbal expression; speech training and drama was also concerned -- in her view -- with validating the children's very existence in the world. She believed in reinforcing their social bonds, their innate value -- just because they were people -- and celebrating the act of living by reenacting it again in a spirit of celebration. Past student Pam Gundle's comment bears this out:

> People who were never taught by her were taught by her -- through her students. She imbued a sense of world value and if she'd gone into any other profession she still would have imbued a sense of the value of human life. That was the gift she had. She wasn't so much a teacher as an organizer -- she got other people to do the teaching and she imbued them with faith in the doing. Would you say, for example, that Albert Schweitzer was a great doctor? And yet he changed the philosophy of the people around him. In the same way Van enhanced the philosophy of the people around her. (Interview)

Thus, although we can see that Van der Gucht's Method of Teaching course was straightforward, its simplicity can not discount its value.

Making changes and travelling

While Van der Gucht was busily engaged at the university, various pieces of Group Areas legislation were passed which had the effect of partitioning South Africa -- mostly to the advantage of the 'white' population. In 1956 the 'Coloureds' finally lost their vote, African women were made to carry passes, and the infamous 'Treason Trials' (which were to drag on until 1961) commenced. 1957 saw 'Die Stem' become the only official national anthem, and the Union Jack no longer official. Libraries, cinemas and theatres became segregated which fate the Little Theatre narrowly escaped, but for the bulk of theatres in South Africa this legislation was to have a profound effect -- which did affect the Speech and Drama Department.

However 1957 was a year in which Van der Gucht's personal horizons expanded for she was the honoured recipient of a Carnegie Grant of $2500 for travel in the United States. In her application to the University for study leave, she said that she wished to be in the U.S.A.

> to visit various universities to study 1) how Speech and Drama Depts are organized & what teaching methods are employed 2) University Broadcasting Stations 3) to ascertain what part the University theatres play in the life of the students and in the life of the community in general. (10 February 1956, Staff Records)

It is hardly surprising that Van der Gucht should wish to see American Drama Departments since her Department was such an anomaly at UCT because the main expertise was practical. Neither she nor any member of her staff contributed to the lectured part of the BA course in Drama (under the Directorship of Professor Inskip (French)); rather they contributed practical sessions. (Perhaps Van der Gucht herself never offered to lecture on the BA course because she did not have a degree. However within the Diploma courses she did a lot of lecturing in Theory of Voice Production, History of Theatre, Play Production and Method of Teaching.) But as we have seen in this chapter, Van der Gucht was developing so outstanding a practice of Theatre and Teacher training that in the 1951 Five Year Development Plan, approved by the Arts

Faculty on 12 April of that year, there is a motivation for 'two additional lecturers in Speech Department to enable institution of Performers' Course alongside Teachers' Diploma Course', and a recommendation for a 'Chair of Drama to take over and expand existing Drama course for B.A'. Thus it would seem that at this stage the Arts Faculty at UCT could accept a Department in its midst whose expertise was almost all practical and wish to develop that and a theoretical side; but could the University? None of these recommendations received the University's approval. However in spite of no increase in staff, in 1955 the University approved Van der Gucht's recommendation to institute a Performer's Diploma in Speech and Drama. In her memorandum she said:

> No extra staff would be required .... I recommend that during the first two years, the course should be exactly the same as that for the Teacher's Diploma. During the 3rd year, instead of practice teaching in the schools ... on Mondays and Wednesdays in the mornings [acting, production, movement, property and costume making] be substituted. (Arts Faculty Board, Minutes 26 April 1955)

However it must be acknowledged that this first attempt at a Performer's qualification was not a huge success as students quickly realised that there was little point in taking a Performer's course when you could get a teacher's qualification with the Teacher's Diploma and enjoy just as good acting opportunities as you had with the Performer's course -- the two Diploma courses were too similar (Gundle, Interview). Nonetheless Van der Gucht had gone ahead and instituted a Performer's Diploma training in marked contrast to the usual practice in Britain, but in line with the practice in the United States. Small wonder then, that having taken so novel a leap, she should be very eager to see how others managed with somewhat similar situations. In this light her report submitted to the Dean upon her return from the United States makes interesting reading:

> I spent three weeks in New York visiting professional Theatre Training Schools and studying methods of production, and then started on a tour of the country.
>
> I visited Drama and Speech Departments in universities and colleges in all parts of America. I had opportunities to listen to lectures, attend rehearsals in university theatres, watch technical and practical work being done, and learn something of the organization of American Drama and

> Speech Departments and their relationship to other departments within the university.
>
> I also saw community theatres at work, radio and T.V. departments, and the broadcasting of educational programmes by the universities. I saw some most interesting work in the field of remedial speech. I observed classes in schools and was particularly interested to learn of the stress laid by educationalists on Public Speaking, oral training, and Drama.

When she arrived in England from the U.S.A., she went straight to Bristol and visited the Drama Department -- one of the few in the UK which was attached to a University -- and saw a public performance by the students. Her report continues:

> I was also in touch with the major drama schools in London. I attended some lectures at Stratford-on-Avon on the plays being presented this season, and saw four of them.
>
> I finished as a delegate to the International Conference of the Federation of Societies for Theatre Research which was held in Venice. Papers were read on Methods of Research, the influence of the Commedia dell' Arte, and the use of Music in Drama. About fifteen countries sent delegates -- many of whom were from European universities.

So Van der Gucht tried to find precepts and ideas that would serve her Department's particular interests back in South Africa; and rightly so because the developments she brought about or was party to, have greatly influenced the discipline of Drama at UCT. Today (thirty years later) fifty percent of the three year Drama BA major is still taught by lecturers from other Departments within the Arts Faculty, and although the Drama Department staff has been increased over the years they are still considerably engaged with practical study of theatre.

There were other course developments in the later fifties which we should note. In the area of Broadcasting the acquisition of a suitably composed BA took increasing prominence over the Speech and Drama Diploma, until in 1958 the requirement to take the Diploma was discontinued, but practical classes in the Speech and Drama department were highly recommended. Male graduates were assured of a year's probationary employment at the SABC upon completion of their degree.[7] At the Education Faculty the Higher Primary Teacher's Certificate broadened to include special training either in Speech and Drama, Art, or Music. Students who elected to take this additional course

had the benefit of working at the Drama Department for three years in the afternoons (whereas students taking the Primary Endorsement only studied Speech and Drama for a year). The Education Faculty (in collaboration with the Speech and Drama Department) offered this course throughout the sixties and it produced confident primary teachers who had Drama as a special skill (see Faculty of Education Prospectus, 1959, pp.6-7).

Causes for gloom

Towards the end of the decade a shadow was cast over the Department by the illness of Gretel Mills. She suffered through several years but she continued to teach, although less and less movement -- sitting on the floor of the movement room, with her back to the heater to relieve the pain. And she continued to direct plays until nearly the end of the decade. Van der Gucht assisted her with her production of Schiller's Mary Stuart (1959), and in May of 1960 Van der Gucht was fortunately able to obtain the services of Robert Mohr (who until then had only acted as external examiner for Van der Gucht) to substitute for Mills. Gretel Mills returned to England on sick leave, and died in 1962.

The end of the decade was also darkened for UCT by the Extension of University Education Act which made four new 'ethnic' universities a reality -- thus further entrenching racism and divisive thinking.

And the world was darkening for Florence Van der Gucht -- now ninety years of age and blind. In the next decade this was to prove a real challenge to Rosalie Van der Gucht's seemingly limitless resources.

4. DRAMA ACTIVITY OUTSIDE OF THE UNIVERSITY

In addition to her work as Head of the Speech Training and Dramatic Art Department at the University of Cape Town, Van der Gucht devoted considerable time and expertise to other avenues of work. As we have already seen in the forties, she was an active and contributing member of amateur dramatic societies in Cape Town. Thereafter the most significant 'extramural' work she undertook was in the area of children and young people's theatre. In 1951 she started a branch of Children's Theatre Inc.

CHILDREN'S THEATRE

In an unpublished report written by Van der Gucht in the eighties when she became most anxious that a record should be made of Theatre for Youth, she says:

> The original concept of starting an organisation to present plays particularly geared towards child audiences came from Johannesburg. Celia Evans pioneered a society called Children's Theatre which began its activities in the late '40s [sic] -- early '50s. Many well known Johannesburg people were associated with its direction including Mary Tilley, & Pat Storrar .... Children's Theatre staged many excellent, artistic productions at the Library Theatre, put on with professional polish & directed & acted by professionals.... The children paid quite (for those days) high prices to come & the aim was to encourage an interest in theatre by providing them with good entertainment. C.T. decided to expand its activities. They asked me to try to open a branch in Cape Town which would be run on the same lines. I called a meeting, held in a room in the City Hall.... A large number of people attended & from them we formed a Committee & Children's Theatre was launched. We were financed from Jo'burg & any profits had to go back to "headquarters".

Patricia Storrar, in Beginners Please -- her history of Children's Theatre -- says:

> Miss Rosalie Van der Gucht ... was providing some excellent productions for young people before the Children's Theatre came into being. As long ago as 1947 she wrote to Miss Evans: "We will certainly do all we can to further Children's Theatre work in Cape Town". (p63)
> ...

> Between then and the end of 1950 she visited Johannesburg several times, saw two Children's Theatre Productions, and met and became friendly with several members of the Johannesburg Executive Committee. Inevitably there was little discussion as to who should take the chair of the Cape Town Branch ... Miss Van der Gucht it was. (p64)

Since Patricia Storrar gives a comprehensive report of all Van der Gucht's activities in connection with Children's Theatre, little purpose will be served by repeating it here. However the reader should note that she makes it abundantly clear that Van der Gucht was the significant force behind the work of Children's Theatre in the Cape:

> Miss Van der Gucht took the chair all the more cheerfully because she had, thanks to her own personality and high reputation, the support on the committee of such people as Professor Donald Inskip ... the late Dr. William J. Pickerill, ex-Director of the Cape Town City Orchestra, Mr. Joseph Urdang, attorney and shrewd Treasurer of the branch, Mrs. Rita Maas and Mrs. White (Pauline de Wet), well-known actresses, Mr. Stephen de Villiers, director of puppetry at the Frank Joubert Art Centre, and Mrs R. M. Lowe [sic], secretary of Oakhurst School at that time and a keen contender for the title of 'most indefatigable worker on all fronts for the cause of Children's Theatre'. (p.64)

A full record of the productions staged by the Cape Town branch of Children's Theatre is contained in Appendix C at the end of this text. The list clearly supports the impression that the single linking factor behind all activity was a degree of input by Van der Gucht. She invited or persuaded her colleagues on the University staff, fellow educationalists whom she met at schools and Training Colleges, past students and friends, to direct and act. They had to sit on the committee and then they had to arrange the performance tours. They had to book the halls, transport the cast, sell the tickets, provide tea for staff and parents accompanying the children, sometimes even make the costumes and paint the sets. But Van der Gucht did the same. There was nothing that she asked others to do that she did not at one time or another do herself. Storrar says:

> Miss Van der Gucht herself, in addition to holding the reins unobstrusively in the background of every production undertaken in the five years, produced two of the most sucessful shows. The first, in March 1952, was an

> Arena Variety entertainment which was taken around to five primary schools.
> ... Miss Van der Gucht's report on it stresses that there was a great deal of active audience participation.... She was convinced that this type of work should become a regular feature of the Children's Theatre. The cost of the production was low ... and it was exciting to see the extent to which the children 'lived' the story. The late Miss Gretel Mills, whose highly successful arena production of Pinocchio was toured to four suburban halls in October, 1955, was just as excited about the value of arena-type entertainment as a means of firing the imagination of a small child....
> Miss Van der Gucht's second production was the most ambitious undertaking of the whole five years -- a presentation of Benjamin Britten's Let's Make an Opera, in the Labia Theatre in October, 1954....
>
> This letter is typical of many received from school teachers: "... I was most struck by the extraordinary effect of spontaneity -- as if one could have gone up from the audience and joined in. I feel the children were most fortunate to be able to see such an interesting production and am quite sure they would like to join me in thanking you." (pp.65-6)

In her Theatre for Youth report Van der Gucht herself also picks out Let's Make an Opera as significant -- in part because a very young Nicholas Wright played the 'Little Sweep'. She also mentions Hermien Domisse's production of The Princess and the Swineherd at the Labia, and about James Ambrose Brown's The Three Wishes she says, 'This had a cast of excellent Coloured actors, was played in Woodstock Town Hall to audiences of White and Coloured children (no demurs) & was toured extensively in Coloured schools'.

However, January 1956 saw the end of the Cape Town branch of Children's Theatre. In the same report Van der Gucht writes:

> We found in the Cape that our policies & aims differed somewhat from those of C.T. in Jo'burg: it was difficult to administrate a branch with head quarters so far away. We therefore decided to withdraw & with the approval of C.T. Jo'burg -- we started our own society in 1956.

THEATRE FOR YOUTH

> We decided to call ourselves "Theatre for Youth". Our aim was to widen our activities & to bring to children of all age groups & from all cultures, every kind of theatre -- in order to develop discerning audiences, to awaken critical faculties, to make them aware of moral and social problems and to give them live, interesting entertainment. We never aimed at training them

> for the stage & only rarely had them in the plays. (Van der Gucht, Theatre for Youth report)

Theatre for Youth carried on quite smoothly from where Children's Theatre had left off and the intended 'broadening' of the activities is immediately apparent since the first two ventures were for senior school children. The first was a tour of a Little Theatre production of Pygmalion, and Van der Gucht directed the second: a playreading of Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra, staged at Rondebosch Boys High School (RBHS) in August 1956 -- which was later made into a tape recording as well. (See Appendix C for a full catalogue of the ventures undertaken by Theatre for Youth.)[1] Van der Gucht asked Joan Seeliger, who had just graduated, to read Cleopatra opposite Joss Ackland's Antony and Frank Spears's Caesar. Seeliger said, 'Her intellect was what impressed me -- one was awash in a sea of words and with one or two pointers she made it all clear to me' (Interview).

With the same clarity she conducted the Committee meetings where a long agenda would be worked through, yet with as much discussion as was felt to be necessary for any particular point. Colourful and 'mousey' personalities comprised the Committee and opinions (ranging from the sentimental to the sententious to the sound) were wont to lurch -- or fly in perfect freedom -- back and forth. In my imagination I can still hear Van der Gucht's distinctive, rather arched inflections making a clear pronouncement to the Committee. Her voice was bold, absolutely 'there', well resonated and deep: the perfect, English articulation making quite clear what was intended. She had a speech mannerism which her students delighted in imitating: she would complete an idea or statement -- especially on a topic about which she felt strongly -- by pronouncing 'There' with a lengthened sound and a definite, falling inflection. I suspect this vocal mannerism carried both symbolic and literal meaning, for this is how she put her ideas, her wishes, her opinions out into the world, 'there' .... Although the effect of that expression upon her listeners was often comic, nonetheless it was evidence of her commitment to her opinions, of her engagement with the present interaction. In this way she contributed to the Committee meetings, providing useful suggestions, up to the minute information; and

with characteristic logic and succinctness, sweeping the cobwebs of generalization and hearty vaguery out of the planning process. The minutes of the first meeting reflect appropriately Van der Gucht's utterly unpretentious practicality:

> THEATRE FOR YOUTH
> MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 22nd MARCH, 1956 IN MISS VAN DER GUCHT'S ROOM AT THE LITTLE THEATRE AT 8 P.M.
> The members present at this meeting had met to discuss 1) Pygmalion and 2) the formation of a company to take the place of Children's Theatre in Cape Town.
> PYGMALION. Miss van der Gucht reported that certain difficulties had arisen in regard to the "tour" of Pygmalion. One of the lead players was to leave Cape Town immediately after the run of the play at the Little Theatre. It was difficult to replace him and a re-shuffle of the cast would be necessary.
> Tentative dates suggested were:-
> Friday, 27th April - RBHS
> Saturday, 28th April - Wynberg BHS
> Mrs. Low and Mrs. Jayes undertook to contact High schools in the Rondebosch area; Mr Lorie was to be asked to arrange the performance at Wynberg.
> Expenses were estimated at £40. This included Royalties, Transport and Little Theatre fee.
> Tickets were to be 2/- and 3/6d. as usual.
> CORRESPONDENCE. The Secretary reported that no further letters from Children's Theatre, Head Office had been received to date.
> NAME AND REGISTRATION. The members present decided that the name "Theatre for Youth" be adopted and that Mr Urdang continue with the Registration of the Company and the Articles of Association etc. etc. Signatories were decided upon:- Mr. Leyds, Prof. Inskip, Miss van der Gucht, Mr. Lorie, Mr. Urdang, Mr. Chambers.
> NEXT MEETING It was decided to hold the next meeting on 24th April at the home of Mrs. Kooy in Rosebank.

The minutes are signed by Van der Gucht. Van der Gucht was chairperson of Theatre for Youth in 1956, and for thirteen years from July 1959 until 1971. There is a strong sense in which the organization was 'her baby'. Yet it would not have lasted for nearly thirty years without the support of her colleagues, friends, and past students whose interest, enthusiasm and involvement she was able to sustain. Peter Henshall said:

> I had always had a vague kind of dramatic interest, which was entirely under-utilised at school, but which teacher training college gave me some opportunity to develop. Shortly after I left there I saw an advertisement -- they were needing people to be in Mary Stuart and I went along. Gretel Mills who was directing was sickly and Van was helping her out. Here I was, a callow youth who had no training and yet she (Van der Gucht) was

> very accepting.... She treated everybody as an individual, she pushed you just that little bit further ....
> And from Mary Stuart she invited me to come along to a Committee meeting of Theatre for Youth. I stayed because I was interested, and got foisted with all these 'impractical' jobs -- like Treasurer for which I, by temperament, wasn't suited at all! (Interview)

Robin Malan puts this most aptly in a short paper entitled 'Rosalie Van der Gucht and Theatre for Youth' which he wrote in 1985.

> "Miss Van" had an astonishing ability to gather around her people from a wide range of backgrounds and interests, to harness and use their varying energies in the joint pursuit of something in which she believed. TFY was no exception....
> ...
> For Van would "rope in" anyone who seemed useful, with scant respect for the careful compartmentalising in which many of us feel and find our security. If she felt you had anything to offer that could be useful to young people, she pulled you in. If you were a good carpenter, you could make a puppet theatre for her; if you could sew, there were costumes that needed making; if you knew a dance, you could come and teach that to her actors; if you knew something about flowers, you could come and tell the company that was doing a Kirstenbosch Fantasy all about that; if you could count, you were just the person to sell the tickets and run the box-office.
> And, once you were in, there was no mistaking the fact that you were in, and, in Van's terms, that meant you were committed .... if there was a point in doing it for and with young people, you could be sure that Van would find someone to do it, would fire that someone with initial enthusiasm, would then be sure to phone at astonishingly early hours of the morning to see how you were getting on, would badger and cajole and sometimes get positively angry if it wasn't all moving as fast or as well or as educationally soundly as she felt it should, and would be sure to be the first person to come and tell you how it had all gone down and what was right and what was wrong with it, and immediately suggest the next project...

The veracity of Malan's report is borne out by the present writer. I was a member of CAPAB's first young people's theatre company Playround Workshop, founded by Malan in 1971. On occasion he would arrive at rehearsals ruefully bemoaning a truncated sleep. The reason: Van der Gucht had phoned him, and he would curse himself for saying 'yes' to yet another project she wanted undertaken!

The essence of the working method applied within Theatre for Youth was teamwork. Van der Gucht was leader of the team and very good at it. The ethos evoked loyalty and shared responsibility along with individual initiative. As Malan's report so nicely

demonstrates, personal skills and strengths were exploited for a cause in which all on the Committee believed. Some Committee members remained active for twenty years. During the fifties and sixties a fine balance was maintained between the 'groups' which, I earlier suggested, comprised the Committee of Children's Theatre, and, after 1955, the Committee of Theatre for Youth, namely Van der Gucht's colleagues, educationalists whom she met in the schools, past students and her personal friends. Naturally these 'categories' frequently overlapped -- especially after people had worked so much together on Theatre for Youth projects.

FRIENDS AND CLOSE ASSOCIATES

Van der Gucht took her students to Oakhurst to do practice teaching. In the course of these regular visits she had the opportunity to get to know the school secretary Madge (Johnny) Low 'and immediately decided: she was keen, reliable and we are going to work well together...' and indeed they did (Stevenson, Interview). Mrs Low was at the inaugural meetings of both Children's Theatre and Theatre for Youth and for twenty years she provided Van der Gucht with highly efficient, essential administrative assistance -- largely enabling Van der Gucht to keep so many projects in Theatre for Youth afloat simultaneously. She was an invaluable link with schools and the schooling system. Highly energetic, politically active, Johnny Low was a vibrant woman with wide interests; of whom Van der Gucht wrote:

> Her wise counsels, her organising ability ... her knowledge of company law were always at hand.
> But her greatest contribution came from her own fine character. She combined a sense of humour and fun with steadfast loyalty and integrity of the highest order... ('Tribute to Johnny Low')

Not surprisingly, a good friendship developed between the two women. By means of this sort of combination of friendship and vision Van der Gucht formed the branch of Children's Theatre and sustained the activity thereafter. These enthusiasts later became

close associates -- even good friends; and were Van der Gucht's peers. It would be fair to assume that while some sat on the Committee through committment to the cause, there were those who served because -- as Peter Henshall says -- 'they just liked the woman' (Interview). These members provided the essential, sometimes highly responsible, oftentimes 'unartistic' services. While Van der Gucht herself frequently dealt with press publicity, others from the enthusiatic band would undertake the myriad other administrative tasks which staging (generally) touring play productions entailed. A non-profit making company had to be instituted, halls had to be booked, ways round the entertainment tax had to be found, school principals had to be interested, money had to be found -- on more than one occasion by holding a rummage sale -- posters had to be printed -- for in this way audiences had the greater likelihood of being assured.

Apart from calling upon Stevenson's talents as a musician, her van was much in demand to transport actors, scenery and scripts back and forth across the Peninsula. Henshall says, 'Prim didn't hold any kind of high profile at all, but she was the sort of person upon whom Rosalie could depend: sensible and rocklike; and Van did depend upon her' (Interview). Not one to seek the limelight; with the occasional unavoidable absence of Van der Gucht, Stevenson frequently became Chairman or Vice, as the occasion warranted, and carried through the decisions of the Committee -- daunting or light though the tasks may have been. And Mrs Hodgson made tea -- at performances, Winter Drama schools -- wherever the thirsty congregated. Mr and Mrs Jayes were indefatigable workers as were Mr and Mrs Chambers, who stored Theatre for Youth paraphenalia, literally, for years. From Mr Chambers's office the tape recordings of school setworks were distributed -- even after he had left the Committee.

Down the years however, many of these 1951 founder members left the ranks of Theatre for Youth and the new members coming in in the sixties were perhaps a decade -- or more -- younger than their Chair. Friendship with folk considerably younger than yourself can be close, but it is rather different, perhaps a little less fun for both parties -- especially when you are someone who is wont to take your responsibilities rather seriously. Perhaps the point may be illustrated by a story with which Robin Malan on

more than one occasion has regaled the writer. He tells (with huge delight) of the notorious Committee meeting which was dominated by Van der Gucht's expression of her excitement at Stephen de Villiers, because he

> has this marvellous erection. I went to see it the other day and really I think it will suit our purposes admirably: it's such a neat little erection, and so easy to transport... Robin perhaps you should go and have a look...'

According to the story, the young at the meeting could not contain their mirth so that Van der Gucht was forced, rather ruefully, to conclude that they did not take a portable puppet-theatre seriously at all, and the more she tried to convince them the sillier they seemed to get about it...

EDUCATIONALISTS

In her report Van der Gucht says, 'We worked largely through the schools. We were lucky in having several educationalists on our Committee .... who worked for nothing ....'. Indeed the involvement of school teachers was considerable and largely filled the unrelenting need of clerical assistance. Mr Arnold Lorie of Wynberg Junior School hosted the Committee meetings in his flat in Kenilworth for over a dozen years. A quiet man, he unctuously welcomed the members into his sitting room and then retired silently to a chair in the corner where he remained until it was time to serve the tea. In later years he sometimes did not even remain present for the business of the meeting, yet still he served the tea; and each meeting concluded with the Chairman's gracious thanks to him.

Miss Ritter, 'a stick-like lady'-teacher at Observatory, was the intensely hardworking treasurer for much of the fifties (Henshall, Interview). Mrs Jones, for many years a teacher at Oakhurst and later Headmistress of Rustenburg Junior, was a watchdog for educational standards -- 'her opinions were important to her' says Henshall. Betty Mitchley, a short bundle of energy who was Std 5 teacher at Oakhurst for many years, took over the extensive secretarial work of the Winter Drama School from Colleen

Fowles. Others from schools were Mr Ulster, who organised performances at 'coloured' schools with admirable efficiency. Mr Doug Brown of SACS was welcomed onto the Committee in 1960 along with his colleague, Peter Henshall who took office -- first as 'public officer', then as Treasurer and finally (after Van der Gucht) as Chairman from 1971 to 1983 (Henshall, Interview).

COLLEAGUES

Through much of the fifties and sixties Professor Inskip was on the Board of Directors, sometimes sat on the Committee, and at times even took the Chair. The minutes bear witness to his considerable skill at serving and promoting the interests of Theatre for Youth without undercutting the interests of the Little Theatre in any way. Van der Gucht was involved in the same operation. Many times it was students of the Department who acted in Theatre for Youth touring plays, or Little Theatre productions which, after the Theatre run, were toured for Theatre for Youth. In these instances, a fine balance between the education of the students, publicity and revenue for the Little Theatre, and the educational value of offering theatre to children -- throughout the Peninsula and Boland -- was arrived at by the dexterous management of Van der Gucht with Professor Inskip's excellent assistance. Everybody knew that Theatre for Youth was a company not for gain, so nobody was going to grow rich -- and indeed nobody did. But an enormous number of children and Theatre for Youth workers were enriched.

Other colleagues who were active in Theatre for Youth were Matine Harman, whose programme Rhythm in Movement and Sound was devised and toured to Cape Town schools, Zonnebloem, Paarl and Wellington Training Colleges, the Strand, Paarl and Stellenbosch and the Little Theatre. She and Mary Suckling -- a reputable Cape Town Ballet teacher -- staged a pageant of ballet, mime, narration and music for the Kirstenbosch Jubilee Celebrations. Gretel Mills adapted some of Geraldine Elliot's animal stories and, with a cast comprising some students and some professionals, Kalulu the Cunning Hare was toured to the Gordon's Institute in Mowbray, and halls in

Brooklyn, Sea Point and Muizenberg in 1956. Taken every year by my school (Oakhurst) to the Theatre for Youth productions, I saw Kalulu the Cunning Hare at the Gordon's Institute, as I had seen The Tinder Box (1952), Toad of Toad Hall (1953) and Pinnochio (1955). Kalulu the Cunning Hare was presented in the three-quarters round to about five hundred junior primary children at a time. I remember the production clearly for its absorbing plot and distinct 'animal' characterizations. There was a duiker who was afraid of everyone and everything while another of the animals -- probably Kalulu himself -- was arrogant, reckless and thoughtless, lumbering bumptiously around the playing area in a way delightful to any child's sense of fun. In movement and speech the actors captured parallels of human 'types' which every child knows; and this child became utterly absorbed in the different responses the animals manifested to experiences in common. The effects were so lifelike that much 'laughter of recognition' was provoked. One also had the opportunity to advise the animals and assist them or not as the case may be -- because there was a good deal of audience participation both of a physical and a dialogical kind. There was no set or lighting at all that I can remember but the animal costumes were bold, and designed to be both attractive and interesting. Perhaps it is worth pointing out that the influence of these productions on the present writer was seminal. They (especially Kalulu the Cunning Hare) and others that will be discussed further on in the text, have proved to be invaluable models -- 'springboards' for my own development within the sphere of educational children's theatre.

PAST STUDENTS

For dramatic expertise and creativity however, Van der Gucht chiefly enlisted the assistance of her students and past students and she received it unstintingly.

Acting

During the fifties it would be unusual for a student to complete her Diploma without performing in a production that was either staged by or toured for Theatre for Youth. Says Colleen Fowles:

> The Speech and Drama Diploma first year students were always in the Theatre for Youth productions so they had a double usage. Van thought it was an acting experience for us; it provided theatre for children and it used first year students in production. As students, we were just told that there will be this production; we were auditioned and the director would cast you and everyone was involved. Such were: Magic Lighter (1957), Hansel and Gretel (1958), Circus Adventure (1958), Holes in the Soles (1959), Seraphino (1959), during my time as a student; although Circus Adventure and Seraphino were done in the school holidays and there was more choice about those. (Interview)

The touring opportunity was exciting for the young students and gave them a chance to experience the particular magic and rigorous demands of playing to children. But students contributed in more ways than simply acting.

Directing

With the advent of the National Theatre Organization (in the late forties), Brian Brooke (who came out to South Africa after the war and ran a theatre company from the Hofmeyer) and Leonard Schach (who -- after serving an 'apprenticeship' in the Little Theatre as acting Controller, director and improvisation teacher -- founded his professional theatre company, The Cockpit Players, active at the Labia and Hofmeyer theatres from 1950 to 1962); students from the Speech and Drama Department could hope for professional employment as actors for the first time. As a 'producer', work was more uncertain and more likely to be obtained ad hoc. Here, Theatre for Youth's need for directors gave some of her former students an early opportunity to try out their skills: although some directed for Theatre for Youth not because they needed the opportunity, but because they believed in the cause.

Jobie Stewart directed The Magic Lighter at Muizenberg in 1957; Nigel Hawthorne directed Hansel and Gretel for a primary school tour, and Helen Houghton directed Circus Adventure at the Labia Theatre in 1958; Marcia Berger and Elizabeth Coates directed The Silver Curlew for the Speech and Drama Department and a similar tour in 1967; and Janice Honeyman devised and directed Cape Parade Adventure for the Speech and Drama Department and Theatre for Youth in 1969 -- to mention only a few. While

still at school, Honeyman played the Witch in Mariel Dexter's production of Hans, the Witch and the Goblin (1963) for Theatre for Youth.

Tape recordings

Tape recordings of English setwork texts, hired out to Senior schools for study purposes, was another Theatre for Youth service made possible largely through the services of Van der Gucht's past students. Thus Cecil Jubber recorded Louis Macniece's Christopher Columbus (1953); Roy Sargeant recorded The Importance of Being Earnest (1966) -- he himself playing Ernest, and Van der Gucht playing Lady Bracknell with 'full projection, straight-on-mike throughout!' (Malan, letter, 9 March 1989), and Arms and the Man (1968). The Living Tradition : A programme of Senior setwork poetry (1967) was compiled and recorded under the direction of Avril Chiat.

The Winter School of Drama

Perhaps the most innovative way in which Van der Gucht's students and past students resourced Theatre for Youth was in the Winter School of Drama founded in 1964. The first seeds of the idea were sown by Mrs Margaret Saffrey in 1962 who suggested that Theatre for Youth conduct a winter holiday play group for senior primary children over a three week period -- leading to performance of a play. Arising out of Mariel Dexter's production of Hans, the Witch and the Goblin in 1963, Mrs Dexter suggested that Theatre for Youth start a creative drama group for senior pupils, since in her cast were teenagers who were very keen to pick up more theatre experience than was currently available to them at their schools (Minutes 29 April 1963). This happened to be the first committee meeting attended by Colleen Fowles and Robin Malan -- invited by Van der Gucht probably because she was hoping the idea would take their interest, and it did -- at least with Fowles. In the minutes of 6 February, 1964, stands the following:

> The Chairman (Van der Gucht) reported that the Sub-Committee had met to discuss a winter holiday drama group. It was decided that the course should be for 10 to 14 days, that pupils from Standards VII to X should be invited ... that a circular be sent to school principals .... The course would consist in lectures on such aspects as Costume, Props ... Creative Dramatics, Mime and Dance. There would be both morning and afternoon

> sessions with a possibility of a production incorporating all sections of the work at the end of the course. It was agreed that the course should be called the Theatre for Youth Winter School of Drama and that the fee should be R2-00.
> After the preliminary approach through the school principals the applicants for the course would be approached personally.

Mr Leeuwenberg (another educationlist to serve the needs of Theatre for Youth) hosted the Winter School at Cape Town High, and in those years when there was a 'performance' at the end of the course, it was generally staged in the Little Theatre. For the first six years the 'artistic' reins of the Winter School were held by Fowles and Malan. Staff members of the Department of Speech and Drama -- including of course Van der Gucht -- were routinely called upon to give guest lectures which they willingly undertook. And the general teaching staff of the Winter School each year consisted largely of past students of the Speech and Drama Department, such as Cynthia Balsillie, Avril Chiat, Brigid Bates, Valerie Shwer, Audrey Babrow and Johan Van Jaarsveld. Susan Broer was general director in 1969, and finally Astri Muldal took over the task from Malan in 1971.

When Van der Gucht resigned from the Chair, the resourcing of Theatre for Youth by the University of Cape Town's Department of Speech Training and Dramatic Art no longer happened on anything like the same scale. Of course those past students who were in Theatre for Youth in 1970 continued to be active and contribute, and individual qualifying students found their way onto the Committee; but the constant resourcing of productions with eager young first years, willing stage hands, loaned costumes and scenery and countless other small services no longer took place.[2] This 'withdrawal' by the Department happened not only because of Van der Gucht's resignation but at least in part because of the changing character of the Drama Department (see Chapter 5). The increasing performance- orientation of the training, and consequent heavy demands made upon students' time, made Theatre for Youth school tours -- while still just as worthwhile a theatrical experience -- difficult to fit into the schedule of students who were not fully determined to do so. And it can be surmised with some certainty that the number of students with a specific interest in children's theatre probably diminished in the sixties

when the performer's training was extended and prioritised and the Teacher's Diploma discontinued. Van der Gucht's resignation from active participation on the Theatre for Youth Committee only made the parting of the ways that much more apparent. Peter Henshall reflected:

> She had a base; she was able to feed in the students, the skills, the people.... For example when she did Tom Sawyer (1961) all kinds of people were involved -- school children, adults -- but she was able to pull out one or two people from the Department who provided a solid structure.... This seemed so much easier in the fifties because the Department wasn't as high-powered in its academic and theatrical expectations as it became in the sixties.

The Theatre for Youth Committee had a great deal of difficulty adjusting to the change. Henshall says: 'There was always that yearning, "Oh what a shame that the Drama Department is no longer as involved as it used to be...."' (Interview)

'CORPORATE PROJECTS'

Up to this point the portrait painted of Theatre for Youth has been through depicting the contribution of its members, because Theatre for Youth's strength lay in its members and its vision which Van der Gucht welded together. The minutes evidence her essential courtesy and her consideration for the variety of skills that members offered while she took pains to preserve quality and innovation. So indeed there were projects undertaken by the organization *en bloc* that were such a corporate effort that it simply is not useful to distinguish particular input, except to say that without Van der Gucht's presence they wouldn't have happened. Thus Teda de Moor's Bantu Theatre Company performed for school audiences in the late fifties and early sixties. This gave performance opportunity and a small income to the latter's company, and extended the theatre viewing of the school audiences. In the minutes of 14 August 1961 is written:

> The Chairman (Van der Gucht) said that Miss de Moor would be very much missed for the work she had done here in Cape Town when she left

> for Nairobi in November. She suggested that Theatre for Youth give her a party, towards the end of October, possibly in conjunction with the Little Theatre and this was agreed to.

The puppet plays of Stephen de Villiers (and his students in the School of Fine Art), Lily Herzberg and Keith Anderson found school audiences through Theatre for Youth; and in most cases it was Van der Gucht who made the initial contacts.

As with many productions before and after it, Brian Way's play on Elizbeth Fry, The Angel of the Prisons (1960), was staged and toured to Cape Schools by the Speech and Drama Department in association with Theatre for Youth. In association with Leonard Schach, The Miracle Worker (1961) was toured in the same way. I saw both of these as a teenage scholar at Westerford High School and they were my first exposure to theatre of an overtly 'educational' nature. Both were 'in the round' productions with no scenery, only stage set furniture, and informative at the most obvious level since they were about Elizabeth Fry and Helen Keller respectively, and they were thought provoking and intensely moving pieces of theatre. As with Kalulu the Cunning Hare they set a standard of theatre, this time for young people, which it has proved difficult, if not impossible, to surpass. Had Theatre for Youth not toured these productions, I would not have seen them at all.

Behind all these projects was Van der Gucht's energy. In essence, her skill, as a Chairman, lay in her ability to encourage and co-ordinate a number of different ventures within the single field of young people's theatre and drama without losing the threads of any of them or favouring one activity at the expense of another. For example in 1964, in the same months that the blueprints for Winter Drama school were being drawn by a sub-committee on which she sat, Van der Gucht was investigating taking a Shakespeare programme to primary schools. She was also encouraging Mavis Taylor -- who undertook to direct student Frank Lazarus' adaptation of the Beverly Nichol's children's novel The Tree that sat Down for the Little Theatre. She was also preparing a report on Theatre for Youth to be tabled at the International Conference of Children's Theatres (May 1964); and as Chairman, she was ensuring that arrangements were suitably concluded for a

performance of Bantu Theatre under the new direction of Mariel Dexter. Perhaps it was this ability to pay attention, contemporaneously but in diverse directions, which accorded her the reputation of being so fair; and which the relatively inexperienced people working under her found so encouraging. Implicit in her style of leadership was the assumption: in as much as I am doing my job as Chairman, so you are doing yours. Such trust drew the best from many of the young members.

LATER DEVELOPMENTS

Because Van der Gucht headed the University Speech and Drama Department and sat on the Board of the English Drama Company of CAPAB at its inception, she brought to Theatre for Youth an understanding of what its contribution was in the light of other theatrical activity in Cape Town. When the Performing Arts Councils were started in 1963, at a Theatre for Youth Committee meeting, 'Miss van der Gucht said in reply to a question that the Performing Arts Council would probably take over a lot of our usual work in the High Schools with regard to prescribed books' (Minutes, 14 October 1963). From this time on her awareness of how the work of Theatre for Youth complemented, extended or duplicated other work on offer in Cape Town (by CAPAB or whoever) is reflected in the minutes. Perhaps the reader may wonder why Van der Gucht was unable to effect some official linking of Theatre for Youth to CAPAB. The reasons are quite complex. Colleen Fowles and Peter Henshall aver that Van der Gucht wished to see links being forged (Interviews). It is surely significant that Peter Curtis, who frequently played for Van der Gucht at the Little Theatre (as Peter Craig), should have employed Robin Malan, who had worked so closely with Van der Gucht in Theatre for Youth, to start a young peoples' theatre company; and that Malan should have received a bursary from CAPAB as well as the Cape Tercentenary Foundation to study overseas in 1971. And yet linking of the two organizations did not happen. As a member of Malan's company it was soon clear to me that CAPAB found Malan's leadership style, 'poor' theatre, and open-ended, negotiatory interaction with young audiences simply too 'experimental'. CAPAB

chose not to continue the venture after its initial six-month try-out; and Malan took up a lectureship at Stellenbosch University. In his work at CAPAB, Malan had one very important intention which was also a *sine qua non* of Theatre for Youth (and had in part led to the break with Children's Theatre, Johannesburg all those years ago): performances for young audiences should be made as accessible as possible. 'Open' theatres should be used where possible -- hence the use of the Woodstock Town Hall and the Gordon's Institute; theatre must be taken to the children -- hence the tours; theatre must employ the imagination of the child audiences -- hence the simplicity (in almost all cases) of the staging. These aspects of production were definitely a priority for Van der Gucht and had certain repercussions. To keep costs down, a lot of the work for Theatre for Youth was done for nothing or very little. While Van der Gucht's personal friends and some of her contemporaries were happy with this, later on young people -- who had been professionally trained by Van der Gucht for the theatre and teaching -- became involved in Theatre for Youth and they wanted remuneration for their services; but Van der Gucht balked at this (Fowles, Interview). So those who worked for Theatre for Youth were in most cases those who could afford to work for nothing because they had other remunerative work or sufficient (paid) leisure. In effect this meant that the most talented people -- for example Robin Malan -- had only the vestiges of their time to contribute, and Theatre for Youth's activities were of necessity curtailed once the involvement of students diminished in the mid-sixties. Paradoxically therefore, Theatre for Youth's 'openness' came at a high financial price and could only be afforded by some. Colleen Fowles puts it like this:

> Van would not go professional: everyone had to do everything free of charge. Then she started introducing more of us who were trained and wanted to be paid and she couldn't accept that; she really hassled about everyone wanting to be paid. (Interview)

Fowles goes on to describe the implications of this and elucidates how the organization's democracy -- for which I have claimed so much -- had certain crucial provisos:

> What happens is this: these (kind of) people are too controlling: Theatre for Youth was a very small elitist organization. We were always thin off the ground; we never, for example, had enough publicity. The women who were in it had no connection with theatre: they liked the idea of it and they worked very hard, and they liked Van. (Interview)

Another repercussion is that it became increasingly apparent that the 'child-centred' orientation of Theatre for Youth and its low key / low budget image was not what CAPAB had in mind for Children's Theatre at all. With the benefit of hindsight it now appears as if Theatre for Youth became a kind of 'alternative' organization doing children's theatre. For example, the puppet work continued because CAPAB did not do any. The production of tape recordings which could reach more schools (and not only 'white' ones), than even the most extensive CAPAB tour, was increased. In 1964 some first year Speech and Drama Department students undertook a tour of 'coloured' primary schools with a programme of dramatised stories; and the Winter School of Drama was launched. For some however, Theatre for Youth did not take it's 'alternative' identity nearly far enough. Malan fought long and bitterly with the Theatre for Youth Committee to move the Winter Drama School out of a 'white' Government School to a venue which was open to all races, and to make it an open Winter School; but the move seemed just too radical in 1971 and so others took over the Winter Drama School from Malan. (Inevitably, a few years later, the School was made open and run from the Community Arts Project in Woodstock.)

Once it became apparent that CAPAB was not going to return to Malan's ideal of a permanent young people's company, Van der Gucht started to develop a new idea. In January of 1969 Limpie Basson devised and directed Fun and Fiddle-de-Dee in the Little Theatre for Theatre for Youth which was a delightful success. In August of that year, Van der Gucht suggested to the Committee that Theatre for Youth undertake a quite new responsibility, and employ Limpie Basson as a resident director for Theatre for Youth, for a minimum period of six months. In the 6 October minutes she pointed out to her committee that:

> The activities of T.f.Y. except for the Winter Drama School, had decreased rather than increased; that our programmes reached a smaller number of children than in the past; and that drastic measures were required if we were to spread and continue. She felt the financial hazard involved in employing a professional director of productions was of secondary importance to the opportunity we now had of taking a step, however small, towards our original aim of establishing a permanent children's theatre in Cape Town.
> The meeting agreed enthusiastically ...

Thus it was that Basson's services were enlisted. He said to the writer:

> Let me tell you the story of my Combi. When we were discussing my permanent employment, I told her (Van der Gucht) I wouldn't be able to do this without a vehicle to transport actors and scenery. I suggested that perhaps the University.... At some stage she said, 'Find a Combi and I will pay the deposit for you'. Without blanching Van put the money down; she paid a third [of the purchase price] with her personal cheque. (Interview)

So in 1970 Basson directed and toured Robert Bolt's The Thwarting of Baron Bollingrew, devised and directed an Afrikaans programme for English primary schools called 'n Potjie met Suurpruime, and together with Pat Kingsley-Hall, compiled a programme on the 1820 settlers called They came to No City. CAPAB loaned Theatre for Youth two actors, and an extensive tour was undertaken to schools all over the Cape. However the initial grant from the 1820 Foundation was not renewed; and performances during school hours in 'white' government schools were restricted, by order of the Superintendent General of Education, to one per day; so for financial reasons it was not possible to extend Basson's contract, and that first step towards a permanent theatre did not become a stepping stone.[3] When I went to interview him on 17 November, 1988, Basson said reflectively:

> Van probably wanted me to take over Theatre for Youth on a professional basis and I didn't do it... I have never thought of it till now ... I think I let her down a bit, but I am not an organizer. If I had had a small group of like-minded people around me, it would have taken off. (Interview)

Knowing Van der Gucht's sense of responsibility it is very likely that as she neared retirement, she tried to plan for Theatre for Youth's continuance; but passing the lead to

Basson was not to be. In fact Theatre for Youth did continue until 1985,concentrating chiefly on the Winter Drama School and touring Theatre in Education programmes (the administrative structure for which Theatre for Youth was well qualified to provide). By the time Van der Gucht resigned as Chairperson of Theatre for Youth she probably felt she had done what she could for the cause of young people's theatre. Whether her work in this area was too unassuming and undemanding of public acclaim, too simple and not worldly enough to achieve financial backing or institutional accommodation for her small band, we can but speculate. But the merits of her approach bear noting. While she was a powerful leader, the Committee process was essentially democratic, and it was full of humanity.

A MEMBER OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN GUILD OF SPEECH AND DRAMA TEACHERS.

'She held us together for all those years you know ...'

(Conversation with Sheila Weinrich, 3 August 1988.)

As before the war in London when Van der Gucht was elected to the Council of the Association of Teachers of Speech and Drama (founded by Fogerty), so in 1946 immediately after the South African Guild of Speech Teachers was formed, Miss Van der Gucht joined and became an active member. Together with Sheila Weinrich she was a delegate to the second Conference in East London in 1947, and she and her mother motored up there in convoy with Weinrich (Weinrich, Interview). In the 'Proceedings of Conference' recorded in lively detail in 'The South African Speech Teacher', we see evidence of Van der Gucht's engagement in and enthusiasm for the issues facing the Guild. In those years its chief intentions could be said to be: to protect and raise the professional status of Speech Teachers; to disseminate new ideas and professional information amongst members; and to stimulate further effort towards speech correction, the teaching of good speech and improved quality in all the performing arts, especially theatre ('The S.A. Speech Teacher', Nos.3,4). For Van der Gucht these aims dovetailed

nicely into the training of her students and they were all expected to join the Guild upon qualifying and they did, and 'served with distinction' -- as Weinrich said in interview. Clearly Van der Gucht's relationship with and usefulness to the Guild had much in common with her relationship to the students of her Department. Weinrich put it like this:

> She was like a magnet to the Guild members -- she had so much to give us personally as well as objectively. Her clear thinking and honesty in approaching a matter was refreshing and authoritative....
> She drilled into us: no sentiment in business matters. (She was) autocratic, our mentor, our oracle; she would see so clearly....
> Even after her retirement she remained an active force in the Guild and was frequently called upon to attend an executive meeting [of the Cape Town Branch] so that she could advise the members re some difficulty. (Weinrich, Notes for Interview, Interview)

Weinrich recalled a workshop where techniques of teaching rhythm to young children were being demonstrated. Guild members were participating in the lesson in the place of a class of young children for whom the activities were designed. They were all

> ...chuffing round the room as steam trains or something like that, and nobody was doing it more emphatically than Van ... I can still remember her total engagement with the activity -- puffing and 'pulling at the whistle' -- and her enjoyment ... she would set the standard of participation for us all to follow (Interview).

The veracity of these remarks is borne out by the comments of other members (for example Harman and Muldal), and by a letter from the Secretary of the Guild on 25 October 1955:

> Dear Miss van der Gucht,
> UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA SPEECH EXAMINATIONS
> The Executive Committee of the Guild wish me to convey to you their thanks for the constructive way in which you conducted the above examinations this year .... We feel that the examinations need your experience in order to become well established and generally accepted.

Van der Gucht assisted with the formulation of the first UNISA examination syllabi (Van der Gucht, Tape recording, 1984), and she not only engaged with the task of planning and compilation, but typically she followed this up in practice. Throughout the years at UCT she was wont to take special leave to examine or adjudicate in different parts of the country -- not only for the Guild but for any local examining body. For example in 1949 she adjudicated an Eisteddfod cum Drama Festival for East London and Port Elizabeth (Faculty of Arts, Minutes, 29 March 1949) and in 1964 she adjudicated in Natal for the Federation of Women's Institutes of Natal, Zululand, East Griqualand and the Transkeian Territories -- to name two examples (letter, 1 December 1964). Van der Gucht served her turn as Chair of the Western Cape Branch of the Guild, and in due course was elected National Chair; but executive member or not, Van der Gucht faithfully attended meetings and workshops and was loyal, constructive, and supportive of the Guild's activities (Interviews, Weinrich and Harman).

Visiting lecturers

Ms Weinrich pointed out further:

> She was indirectly and/or directly responsible for visiting lecturers such as Hilda Adams, Rose Bruford, Maisie Cobby, Betty Mulcahy, Gwynneth Thurburn, Brian Way, Christabel Burniston, John Hodgson. (Notes for Interview)

By dexterous negotiation Van der Gucht generally managed to get such visiting lecturers to teach her students at the University, give lectures or workshops for the Guild, and sometimes direct a play for Theatre for Youth all in the same visit. In this way the visiting authority received the widest possible exposure and the expenses were borne by more than one organization. Van der Gucht did not herself necessarily do all the organizing for such visits; her contribution was rather in knowing who to ask, what they could contribute, and knowing the party in question personally so that the invitation was generally well received. For example, in Beginners Please Storrar points out that it was at Van der Gucht's suggestion that Children's Theatre, in collaboration with NTO, invited Jan Bussell and Ann Hogarth of the Hogarth Puppets out to tour South Africa -- which was a

huge success (p68). In 1953 Gwynneth Thurburn, then Head of the Central School in London, came out to do courses on Voice Production for students at UCT and the Guild. (She invited Van der Gucht to join her staff at the Central School -- without success (Stevenson, Interview).) In 1960 Brian Way came to South Africa. He ran a course for the Guild on Educational Drama and then commenced direction of his play, Angel of the Prisons with Van der Gucht's students. This is one of the productions which I recall so clearly as a school child. The following undated letter from Way closes this discussion, because it is a fitting tribute to Van der Gucht's work for the good of her community:

Thursday.

The Country Club,
Auckland Park,
Johannesburg.

My dear Miss Van der Gucht,

To someone like yourself it is never easy to say eye to eye what is in the heart to say, because your own modesty cuts short the words; also I am not very clever at finding the words I mean, when speaking. So I resort to the pen, to try to tell you what all you have done for me in the last month means to me, and to try to say thank you for it all.

Frankly, when I arrived in South Africa, I had feelings of such trepidation that all I wanted to do was cross from one plane to the next and fly away as fast as possible. Anywhere! Within 24 hours you had allayed, if not all, then at least the majority of these fears, so that I began to feel a little more secure, a little more confident and at ease. And my happiest moment came when one of you ex-students said to me: "None of this is new to some of us -- Miss Van der Gucht has been teaching the same thing for years". Then I knew that I was at least roughly moving in the right direction.

During that month in Cape Town I became more and more filled with admiration for all you do and all you have accomplished, and more and more aware of the spirit of animation, love, delight and straightforward gladness with which those who have had the good fortune to work with you look at that touch of fate. I feel so privileged that I am able to add myself to that number, all too sadly brief as the time may have been.

And for that I can only say "thanks" -- but it is the biggest word in the language. And the same word for all you have done for me socially, including your many kinds of help with my gropings to understand a little of the general situation over here. I could have asked for no wiser guide, because of your own wisdom and tolerance and understanding. Of course, I still have very little idea of all the ramifications, but I should be resting in unblissful ignorance except for your help.

I hope that all your work will continue to grow and prosper and bear fruit. And I shall always be deeply grateful for the oportunity and privilege of sharing a little of it with you.

With all good wishes,

Very sincerely yours,

Brian

5. TEACHING IN THE SIXTIES

During the sixties a new world took shape in South Africa which had its effect upon the universities -- in this case upon Van der Gucht and the Speech and Drama Department at UCT[1]. The change to Republican status, the Sharpeville shootings and subsequent bannings of the African National Congress and the Pan African Congress, the increasing use of censorship by the SABC, the Publications Control Board and the Bureau of State Security, polarised political opinions and accelerated protest activity -- chiefly amongst 'Blacks' but also amongst other people in South Africa. At the same time financial prosperity under the powerful Verwoerd government made University education more accessible for 'Whites'. Ironically however, as 'white' South Africans gained this opportunity for the world to open up, there were many ways in which it shut down. Some foreign governments closed the doors of their countries to South Africans, University autonomy within the Republic was curtailed, the South African Board of Censors 'cut' or banned plays, books, films and newspapers outright, and the playwrights' boycott prevented performance of some of the most exciting of those which remained. University students protested governmental interference into the universities and the curtailment of individual freedom by means of marches, all-night vigils and other forms of peaceful protest such as the American style 'sit- in' -- demonstrating a defiance of university authorities far more pronounced than had previously been the case. Some South African 'white' youth simply became disillusioned and despairing in their world view. But this loss of faith was not confined to South Africans; rather it seems South Africa was infected not only by events within the country's borders, but also by a growing disillusionment seeping in from Europe and America. Gene Feldman and Max Gartenberg open their book Protest by saying:

> Contemporary history writes itself in nouns: Fascism, Nazism, Communism, Spain, imperialism, Hitler, Stalin, nonagression pact, Pearl Harbour, Dachau, Hiroshima, Moscow, Yalta, Hungary, Suez ... names of violence

> and disaster, of guilt, betrayal, spiritual exhaustion. And superimposed on the experiences these words evoke is a formula whose awful significance may never be washed away: $E = mc^2$, the key to the Atom.
> ...
> Should man live a slave to illusions he knows to be untrue? Or should he tear down the false front that masks itself as his dignity and thereby enter into an existence wherein, through acceptance of his lone-ness and of the ever-present possibility of sudden death, he can find the potential for freedom and authentic identity? This is how the question poses itself to many young people on both sides of the Atlantic.
> In the United States of America, those "new barbarians" who have chosen the present as the compass of their lives are the Beat Generation. In England, with certain differences, they are the Angry Young Men. Both ... are social phenomena which have found increasing literary expression. (pp.9-10)

This sense of despair was to transform the theatre in South Africa as it had in Europe -- in spite of the playwrights' boycott. In the opinion of this writer it would even seem that in some cases in this decade events beyond the borders of South Africa evoked a more powerful theatrical response than the not inconsiderable events at home. Perhaps the ease with which people and plays (however tenuously associated with politics) were banned, discouraged overtly political playwriting and production. And so in many cases theatrical protests or new visions for South Africa were expressed in plays that were analogous, allegorical or illustrative.

The choice of plays at the Little Theatre reflects the times

This was certainly true of the canon of plays at the Little Theatre which were markedly different from those of the fifties, being more diverse, dark, and searching. Life's absurdity for the young, the gratuitous nature of time, and existential despair were frequently projected from the boards of the Little. Sometimes these plays echoed conditions in South Africa, but in many cases they focussed upon more 'universal' problems. The young and talented Robert Mohr and Mavis Taylor staged plays that were daring and provocative and zany. In combination with the contribution of the University Dramatic Society, who in this decade staged some twenty-two plays, the play canon at the Little recorded the spirit of its time. Notable productions were Mohr's The Sport of My Mad Mother by Anne Jellicoe (1961), Seppuku (1967) and Hamlet (1969). Take this in tandem with Taylor's One Way Pendulum by N.F.Simpson -- produced in the old SACS

hall 'in the round' in 1962, and Oh what a Lovely War (1969), and University Dramatic Society productions such as Robin Malan's 'Tis Pity She's a Whore by John Ford (1962) (which fairly appalled the public), Edwin Polakow's A Taste of Honey by Shelagh Delaney (1964) and Roy Sargeant's Volpone by Ben Jonson (1966) and the wilder, blacker world of the sixties theatre is immediately apparent. Still a Shakespeare play was produced every second year except for a lapse in the middle of the decade, but only Antony and Cleopatra (1960) which we have already discussed, was produced by Van der Gucht, which brings us to her contribution.[2]

AN ESTABLISHED HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

In June 1963 Van der Gucht directed Arden's 'Un-historical parable' Serjeant Musgrave's Dance, a strangely wry play concerning three soldiers who have deserted under the influence of their Serjeant. They flee to a remote mining town in the north of England, ostensibly to conduct a recruiting drive but in reality to crusade against the futility of war. The play reaches its bizarre climax when Musgrave attempts to convince the townsfolk by hanging upon a lamppost the skeleton of a young soldier -- recruited from the town -- who was futilely killed in fighting. The play employs an amazing variety of theatrical + devices: songs, episodic structuring, certain chararacters who are more symbolic than real, zany humour and some intensely poetic sequences. It would prove a challenge to any director, and although many did not understand it Van der Gucht made it her own. Of the play, Arden wrote in his introduction:

> I have endeavoured to write about the violence that is so evident in the world .... I think that many of us must at some time have felt an overpowering urge to match some particularly outrageous piece of violence with an even greater and more outrageous retaliation. Musgrave tries to do this: and the fact that the sympathies of the play are clearly with him in his original horror, and then turn against him and his intended remedy, seems to have bewildered many people. (p.7)

In a review for Varsity Roy Sarjeant, the then student reviewer voices his exasperation: 'This is the problem with *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance*: one cannot make many categorical statements without an opposing idea cropping up and niggling at one's mind' (18 June 1963). Apart from its theatrical sophistication, perhaps it was exactly the play's paradoxical quality which appealed to the director. In the years to come she was to prove herself a master of nuance, dramatic irony, and contradictory, essentially human responses. It was her grasp of the dramatic irony -- so well captured by Babs Laker's portrayal of Hecuba -- which made her production of the Trojan Women in 1968 so fine. But this is to anticipate.

While Van der Gucht did direct on a regular basis during the sixties, she handed over more of this responsibility to other staff, guest producers and even students.[3] (The diversity of directors of Shakespeare at the Little Theatre in the decade supports this point.) Indeed the quality of her leadership was rather different from that of the previous decade which essentially had been a 'bootstraps operation' for her so that by the end of the fifties she had achieved an established school of Speech Training and Dramatic Art. She had successfully integrated the activities of the Little Theatre into the life of the University so that students doing the BA Drama course were sufficiently interested and talented and experienced -- through participating in departmental productions -- to exploit this opportunity of exploring the theatre in the theatre to the full, and directors from among their own ranks were producing at least two productions a year with no need to invite in outside experts. Many of her Diploma graduates were going straight into employment either as teachers or actors and it was generally recognised that they were professionally equipped and capable. Thus, since she was less involved with setting a model for students, at a macro level Van der Gucht could afford to let her young Department grow up, her colleagues on the staff to set new trends, while she set her own particular example for this 'baby boom' generation. A woman well into middle age now she stood, as always, for constancy, honesty, respect -- the 'old fashioned values' -- and left it to her younger staff to set the tone for creativity and bold experimentation in consonance with the prevailing ethos. She never adopted the casualness of manner which

gained currency in the sixties, her students never referred to her in her presence as anything but 'Miss Van der Gucht'; she disapproved as strongly as she ever had done of any slackness, lack of punctuality or commitment. But while remaining steadfast to her values, she rigorously avoided any rigidity of approach -- which would have denied the core of what she believed to be the task of education. As Professor Taylor put it in her (recorded) address at the Memorial Service:

> She was a woman of very strong principles and very strong viewpoints. She may not have approved of someone's way of life or actions, but would never reject that person because of her viewpoint. I can remember several instances where people she loved behaved in ways which she found objectionable, rejected and which in fact was very difficult for her professionally. She told them her view but remained loyal to the person as a friend. (15 November 1985)

And in spite of the respect she commanded she endeared herself to students and staff. Taylor says:

> Perhaps her most endearing foible ... was her habit of ending sentences with 'there'. Student ... impersonators went to town on this one, but always with a very loving attitude. Often you'd see a group of people sitting listening to her and out would come -- at the end of a sentence -- 'there'; and there would be these idiotic smiles from everyone sitting around -- trying not to smile or giggle or whatever. (tape recording, 15 November 1985)

David Haynes said:

> Can I tell you my favourite 'Van story'? For some reason, I forget now why, she was on crutches; and one afternoon I saw her struggling across the Hiddingh Hall parking lot, and she called out loudly: 'Mr Mohr! Mr Mohr! There's something moving in my crutch!' (Interview)

While Paul Slabolepszy told the writer:

> She was at the cricket match when Mike Proctor hit five sixes in one over. She was in the grandstand and I was swinging in the branches [of the oaks]. Later we discussed that historic over, and she grew in stature in my eyes: she could discuss 'on drives' and 'lofted straight drives' with such authority. (Interview)

Departmental staff

As had been her practice in the previous decade, so in this one she observed the individual talents of her staff and actively fostered them. Robert Mohr had acted as external examiner of Van der Gucht's students since 1953. As luck would have it he was available to stand in during the sick leave of Gretel Mills in 1960 and 1961, and in 1962 Van der Gucht recommended (and the Arts Faculty approved) his appointment -- without advertisement -- as lecturer in the place of Mills, with full pension and furlough rights, retrospective to 1 February 1961 (Minutes, 7 August 1962). Mohr came to UCT with some highly innovative directing at Stellenbosch University to his credit. (In later years he was wont to lecture on the progression of his directorial interpretations of Hamlet -- the first being his production at Stellenbosch in the fifties.) He did the first South African production of Brecht's Mother Courage in a stepped lecture theatre at Stellenbosch, of which theatre designer Stephen de Villiers said, 'Allowing for the limited means at Mohr's disposal, in spirit, drive, and drama, I preferred his to the production by the Berliner Ensemble which I was fortunate enough to have seen in Paris' (Interview). Mavis Taylor opened the decade with a production of Arthur Laurents' A Clearing in the Woods which seemed to herald the start, by her, of some very exciting ventures into directing after many years in which she had concentrated on designing -- often for Van der Gucht. Van der Gucht encouraged these two, about which Taylor says:

> During the many years that I worked with her she helped me to find confidence to develop my work and urged me to express my ideas, my beliefs, my outrages, and take the consequences of my statements and actions. She encouraged me in my work and was interested in my career, suggesting plays she thought I could do. (tape recording, 15 November 1985)

Amongst the plays that Van der Gucht suggested for Taylor (Taylor told the writer in interview), was David Halliwell's Little Malcolm and His Struggle Against the Eunuchs (1967), which Inskip describes as 'a bare, sad, decrepit and passionate tirade against the "establishment"', which was 'a touchstone or a catalyst' for 'one outstanding success after another...' which Taylor has subsequently achieved (Forty Little Years p.110).

Van der Gucht was finally able to achieve a new junior lectureship in 1969, by foregoing some of her part-time assistantships -- one of which was held by Matine Harman. No doubt they discussed this development and no doubt Harman was entirely able to see the advantages of having a full-time movement lecturer for the students' training. Nonetheless her association with the Department had been a very long and loyal one and hers must have been quite a sad departure. Van der Gucht arranged a farewell function, for which Harman wrote to thank her:

> Oct 17th
>
> Dear Van,
>
> I just wanted to drop you a personal note to thank you for all the nice things you said about me on Thursday and also for the lovely gift which I shall treasure. I know it was you that prompted the ceremony & organized everybody and chose the gift. I was most touched.
>
> I do want to say how much I have enjoyed my work in and out of the department over 21 years! I found it stimulating and interesting. Your co-operation always, helped to develop me as an individual & in my work. You have been a wonderful 'Head of Department' (and still are) you always encouraged any experimental work and always made me feel that I was really quite clever! and the ideas worth while. You never condemned any project but always said "excellent, excellent go ahead"
>
> I could not have wished to work for anyone better. I shall miss the work and the association with the Department, but for your sake and the good of the Department I know you have made the right move.
>
> I shall always be willing to help you at any time and can only wish you luck and happiness and hope that our friendship will continue....
>
> With very much love
>
> Matine.

Van der Gucht appointed past student Tessa Marwick in 1968. Marwick had just completed her Teacher's Diploma from the Sigurd Leeder School of Dance in London; and it was she who, in 1969, obtained the newly created post. Marwick's innovative teaching methods and curriculum literally 'reverberated' (for her musical accompaniment

was very loud) through the Department with astonishing impact -- and with the full support of her Head of Department.

The four full-time staff were supported by the part-time staff, most of whom remained with the Department throughout the sixties. Joyce Burch tutored voice and acting, Dewar McCormack -- Broadcasting, Dorothy Bagnall -- Remedial Speech, Miss Spring taught mime, Marina Keet -- period movement, and Amelia du Toit taught Laban movement. Without the help of Gretel Mills, Van der Gucht took charge of the teacher training aspects on her own; so in addition to voice and acting tuition, she consistently taught Theory of Voice Production, Public Speaking, Story Telling and Teaching Method.

TRAINING TEACHERS

The changed times affected the curriculum of her teacher training in two significant ways. It affected the structure of the courses, which will be discussed in Chapter 6, and it affected the content -- which will now be examined.

Teaching South African English speech

When the decade started, twelve years had gone by since South Africa had had an English-speaking government. In 1957 the British flag -- the Union Jack -- and the anthem 'God Save the Queen' ceased to have any official standing as national emblems; but such small changes in cultural signifiers paled into insignificance in the face of South Africa's exclusion from the British Commonwealth. South Africa had lost its closest tie with the Western, English-speaking world and Afrikaner hegemony prevailed. Accordingly, views on 'what English is the correct English for South Africans' began to shift, with Van der Gucht in the vanguard. She had never been one to emphasise 'the Queen's English' for its own sake. And in the light of the changed ethos in South Africa, insistence upon 'a British Received accent' would have been reactionary. From her comment in Viva Voce in 1945: 'Many of ... (the South African students) ... have lovely voices and a strong feeling for words and rhythm, though a tremendous variety of accent

and grasp of English often proves a difficulty' to her response to W.S. Kaplan's criticism of her production of The Cherry Orchard in 1978, when he wrote:

> If Pacofs is an indication of the English spoken by the new generation of actors entering the profession, then there will be many ears that will have to be retuned. It is, of course, preferable for the actors to improve their vowel sounds. (The Argus, 3 March 1978)

and she replied:

> To me, of course, the speech of the actors was entirely acceptable. Their occasional Afrikaans intonation or stress did not in my opinion detract from the play. I cannot recall any words which were mispronounced.
> I think I have a sufficiently trained ear to rectify such defects -- if I had deemed them necessary. Incidentally three of the actors' first language is English. (The Argus, 5 April 1978)

Van der Gucht never stopped nurturing what she might have called 'good English speech'. Pam Gundle says that 'Van felt very strongly that children must treasure the English language and use it properly' (Interview). So Van der Gucht taught that clarity, audibility and intelligibility were the *sine qua non* of speech work because she wanted all speakers of English to be comprehensible to each other. Now this is not only a question of pronunciation; more importantly it has to do with grammar, the fluency and vibrancy of the speech, and its communicative quality. In a tape recorded interview with Dewar McCormack in 1984, she said:

> I think what's important is at any rate to keep it English that everybody's going to understand .... Sometimes I fear that, here, the speaking of English is deteriorating: not that I mind the varying accents but it's very difficult sometimes to know what they're talking about...

It could be argued that Van der Gucht's fears for the intelligibility of English were ungrounded or alternatively that she really wanted to change accents in favour of the English- speaking upper classes (see Dalrymple, pp.82-83). Certainly she always worked for pleasing, varied, vocal interpretation from her students and play casts -- in addition to

clarity and intelligibility; but from the evidence, the writer is not convinced that her intentions were supremacist. The question of speech pronunciation and accent is an area fraught with personal perceptions and prejudices. It is refreshing to have Daniel Jones preface the fourth edition of his The Pronunciation of English with this comment on his considerably revised third edition:

> And finally a new attitude was adopted in regard to the much-discussed subject of standard pronunciation. This was because I found, as I still find, that it can no longer be said that any standard exists, nor do I think it desirable to attempt to establish one. It is useful that descriptions of existing pronunciation should be recorded, but I no longer feel disposed to recommend any particular forms of pronunciation for use by English people or to condemn others. It must, in my view, be left to individual English-speaking people to decide whether they should speak in the manner that comes to them naturally or whether they should alter their speech in any way. (p.v)

Perhaps, in the face of a world that was becoming increasingly visually aware and aurally insensitive, Van der Gucht can be found guilty of wanting to foster the more elaborate English usage to which she was accustomed. Characteristically however, she also wanted to explore new ideas.

Speech Training tends towards Oral Communication

In the same interview with McCormack there is a clear account of her history as a voice teacher which makes the new trend discernable:

> Well of course in the early days a great emphasis was put on ... voice production and also on the pronunciation; so that you did teach, and to a certain extent you still have to, what was then called 'Received English' or 'Standard English' or 'the King's English'. Well, there were varying names for it, but one tried not to make it in the least elocutionary ... but the emphasis was on ... clarity and on good speech but trying not to make it artificial in any way, and the speaking of verse and the ability to handle prose and Shakespeare and so forth and so on.
>
> Now of course this has changed. It is much more on communication in as much as; provided you can be fluent and interesting and have got something to say and put across your message; your actual speech pattern that you decide to adopt doesn't matter so much.... (tape recording 1984)

Once again, Van der Gucht was influenced -- not only by events in South Africa, but also by trends in the U.K. and the increasing American interest in 'communication' and media studies. In Britain, in an article of 1960 which surveys the development of the British educational system and the influence upon it of growing industrialisation and somewhat changed attitudes to class, Kenneth R Scott -- a Birmingham headmaster -- calls for extension of the social and oral sides to contemporary British schooling. He writes:

> The pupils must be trained to speak and discuss a variety of topics at every age ... they must learn to listen patiently to others; to assess fairly and accurately the values of what they hear; they must be helped to be sensitive to everything novel, exciting and interesting around them....
> Schools must teach more and more through discussion. (Creative Drama p.21)

In response to this kind of felt need the English Speaking Board started developing **Oral Communication** as an essential educational discipline. Van der Gucht adopted these innovations and extensions to Speech education in South Africa with alacrity because Burniston's dictum which she often quoted to us students, 'Remember it is not what has been *said*, not what has been *heard* but what has been *RECEIVED* which has been communicated' made good sense to her (Speech for Life p.7). In other words, good speech is useful speech, and so she started to stress the inherent educative value of the content of what was being communicated, and the interest which it evoked. In accordance with this new trend, the writer -- a teaching student in 1968 -- just three years prior to Van der Gucht's retirement -- was oriented away from teaching voice and speech towards the development of oral communication, somewhat more than Elizabeth Coates -- who completed her teacher training in 1966 -- had been (Method of Teaching Notes, 1964).

Creative Drama

In the same socially orientated, child-centred English spirit in which Kenneth Scott calls for increased oral education, did Peter Slade develop his practice of Child Drama, and Van der Gucht found it most suitable to teach in South Africa, where in spite of the

political repression, the bourgeois young, student groups and groups of workers, were daring and exploring in the arts as never before. In 1965, in an article for Slade's Educational Drama Association magazine, Creative Drama, she summed up 'Creative Drama in South Africa' thus:

> It is difficult to give a picture of the work done in the field of Creative Drama in South Africa. Owing to the size of the country and the different approaches to education in the four provinces, conditions vary considerably, and it is hard for one person to be *au fait* with all that goes on. I would say from my knowledge that there are "pockets" of creative dramatic work, but that one cannot claim that forms part of the general educational set-up in the country, or that it is used by all speech and drama teachers.
>
> However, undeniably the books by Peter Slade and the personal visit to South Africa of Brian Way, who came to direct drama courses on behalf of the South African Guild of Speech Teachers, have had a big influence on the handling of dramatic activities among school children of all ages, and, in some cases, among adults.
>
> In the Cape, students trained at the University's Speech and Drama Department are introduced to Peter Slade's methods. His books are prescribed reading, and they are given opportunities to put into practice some of his ideas when doing their teaching under supervision in schools. (p.31)

In the same article Van der Gucht discusses the influence of Creative Drama on Theatre for Youth. However, typically she does not claim that all the 'innovatory methods' are due to her influence.[4] She writes:

> In three schools for "coloured" children in the Cape excellent work in creative drama has been done. Two of these are Primary Schools -- St. Philip's, Cape Town, under the direction of George Veldsman, and a little school at Hout Bay, some 15 miles out, under the direction of George Manuel. Mr Veldsman has made creative drama and movement part of the work of the school, and has allied it most successfully to the art classes. He told me once that he felt it had revolutionised the work of his school. Ivan Agherdien has done some exciting work at Roggebaai Secondary School, as an after-school activity. The beautiful movement of his group was quite outstanding. It was quite obvious that the creative work helped these under-privileged boys and girls to express something deeply felt in them and perhaps to "play out" some of their feelings of hurt and frustration. (pp.31-2)

She also suggested to the editor of the journal that he look at others using and exploring through drama in South Africa, and he replied: 'Your suggestion for a further article on work done among the Bantu is welcomed. I am writing to Mrs Thomson' (Thomas, 3

October 1964). Thus it was that Vol.3, No.6 of Creative Drama also contains an article by Norah Taylor: 'Drama Work at the African Music & Drama Association, 1960-1963'.

The complete range of a Speech and Drama syllabus

It bears noting however, that while Van der Gucht appreciated its impact, and creative drama became a key aspect of her teacher training, it took its place alongside a range of other skills and/or speech and drama activities which she expected her students to be able to teach. Coates' Method of Teaching notes, taken in class with Van der Gucht in 1965 -- extensive extracts of which are to be found in Appendix D -- contain a short, useful summary of what those activities were:

Work devided into: -
1. Speech Improvement.
    a) pronunciation
    b) accent
    c) clarity
    d) quality -- pleasant tone
    e) flexible

2. Interpretive work.
    a) poetry
    b) reading aloud
    c) acting
    d) story telling
    e) public speaking
    f) speech clarity (telephones, interviews)

3. Dramatic Activity.
    a) improvisation
    b) creative dramatics
    c) mime

4. Appreciation of Literature and stimulation of interest in the arts in general.

Nonetheless, in the years just prior to her retirement, Van der Gucht set increasing store by improvisation and heartily advocated a creative approach to Drama teaching; but, perhaps because of her talents as a play director, she infused a strong aesthetic sense into educational drama work she fostered, and never discounted work of a purely 'theatrical' nature -- even with the young. Similarly, she never stressed creativity more than she stressed clarity of educational intention and planning. This is significant because of the

tendency of today's South African drama teachers to espouse **either** improvisatory, group orientated drama, **or** speech education (in the form of presentational drama with a communicatory bias) as the last word in dramatic education. Van der Gucht rigorously avoided a complete espousal of either orientation. The upshot was that the student could not avoid the demand to create constructive activity in the classroom --of whatever kind -- by claiming that s/he was 'misunderstood'. They had to learn the salient lesson that using theatre forms, in themselves, was no excuse for a failure in significant meaning; nor was an emotional response from the children a reasonable excuse for a loss of discipline or form. In the final analysis, the key test Van der Gucht applied to the validity of classroom drama was: is the educational intention sound, and is this teaching attempt an honest one? Coates says, 'She was always helpful, never derogatory, (and she was concerned with) **how you could improve'** [my emphasis] (Interview). This brings us to the heart of Van der Gucht's particular quality as an educator of teachers, which will now be discussed.

'TEACHING IS MY THING'[5]

What were the particular strengths of Van der Gucht's training of teachers? In discussing her pedagogy of the fifties; her ability to fuse organisation, content and teaching manner was examined, and the fact that she was always concerned that the teacher focus on the pupil's learning readiness. These qualities did not change in the sixties, rather her integrative teaching style is worth recording in greater detail.[6]

Van der Gucht was a model for her students

Coates's record of Van der Gucht's lectures begin with a clear statement of aims for teaching, and the type of teacher likely to fulfil them successfully. The dictum 'You teach what you are' (commonly attributed to Dorothy Heathcote) certainly applies to Van der Gucht. Coates recorded Van der Gucht's introductory lecture in 1964:

METHOD OF TEACHING

People who teach Speech and Drama are experts in teaching oral communication and should not be separated from that teaching as a whole.
The teacher should be able to teach all ages from four to elderly people. She is supposed to be able to:

i) improve voices
ii) raise general standard of speech
iii) interest them in literature
iv) how to speak & interpret poems
v) public speaking
vi) act in all capacities
vii) mime & movement
viii) put on a full play

The teacher should be highly intelligent, cultured. She must be a bit of a psychologist in order to understand her children. Her personality must be such that the children will want to learn.
She must have initiative, imagination and tremendous drive. Fashions in speech, methods of teaching and ideas are always changing. She must be creative and always keen to try new ideas. She must be ready to go forward all the time by using new ideas.
A teacher must not be bogged down.

In addition to believing it necessary that they be taught to children, Van der Gucht saw to it that her students were taught all the aspects listed above. When I was her student she taught me all the listed points, except 'vii) mime and movement', herself. Like nothing else, this served to impress upon me, the student, that this lecturer meant what she said -- she was speaking the truth.

Organization and planning

A close reading of Coates's notes (see Appendix D) reveal that Van der Gucht interspersed long-term educational intentions with short-term, and hence more easily achievable, goals. She interspersed both of these with examples from practice and management hints. Resources are suggested intermittently, along with readings. Is this mere 'ad hockery'? Perhaps, but perhaps it is in fact an enabling structure for the young teacher. Guidelines as to how the teacher should organise her lessons and manage the children can make the teacher feel sufficiently safe and in control of the teaching situation to communicate well with her classes. Heathcote wrote, in an article first published in the year in which Van der Gucht retired, 'Drama and Education: Subject or System?':

> **The teacher's security**
> ...teachers require to understand their own security and practice in order that they may gradually push back these security needs and accept more tenuous positions in order that eventually they may teach from positions of calculated risk....
> ...
> It is essential that we learn to teach with a modicum of security so that we are not consequently appalled by meeting our thresholds all the time. (pp.63-4)

Similarly I think Van der Gucht appreciated only too well the teacher's need for security and she sought to facilitate an organised approach to the teaching task in the student, so that the student might feel 'on top' of the task. For this reason she also emphasised clarity, because clarity reduces anxiety-invoking confusion and facilitates good communication.

Using negotiation to educate

Not only of those aspects of vocal communication listed under i to v of Coates' notes was Van der Gucht master; her powers went further, and she was a good model for her students. She negotiated the meaning, purposes and method of the teaching act with them. She was able to concentrate -- to listen and observe closely. She listened not only to what was said to her but to the manner in which it was expressed, and then engaged in dialogue with her students in order to understand their viewpoints and ideas. Having once understood these, she could challenge them to provoke any improvement or refinement required. So she led students from the security of what they already knew and understood to what was challenging for them, and counselled them to follow the same process with their pupils. In my notes, taken from her lectures, stands the following: 'Begin where they are used to and work into unknown areas. Work from the known and enjoyable to the unknown.' (6 June, 1968)

Teaching the child

In 1968 Van der Gucht impressed upon our class the considerable value of her friend Christabel Burniston's book which had just been published -- Speech for Life. It opens with a message:

> To the Teachers and Tutors who use this book
> If you have undertaken the job of teaching Spoken English, you will find that you become involved in a host of other things. Subject frontiers will be uncertain, for science, maths, religion, sailing, philosophy, photography ... will encroach on your teaching time. You will be drawn into family and community problems and find yourself steering discussions on friends, jobs, church, racial problems, sex, marriage, jazz, records, nuclear bombs, clothes, death, make-up, crime, television programmes, capital punishment and social 'know-how'. They may crop up in just such an inconsequent order. If, therefore, you are looking for a book on 'speech' of the 'how - now - brown - cow' type, close this at once. It is not for you.
> Spoken English, then, is not a 'subject' in the curriculum sense of the word... (p.1)

Educational drama and plays enjoy the same wide range of subject matter as Burniston suggests for Spoken English -- not all areas of which a single teacher can master. However the point of the activity lies not only in the subject matter, although that in itself is educative, the point also lies in the child's engagement with the dramatic activity. Van der Gucht was concerned to teach the child the subject, but she impressed upon us that, without the co-operation of the child, for whom was one teaching and hence what would have been taught? She brought the same common sense to bear in dealing with her students. A vivid memory of my teacher training year is of standing in a group, discussing teaching, in the Hiddingh Hall car park with Van der Gucht after we had been to a school that morning. She thoughtfully adjusted her clothing and then said: 'Yes ... yes ... I think you must read Speech for Life now: it will be right for you.' We could feel she meant it and we did read it and it was certainly just right for us for the following short while. She had timed the suggestion of the particular book to a nicety. Part of her skill in getting her students to 'receive' what she said was her keen sense for when students would be receptive. She listened not only to your questions, but to the tone in which they were asked, and so she managed to teach according to one of her favourite maxims 'teach the child, not the subject'.

Meaning in dramatic form

Method lectures for her trainee teachers surveyed various aspects of dramatic activity and also relentlessly pursued the question of meaning which deepened and broadened the education her students received and made the lessons learnt memorable. When she came

to the schools to supervise and comment upon her students' teaching, her comments seemed cleverly to combine matter and manner -- which reinforced for the student that one was dealing with people and content in drama. She found the meaning of the content or saw the potential meaning/message in any expressive act, and her comments helped the student realize those powers to the full. She understood the powers of story, and knew when those powers could be used for drama since her dramatic sense was acute as the reviews of her many stage productions testify.

She loved 'the dramatic experience'

What does not emerge from Coates' notes however, is Van der Gucht's delight in the plastic, aural art form which is drama. When I saw her teach the children at Oakhurst when I was in training, this is what I remember: a sense that she took her time, that she enjoyed the process of the drama, that she used her voice to great effect because she intended to communicate to the children, that she modelled keen interest and calm concentration, that her questioning was directed towards upgrading the quality of the dramatic activity, and finally that she made no attempt to be 'on the level' of the children, or to be their friend. She was simply herself and she simply taught.

RESPONSIBILITY TO THE COMMUNITY

Van der Gucht was also constantly concerned with spreading Speech and Drama education amongst those who were not allowed, or not rich enough to go to University. Avril Chiat said that Van der Gucht became so excited with what she was doing at SHAWCO at the end of the fifties 'that she hauled in Isolde Gerdener to play the piano and the three of us did things with this collection of strays at SHAWCO' (Interview). Similarly, when the writer was a student she sent us 'voluntarily' to Leliebloem Orphanage in Woodstock to teach drama every Saturday morning. As the decade wore on Van der Gucht was increasingly urging students to go into the community and start drama groups or classes. She organised Tessa Marwick into running a drama group in Guguletu which she had started, and which Mavis Taylor took over in 1972. Taylor says it was this group, Ikwesi (with whom she worked as often as four times a week in that

period) who were the springboard for all her subsequent interest in promoting drama work in the community (tape recording, 15 November 1985).[7] The writer, and another ex-UCT student Lola Katz, ran the Apollo Dramatic Society weekly drama sessions in Athlone in 1971 - 1972, because Tessa Marwick was recommended to the society by Van der Gucht and the former in turn recommended us. Taylor sums up this drive in Van der Gucht's personality most acutely:

> When she could no longer do it (ie run a community drama group) she saw to it that someone took it over because she had too many commitments. That was characteristic of her -- commitment. And she had commitment to people, commitment to ideas, commitment to work, commitment to orgnizations; so much commitment. (tape recording, 15 November 1988)

A Soroptimist

Lest the reader should think that Rosalie Van der Gucht was only concerned with the young, she concerned herself actively with the elderly also -- when she was invited to join the Soroptimists of the Cape of Good Hope. It is an organization (started in a the United States in the nineteen-twenties) of women -- each member being a leader in their particular professional field -- 'bound together in service and friendship' (as expressed to the writer at a Soroptimist monthly meeting, 6 February 1989). The Cape of Good Hope branch started in 1962, and Van der Gucht became a member not long after. And then as Miss Margaret Thompson -- a fellow member, who was head of Rustenburg Girls School when Van der Gucht was Head of the Drama Department, says:

> It was through Rosalie that the Good Morning Club was started in Rondebosch. She wanted to start a club to be a meeting place, not necessarily for the financially handicapped, but for people who would enjoy a little companionship -- perhaps have a speaker, or play some bingo or carpet bowls... (Interview)

Rondebosch in the sixties contained many elderly, living in self-contained, old blocks of flats, with little sense of community or opportunity to chat. A room was obtained in the Rondebosch Town Hall building and the Good Morning Club for senior citizens

flourished every morning of the week. The reader may wonder what Florence Van der Gucht, who no doubt appreciated all the companionship her daughter could spare her, thought of the Club. Perhaps it was the experience of caring for her mother that made Van der Gucht aware of the companionship elderly people needed, and made her put a lot of effort into the Good Morning Club. (The Club is still functioning, but many more of Rondebosch's elderly are housed today in 'retirement flats' which have their own community activities, so now the Club only meets twice a week (Krige, Interview).)

The service Van der Gucht gave, the Soroptimists returned by means of fellowship which extends across the globe. After retirement when she travelled a lot, she could avail herself of contacts in Europe, the Americas and the South Western Pacific -- where Soroptimists are established. In 1984 she was royally and caringly entertained by Soroptimists in Monte Carlo, Grenoble and Paris. Louie Hodgson who travelled with Van der Gucht writes:

> We had numerous suppers and lunches, but the one that stayed in my memory is the dinner we had with 12 Soroptimists in the Eiffel Tower. It was absolutely wonderful and Rosalie adored every minute. She rattled away in French and there was a famous actress there who was very amusing ... (letter, n.d. circa June 1989)

Chair Person Mariana Krige, addressing the monthly meeting of Van der Gucht's old branch of the Soroptimists on the 6 February 1989, said:

> Rosalie was a great supporter of the notion of a bursary fund for a needy woman student and in her will she left a substantial sum towards it. She was a very loved member of our community; she supported education, she was very good with young people and my children spoke of her as 'the Soroptimist who listened the most'.

For a woman with no siblings and no spouse, such a sisterhood is both a support and a responsibility. It would seem that Rosalie Van der Gucht valued this kind of commitment; enjoyed committee proceedings and the sense of belonging that being a member bestows. Apart from the Soroptimists she was also a member of the National

Council of Women, The South African Council for English Education, the English Academy of Southern Africa -- not forgetting Theatre for Youth and the Guild of Speech and Drama teachers; and in the early sixties she was appointed to CAPAB's Drama Committee, on which she served for seventeen years.

A caring daughter

Perhaps the most trying responsibility that Van der Gucht faced in this decade was looking after her mother. Sheila Weinrich describes her:

> Van's mother was delightful, interested in everything -- sitting with her ear to the radio keenly following the sports. She was so interested in my children. In 1966 I had back trouble; Mrs Van der Gucht would remember to enquire and she was in her nineties! (Interview)

Stephen de Villiers said:

> I remember one morning going for drinks and there was a cricket test match being played and I was introduced to Van's mother; a tiny woman -- just the essential skin and bones. And she quickly had me placed as -- 'Ah, drama and ballet'. (Interview)

Prim Stevenson concurred heartily on the question of Florence's acuteness. She pointed out to the writer on more than one occasion that the old lady -- possessing financial interests on three continents -- managed her own income tax assessments until she was too blind to see the forms.

In his memorial address for Rosalie Van der Gucht, Inskip painted a revealing portrait of mother and daughter:

> Her mama was somebody who could very well have been a Lady Bracknell. She said, thought and did this extraordinary thing. She said 'I shall live to be a hundred and then I shall die, and she did.
>
> And although Rosalie did not become like her mama, she had some traits of character not unlike; and to watch these two together at home was really an exercise in how to handle a difficult situation ... because her mama was a very critical lady, a very hyper-critical lady. She was very critical of me because she thought that I was exploiting her daughter by giving her too much work in the theatre here. And she would say so in no uncertain terms

> and Rosalie would say 'Yes Mama' and proceed to pour out the tea and talk about some other aspect of what had brought us together.
>
> She (Van der Gucht) was a complete realist; there was no sentimentality about her. She loved her mother, she wanted to look after her -- she did; but she knew that she should not and would not sacrifice her own career for this and she did not. (tape recording, 15 November 1985)

The Inskips' excellent cook-cum-housekeeper, Merilia, went to work for the Van der Gucht's towards the end of the fifties, and was a great asset. She was extremely capable and ran their household extremely efficiently. Several past students of Van der Gucht's drove out to Pinelands and read to Florence, but while this favour must have helped, it did not entirely relieve Van der Gucht of the strain of filling the life of a blind woman of over ninety who was still a redoubtable character. Joan Seeliger says: 'I went and read to her mother and that's when I was in touch with Van's humanity. She was exasperated with her mother and showed it openly -- she considered herself very ordinary' (Interview).

Perhaps, in some ways, working so hard in the theatre and for various organizations was a relief for a harassed daughter.

6. CHANGED COURSES FOR THE CHANGING WORLD OF THE SIXTIES

The sixties was the period which saw the Afrikaner Nationalist Government pursue an all-out stratagy to gain control of every sphere of public life and that included the Arts -- at least in part through tertiary education. Throughout the fifties the Universities of Cape Town and Natal were the only ones to have fully fledged Speech and Drama Departments. Elizabeth Sneddon had insisted that the University of Natal institute a majoring course in Speech and Drama, while Cape Town had its Diploma, its single BA Drama course and its active Little Theatre; but now this was all to change. Apart from the Nationalist government's intention to establish Afrikaner hegemony, the growth of South Africa's population and industry necessitated more trained manpower and training institutions.[1] In the resultant increase of University education, drama was well served.[2]

New Drama departments are established in SA universities

Of the Afrikaans universities, Stellenbosch has the longest tradition of Speech and Drama teaching going back to the thirties; in the shape of a lecturer for Afrikaans Speech and Acting and the same for English, working within the Konservatorium vir Musiek. But this changed in 1961 when Fred Engelen was appointed first Professor of Drama and Head of a substantive department. (Frequent seasons at the Little Theatre with touring Flemish Companies, and several productions as a guest Director for the Speech and Drama Department UCT and the Little Theatre had done much to establish Engelen's reputation in the Cape.) His Department initially remained small; but in due course more and more academic and technical staff were acquired (amongst whom was Jo Gevers), a four year Drama Degree programme was instituted and the Drama Department and the H B Thom Theatre were built in 1966.

In 1965 the University of the Orange Free State started majoring courses in *Drama en Toneel* under the leadership of Jo Gevers from Stellenbosch -- with one other full-time lecturer and two part-timers. (Today the Department is headed by Professor Ben de Koker who was a student under Van der Gucht in 1950.) Geoff Cronje, a sociology

professor, criminologist and philosopher, assisted by Anna Neethling Pohl (known for her organization of 'Volks Feeste' such as those in honour of the Great Trek in 1938, the Opening of the Voortrekker Monument in 1948, and the Jan van Riebeeck festival in 1952) started the B.Drama degree at the University of Pretoria in 1965 as well. All the subjects for this degree were orientated towards Drama and Theatre -- specifically *Dramakunde, Toneelkunde* and *Spraakkunde*, which is surely evidence of how seriously the University took Arts Education (in this case drama).

In 1966 Guy Butler instituted a Speech and Drama Major within the English Department of Rhodes University taught (like UCT) by various members of literature Departments, and Beth Dickerson who did practical acting and movement. These Drama courses had long been a dream of Butler's and in the course of adjudicating FATSSA Play Festivals in East London, and on professional visits to the University of Cape Town, he became acquainted with Van der Gucht[3]. He says: 'I had a long talk to Van about what Drama departments should be doing and what [models of training] she had seen'; and he had clearly found these discussions extremely useful (Interview). Dickerson then sought the advice and experience of Van der Gucht in those first years, and found her annual visit as external examiner (1968-1971) a great help (Interview). Dickerson was joined in 1967 by two more full-time staff; but it was not until 1973 when Professor Butler had planned to retire, that Roy Sargeant (ex UCT and SABC) was appointed Professor and Head of a substantive Speech and Drama Department. Thus it was against a background of hugely increased dramatic training that Van der Gucht was now teaching at UCT so that any 'white' university candidate who so wished could be introduced to the discipline of Drama on a scope not previously conceivable.

The establishment of the Performing Arts Councils

Not only were the training opportunities increased, so were the job opportunities -- at least for 'Whites'. For in 1962 the National Theatre Organization was finally disbanded -- fourteen years after its humble start at the Little Theatre -- and Regional Performing Arts Councils were established in 1963 in the Transvaal and the Cape. The other provinces followed suit soon afterwards (The Breytie Book). Van der Gucht was invited to sit on

the Committee of CAPAB Drama, and Laurie van der Merwe (a student of Van der Gucht's just after World War II) who had been the Cape's Organizer for NTO, was CAPAB Drama Company's first artistic director. Obviously the Performing Arts Councils promised acting and directing employment for UCT's Speech and Drama students on a scope which simply had not previously existed. In all the provinces, actual theatres were being created out of other buildings or being built from scratch; and on the commercial side, although Leonard Schach's Cockpit Theatre was shortly to close, Maynardville promised an annual Shakespeare, the Brian Brooke Theatre in Johannesburg was thriving, and David Bloomberg started his Barn Theatre in Constantia.

Planning curriculum changes

In contrast to these new promises of employment for actors, while the demand for private teachers of Speech never flagged, Van der Gucht was unable to get the Teacher's Diploma in Speech and Drama recognised as a valid **three year** teaching qualification while students of the Education Faculty, whom she trained for the Higher Primary Teacher's (Endorsement Certificate in Speech and Drama) or to offer Drama as a Special Skill, were recognised as fully qualified. So she applied to her Dean for study leave from October 1962 to January 1963, which Professor Paap approved on 9 February, 1962. She wrote:

> My study programme would be -- an investigation into the latest methods of teaching speech & drama in schools in & around London -- at all levels & the value of such work in relation to language teaching. I also want to visit the leading Colleges engaged in the training of students of speech training & dramatic art for the purposes of acquainting myself with current training methods. During the second half of December I wish to attend a course organised by the British Drama League on Drama in Education. (Memorandum)

Clearly Van der Gucht was needing space and time to reflect on the kind of training she was offering at Cape Town. Judging by the leave report that she submitted on 7 March 1963, she had received plenty of food for thought -- and all of it in three months.

> I arrived in London on October 1st, 1962. I spent until mid-November visiting the major drama colleges. I attended classes and watched students at work. By the courtesy of Miss Maisie Cobby, Chief Drama Inspector of the L.C.C., I visited many L.C.C. schools, junior and secondary, and watched speech, drama, literature and language classes. I also observed students teaching, and attended a series of lectures by famous stage directors on the production of Shakespeare today. I met Mr Hugh Allen, Chief Drama Inspector of the Ministry of Education, Peter Slade, Inspector of Drama for the Birmingham Eduction Department, Professor Hugh Hunt, Director of the Department of Drama at the University of Manchester, and Professor George Brandt of the Drama Department at the University of Bristol. At Manchester I attended the Drama Department's Theatre Week, where I heard lectures on modern theatre design by Sir Tyrone Guthrie, Sean Kenny and Richard Southern. I followed a course on 'the drama of the absurd' at the Royal Court. I was asked to lecture at the L.C.C. January Drama School at Eastbourne on South African Theatre, and also at the Rose Bruford Training College.

(Prim Stevenson recalls that Bruford tried very hard to persuade Van der Gucht to accept an appointment at her College, but flattered though she probably was -- for Van der Gucht was modest -- she declined (Interview).) The report continues:

> At Loughborough, at the National Union of Students Festival, I saw Drama students from our Department of Speech and Drama, sponsored by the University, play 'The Sport of My Mad Mother' by Ann Jellicoe, directed by Robert Mohr. They were given an excellent reception and acquitted themselves well.
>
> I attended the first International Conference on Theatre Training, held in Brussels under the auspices of the International Theatre Institute. I was invited to represent South Africa, and spoke on Drama Departments in South African universities. The Conference was attended by representatives from 22 countries. It was divided into two sections - (1) the work of University Drama Departments, their future and their relationship with professional theatre schools; and (2) the training of the voice and body of the actor, with demonstrations from theatre schools from 6 countries. I was appointed secretary of the former section, and spoke on the Drama Departments in South Africa. The main speeches in this section were given by Professor Kindeman of the Institute of Theatrical Sciences, Vienna, Professor George Brandt ... Professor J Scherer of the Sorbonne, Paris; and Professor Lewin Goff of the University of Kansas, U.S.A.
>
> The British Council accepted me as an approved visitor, and were most helpful in arranging contacts and itineraries.

In the light of the commencement of the playwrights' boycott in the same year, this report makes interesting reading. But it seems that Van der Gucht had got what she went for, for on the 14 May 1963 her 'PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE OF COURSES - SPEECH

AND DRAMA DEPARTMENT' were tabled before the Board of the Arts Faculty. Extracts from these proposals read:

> I. The Teachers' Diploma Course in Speech and Drama should fall away. Students wishing to take up specialist teaching of Speech and Drama should take a B.A. degree, followed by a one-year professional training course in the Department of Speech and Drama.
> A second qualifying course in Drama to follow the present one should be introduced into the B.A. syllabus, and these two courses together should constitute a major course....
>
> II. Specialist Teachers' Course in Speech and Drama:
> For students wishing to specialise as teachers of speech and drama - a one year professional training course should be instituted ....
> III. A Three-Year Course *for Performers* would be established -- entrance qualification as present Teachers' Diploma ... plus an audition ....
> The Speech and Drama Department would continue the present one-year course for trained Higher Primary Teachers (Endorsement Certificate) and would continue to collaborate with the Faculty of Education in training Primary Higher Teachers to offer Speech and Drama as a special skill.

After extensive deliberations by a specially appointed sub-committee, the new courses were finally approved by the University and in 1965 were offered to students for the first time.[4] It is interesting to note that many of the early Performer's Diploma students were 'recruited' from Theatre for Youth's Winter School of Drama which was run for the first time in June 1964 (Winter School of Drama List of enrolled pupils). Ex-Winter School students Janice Honeyman, Peter Kruger and Edwin van Wyk were accepted into the Performer's Diploma, while Jacobé Gilbert, Miranda Kark, Diana Ginsberg, Penelope Kreitzer and Louise van Winsen enrolled for the Drama major -- all of whom subsequently made a career in theatre, film or oral communication teaching.[5]

The Drama major

The new Drama II course complemented the study of pre-twentieth century play texts of which the Drama I course was composed. Twentieth-century drama of England, America, Germany and France was studied, as well as Ibsen, Chekhov, Strindberg and Pirandello.

And Van der Gucht, having launched the new courses, set off in July 1965 for a brief visit to Nigeria. The University of Ibadan invited her 'to tell the staff something of the developments in South African theatre' (Sunday Chronicle, 11 July 1965)

The Specialist Teacher's Course in Speech and Drama

The one year Specialist Teacher's Course in Speech and Drama consisted of the chief courses of the old Teachers' Diploma condensed into a single year of study. Discontinuing the three year Teacher's Diploma course had not been easy for Van der Gucht. She was committed to the art of teaching and she knew that there would be less time for students to develop skill (either in teaching or interpretive work) in a one year training programme. Indeed Stevenson says that, 'She felt [the Teacher's Diploma in Speech and Drama] was a course that shouldn't be terminated' (Interview); but to offsett this reluctance was, 'Her whole feeling towards the whole subject of Speech and Drama was that it should go into the community' (Stevenson, Interview), and she had deduced that the best way to spread the experience of Speech and Drama across a broad -- if at this stage a largely 'white' -- spectrum of people, was to produce teachers who were qualified to take up positions in Government schools and teach drama as an adjunct to language.

Length and 'density' were not the only differences between the new course and the old Diploma; a different type of student enrolled. These were far fewer, older, graduated, and probably more questioning. While some of them had worked in the Department during their undergraduate years, they had not usually thrown themselves into the Drama Department as the Teacher's Diploma students did, so these 'Specialist Teacher' students tended to be more critical and less spontaneous; directing their first loyalty towards their training rather than to the Drama Department as a whole. Coates who was among the last intake for the old Teacher's Diploma (1964) commented:

> Van's lessons were totally away from everything else: (they) were not repeated by anyone else. There was no relationship between performance and teaching -- nobody else ever talked about teaching. You did your acting tutorial in groups of three for crit class, with Van, Joyce Burch, Mavis or Robert; but that was what was so super about drama school: we did everything [both acting and teaching].

> It just wasn't the same when it became a post-graduate course. When we were there, the teachers were the most important things; she was concerned about the teachers and we gained more from her than anyone else.... She was interested in us as people.
> She was totally different to all the other people in the drama school. (Interview)

It is probably true to say that Van der Gucht's impact on the new Specialist Teacher's course students was defused; not because she was any less enthusiastic but because of the extremely heavy timetable and the startling experience for these students of being -- for the first time -- full-time Drama students.

Oral Communication developments in Cape schools

The writer was one of three students comprising the second intake into the post-graduate Specialist Teacher's course, and therefore able to observe the range of uses to which qualifiers put their training. Many have emigrated, some became actors (although this ceased once the Specialist Actor's course was introduced); and those who stayed in the field mostly went into secondary and tertiary education as specialist Drama teachers. It is interesting to trace their contribution (among others) to Speech and Drama education in Cape Schools, for which it is necessary to look at developments in the seventies which came about, at least in part, because of the work of Van der Gucht.

Partly through the continual presence of her students on Teaching Practice in schools such as Oakhurst, Rustenburg, Observatory Girls High and Good Hope Seminary, the Education Department's Inspector for English, Mr Wigget, had become increasingly conscious of the positive part Speech and Drama could play in schooling -- especially with respect to the child's powers of Oral Expression. Upon the suggestion of Van der Gucht, the Guild invited Christabel Burniston to South Africa to lecture and give workshops, and Mr Wigget was invited to hear her speak. He was finally completely convinced and in 1972 three posts for Oral Communication teachers were created at Boston, Fishoek and Rustenburg junior schools in the Cape Town area.[6] This was followed by a similar complement at High Schools: Jan van Riebeeck, Plumstead and Westerford being among the first to obtain Oral Communication Specialist posts, until by the late seventies twenty-six posts had been created in the Cape Province (thirteen in each official language).

Sadly, with the increasing strictures laid down for educational qualifications, Van der Gucht's Teacher's Diploma in Speech and Drama students (who had years of teaching experience) were not 'qualified' to apply for these posts. Fortunately some of the posts could be filled by students who had completed the new Specialist Course. In 1965 the Arts Faculty Board had recommended that the University request the Superintendent General of Education to recognize the Specialist Teacher's Course as the full qualification for a Speech and Drama Specialist (Minutes, 27 July 1965). This was never granted, although students having this qualification were in fact employed in the Oral Communication posts, and were paid as if they had a post-graduate teaching diploma because their course contained Psychology of Education.[7] In the Junior schools, students with the UCT Special Endorsement in Speech and Drama, or Drama as a special skill (in addition to their Primary Teaching Certificate), in a number of cases were employed in the Oral Communication posts; and in most cases these were the teachers who made a success of the new posts. But there were insufficient students completing the Specialist Teacher's Course and the Primary Endorsement course to fill all the posts which were suddenly created in the mid-seventies. This meant that the majority were filled by College-trained primary teachers who may have done as little as one hour per week of Speech and Drama during their three years' training, and University-trained High School teachers whose understanding of the dramatic needs of adolescents had scarcely been extended in undergraduate courses which -- for example -- focussed upon the finer points of textual analysis of Goethe's Faust or the physical staging employed by the Classical Theatre of Ancient Greece, or for that matter, the fine art of 'building a character'.[8] While these may be considered as worthwhile aspects of dramatic education within the Western European dramatic tradition; sucessfully introducing these kinds of topics to school pupils (in a non-examinable subject period) would be a daunting task for any teacher who had not been well-equipped with appropriate teaching methods, and who was not absolutely certain of why she or he was teaching these particular things. From the present perspective it would then appear that many of the posts were filled by inadequately equipped teachers who struggled manfully along with increasing inroads

being made into their time perhaps by timetable alterations, or by such decisions as, 'Std Nines are too busy to have drama...'; and in many cases the teacher was gently eased out of drama teaching into full-time language teaching; or when she or he left the school the post was never refilled. Today there are nowhere near twenty-six drama specialist teachers in Cape Schools. Nonetheless the presence of Van der Gucht's trainee teachers and the teachers who filled these posts have thoroughly established the presence of Educational Drama in 'white' schools in the Cape.[9] In other schools there are pockets of extremely vigorous activity -- as Van der Gucht pointed out in her article in Creative Drama in 1965 (already quoted).

Oral Communication within the University

While Van der Gucht was busy developing these courses, she was also appointed to a Faculty sub-committee to 'consider The Institution of Degree Courses in Communication' (Faculty of Arts, Minutes, 30 August 1968). However when this committee reported, rather than degree courses they recommended training in Communication for a broad spectrum of students. Van der Gucht drew up the first Course Proposal which planned to cater for three hundred students and -- as was her inclination -- to offer these students a useful, helpful practical training in Oral Communication to assist them in a future professional career (8 May 1970). In 1971 past student Audrey Babrow was given the task of launching this course under Van der Gucht's watchful eye. In 1975 the course was expanded to include theoretical as well as practical aspects -- run by a fully- fledged Professional Communications Unit under the leadership of Michael Fielding.

The Specialist Actor's Course in Speech and Drama

With exciting 'young peoples' plays' being staged at the Little, the introduction of a two year B.A.Drama major, and the heightened exposure to theatre which the Performing Arts Councils promoted, it is not surprising that some students who completed a BA hungered for more practical theatre experience. So in 1968 Van der Gucht introduced the one year Specialist Actor's Course, with a curriculum much like the third year of the Performer's Diploma (see Arts and Science Faculties prospectus, 1968, p.45-6). In 1981

this course was converted into a BA Honours in Drama (Theatre Studies) at the same time as the Honours (Drama in Education) was created.

The Performer's Diploma in Speech and Drama

The new Performer's Diploma was thoroughly focussed upon a professional training for the stage in ways not evident in the 1957 course. Practical verse speaking, rehearsal and dramatic work were the core qualifying courses in all three years of the Diploma. Classes in mime, dance, acting technique, voice production, choral verse speaking and rehearsals were also a requirement throughout. Small-group acting and verse speaking classes were used extensively and replaced the private tutorials which had been considered so essential a part of the training of Teacher's Diploma students. The Criticism Class, attended by students in all three years and held every Friday afternoon, proved indispensable to acting training since in this forum all the students had the opportunity to stand up and try their performance skill. (Both of these teaching structures are still used at UCT today.) Additionally, students took English I, Theory of Voice Production and Aural Interpretation, Phonetics, History of costume and design in the theatre I, and reading aloud in the first year. The second year's other requirements were Drama I, History of costume and design in the theatre II, story telling and practical theatre work. In the third year students had to complete Drama II, History of the theatre, Comparative styles in acting and production, creative movement, Décor and elementary physics for stage craft and lighting, or Design and making of costumes,masks and properties, speech making and play production.

These course changes which took some years to fully effect, naturally made rather different demands upon the lecturers because, once again, they signified a different kind of student. For Mohr and Taylor it was a golden opportunity to exploit their creative, directorial gifts. For Van der Gucht the course changes mark a distinct shift of her teaching orientation towards training professional actors -- which turned out to be her chief contribution for the remainder of her teaching career.

Training students of Acting and Drama

As we have already said, the students changed too. In Forty Little Years, which Inskip wrote in 1972, he says:

> These steps [viz. course changes] have brought about a radical change in the composition and outlook of the student body at the Drama School. A substantial number of male students now enrol for the various courses and the standard of ambition, assiduity and achievement has risen in a marked degree. The students at the Drama School are professionally orientated and professionally motivated .... (p108)

A far cry indeed from the days of 'the Marriage School' -- and indeed from our own age of anti-sexism! But in truth there were still considerably more women than men enrolled at the Department -- possessing a greater right to acting opportunities since they were not also studying to be teachers. This was a responsibility Van der Gucht accepted fully; not only with respect to her Performer's Diploma students, but she also had a committment to involve the BA Drama students with at least one production per year as part of their coursework. So she saw to it that she found the plays with sufficient parts for women and she saw to it that each student was given an opportunity.

For example, in 1965 -- the year that he died -- she produced T.S. Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral with a chorus of eleven women (of Canterbury). The play required four men to play the tempters and six more for the smallish parts of the priests plus, of course, Thomas Becket. To the writer's knowledge, while all the women in the chorus were diploma students, none of the men were, and only a few were taking the BA Drama course. In addition Van der Gucht doubled the number of women students given this acting opportunity by 'doubling' her chorus of women, so that twenty-two students were involved. And it was the opportunity that counted, even if, in the eyes of the public, Van der Gucht was not always completely able to pull it off. We read with interest what the press said. Nancy Baines wrote of the production in the Cape Times:

> Decor, costumes, music, individual actors contribute faultlessly to the whole, making it ... a timeless drama, in which we ourselves, as much as the

> simple people of Canterbury, are asked to make our choice between principle and expediency.
>
> The most striking aspect of the production, to my mind, is Rosalie van der Gucht's treatment of the chorus. The women are not kept grouped as an immobile unit, but move about the stage, advancing and receding, grouping and separating as sense and action suggest. Similarly, the wonderful words they have to speak do not become a dreary soporific group utterance, as so often happens with a chorus, but are broken up into individual voices to express individual ideas, speaking together again to express shared emotions or attitudes. (2 July, 1965)

But Owen Williams, writing in the Cape Argus directly after the opening on 14 June 1965, says:

> ROSALIE VAN DER GUCHT has done a sound job of a most difficult play, aided by a splendid sombre and evocative set by Bill Smuts.... It is a production of primarily visual appeal which, considering the magnificent quality of the lines, is a little odd.
>
> ...
>
> Eliot here used all his formidable poetic gifts, including the subtle use of conversational rhythms, his allusive imagery, his almost telegraphic compression of meaning and association into the poetic phrase.
> In this story of the last days of the martyr of Canterbury ... he returned to the method of the Greek dramatists, using a chorus, antiphonally chanting to point and to illustrate the action, which takes place almost entirely on the spiritual level. The only real action as such is the murder of Becket.
> Chorus Work
>
> The task of interpreting the play in terms of movement is consequently formidable. Miss van der Gucht, aided by the superb set and costumes, seemed to go for a concentrated visual effect, a sort of rippling continuous movement which constantly underlined the meaning of the poetry, which achieved at times a haunting beauty of its own, and which never at all gave the effect of restlessness, which it might well have done.
>
> The flaw of the production -- and it was a serious one -- lay in the chorus work. The chorus has a very important function in this play -- on a purely theatrical level it has most of the best lines, and on another it acts as the voice of Eliot.
>
> I found that both the men and the women, although they spoke with an admirable clarity, had a sort of irritating sing-song, slightly unctuous quality, which at times became almost soporific and to me at least tended to deprive the poetry of its tragic grandeur and to substitute for it the accents of the schoolroom.

W E G Louw said (on the same day):

> Weens die betreklike onrypheid van die spelers was die indruk selde diepsinnig of selfs orals die teks waardig.
>
> Wat ek nog by dié presiesheid gemis het, was 'n innerlike en hartstogtelike intensiteit.

> [Because of the relative immaturity of the players the impression was seldom profound or even always worthy of the text.
> What I also missed alongside all this precision was an inner, passionate intensity.]

Reviews of the day talked so much of the impressive quality of the setting that one is inclined to suspect it may not have been altogether useful. Stephen de Villiers (who frequently designed for Van der Gucht) certainly felt it was unsuccessful, being both overbearing and unfunctional -- which can not have made Van der Gucht's task of staging such a deeply poetic play with young people any easier (Interview). So much for the setting; but the opinions of some of the students who were supposed to be learning from the production are also important. On the 11 July 1965, Pat Storrar said in the Sunday Chronicle:

> One of her [Van der Gucht's] students, Dorienne [sic] Berry, told me this week:
> "Quite the most inspiring thing that has happened to me in three years at university was to be allowed to act as stage manager for Vandy's recent production of **Murder in the Cathedral.**"
> And this is the secret of Rosalie's considerable success, both as a teacher and as a producer: her own infectious enthusiasm is caught by everyone working with her.

It is interesting to compare this with Roy Sargeant's astute comments composed twenty years after the production with all the benefits of 'recollections in tranquility' having nonetheless the unmistakeable ring of authenticity. He played the 2nd Tempter and 2nd Knight in the play. In the SABC Memorial programme for Van der Gucht in 1985, he says:

> It was final dress rehearsal and late at night.... For the Professor the production had for some reason been irksome and as Eliot's final chorus, "Forgive us Oh Lord" rose from the throats of the twenty or so women of Canterbury, I happened to be sitting next to the Professor in the auditorium.[10] Suddenly the beautifully patterned chorus movement petered out as the last syllable was chanted. Professor turned and said, 'I'm at my wits' end! What can they do to end the play?'
> 'Simply drop their heads and fade lights?' I suggested.

> 'Yes', the Professor said wearily, 'Drop your heads girls, drop your heads'; but then exasperation set in and she said,
> 'Oh do anything -- they'll all come here and hate it anyway!'
> I tell this story simply because it was so uncharacteristic of Professor Van der Gucht -- the indefatigable, inspired and keenly rational teacher of Speech and Drama -- also play director extraordinaire.
> Yet this seemingly cynical and exasperated moment in her directorial career hid many of the most characteristic and fine qualities which made the person: the divine discontent of artistic self-doubt, the utter humility of being unsure of the quality of the production which -- while it may not have reached the inspired heights of many of her later productions of Chekhov's plays for instance, was extremely good.
> Then too there was the warmth, the friendliness, the trust (that made her turn to) a recently graduated ex-student for support; the utter humanity and simplicity, and again humility: revealing in that straightforward and open manner, 'Help! I haven't all the answers!' (6 November 1985)

Nor did she have; as was the case in her fine direction of Jean Paul Sartre's adaptation of Euripides's Trojan Women in 1967. In this production, of the seven men required (plus the boy, Astyanax), certainly five were students -- including Ralph Lawson, Arnold Blumer and Tim Huisamen. She was able to use fifteen of her women students including a large part of the BA Drama II class (which included the writer). Together with Janice Honeyman and Ilona Sarif, I had opportunity to audition for the part of Hecuba, Queen of Troy. A few days later the three of us were summoned to see Van der Gucht. To each she explained that Professor Inskip had persuaded her to invite Babs Laker -- at that time a professional actress of the first rank -- to play Hecuba. She expressed her appreciation of our efforts at the audition and her regret that one of us would not have the opportunity of tackling that large role. It was doubtless a wise decision -- judging by the critics who unanimously found Laker's performance exceptionally fine, the principals pleasing enough and the chorus -- in which two of us played -- weak.

The play was performed during the Israeli six-day war and Sartre's anti-war theme and the biting irony -- which was the only weapon Hecuba, Queen of Troy, still could employ to attack her foes -- found enthusiastic and empathetic response from audiences. But as frequently as Van der Gucht clarified for her cast the issues of power and loyalty and family obligations found in the play, so she insisted on succinct and appropriate expression of those thoughts and feelings to the audience. Miss Laker recalls Van der Gucht's insistence on the sound basis which good vocal technique gives the player, and

her real anger when Janet Rees -- the student cast to play Cassandra -- was struggling to achieve the power and sustained volume necessary in her speeches of prophesy; and Van der Gucht yelled at her in a voice filled with certain scorn: "'IT'S BECAUSE YOU DON'T DO YOUR BREATHING EXERCISES!'" (Interview, B Laker). This tactic must have had its effect, for an unidentified magazine reviewer said 'Janet Rees was an excellent Cassandra, half-mad, prophetic, diction clear and telling.' Peter Temple said in the Argus: 'Her delivery of the ironical, mad-sane lines is fluent, her emphasis pertinent and her movement strong' (18 May 1967). While Terry Herbst in the Cape Times says, 'She retained throughout her long and difficult speeches the unbalanced mood of the insane.... and Miss van der Gucht drew from her a well- defined portrayal which had impact and strength' (18 May 1967).

On the other hand, W.E.G. Louw had this to say -- rather accurately -- of the Chorus:

> Met die koor had ek veel minder vrede. 'n "Spreekkoor" -- soos 'n mens dié groepie wel van tyd tot tyd saam hoor praat -- is in die beste omstandighede 'n gevaarlike onderneming. Wat ek hier gemis het, was veral stemkwaliteit. Van dié elftal had slegs één m.i. 'n stem waarmee 'n mens iets kan doen. As die ander harder praat, het dit deurentyd skriller en skriller geword! (19 May 1967)
>
> [I had far less satisfaction from the chorus. A 'Speech Choir' -- such as this group which one hears reciting together from time to time -- is a dangerous undertaking under the very best of circumstances. What I missed here most of all was vocal quality. Out of the eleven, in my opinion there was only one voice with which something could be done. When the others spoke it became progressively shriller and shriller!]

Already the differences between the intensity and duration of training of the Performer's students, and that of the BA Drama students -- who majorly composed the chorus -- was making itself felt. But quality or no, Van der Gucht defended her choices, bolstered the somewhat shaky spirits of her inexperienced chorus, and saw to it that the women students (as well as the men) who were accepted into the courses were given their chances.

In the mid-sixties she staged Eight Women, by Robert Thomas and The House of Bernada Alba by Garcia Lorca in the old SACS Hall (now the Arena Theatre) and billed them as 'rehearsal productions' to provide the necessary acting opportunities for her women students. And in 1969 she did a production of Sheila Corbett's play with music, adapted from the novel by Louisa M. Alcott, called Little Women, which proved to be charming. Pam Gundle (who was then assisting Van der Gucht with the tutoring of educational drama) said: 'Those people who really needed teaching she put in productions. She did a production of Little Women. It taught us never to overlook anyone; everyone is worth teaching' (Interview). While A Z Kurgan wrote in New Trend on 16 June:

> After Mavis Taylor's exciting production of 'Oh What A Lovely War' and Robert Mohr's controversial 'Hamlet', the Little Theatre now offers fare for the theatregoer who likes his drama sentimental, two-dimensional and coy. This is not to undermine Rosalie van der Gucht's production of "Little Women" which is as painstaking and polished as always.
> ...
> I should imagine this play was chosen largely because of the fair number of equal women's parts -- always a problem in the Drama Department.
> ...
> Nevertheless the actresses were enjoying their situation and the audience, amongst which were a number of 10 to 12 year old girls, responded very warmly to their performances. Elizabeth Rae as Amy March gave a splendid interpretation of the precocious, pouting, pampered youngest sister. (She projects the same elfin personality as Leslie Caron.)

Certainly one member of the audience was highly appreciative and wrote:

> Dr F.M. Purcell M.D. F.R.C.P.
> 98 Westcliff
> Hermanus
> 14 June '69
>
> Concerning "Little Women" performance 18 June Little Theatre Cape Town
>
> Dear Miss Van Der Gucht,
>
> During a midweek visit to Cape Town my wife and I decided to 'risk' a visit to 'Little Women' -- as we were staying in a hotel nearby. Experienced, elderly theatre goers as we are -- in South Africa and formerly in Europe -- we are/were not disposed to be bored!
>
> The title 'Little Women' was dimly familiar but, I surmised it was not a 'British' play/novel or I should have known more of it. -- Yet its title and 'vintage' suggested that the play would be 'wholesome', and therefore acceptable to us -- by contrast with the degenerate modern rubbish to be

> seen elsewhere. And we were not disappointed. Indeed so pleased were we that I decided to write & pay brief tribute -- where tribute is due.... It was a very considerable achievement to produce this play without a moment's lag in the dialogue: there were no 'flat' periods. The credit for this sustained continuity is yours -- as much as the artistes....
> ...
> As for the sisters -- and Mama ... we would stress -- the endearing appeal of Beth's first song[11]; the artfulness of Amy (this little lady possesses the art of mime, and moves as in ballet? Does she dance?) -- the beautiful and adorable "Mrs March". What a lovely mummy to own. But to each and everyone of these ladies a mature and cultured man could earnestly declare: "It's good for a man to know a girl like you!"

Wilhelm Grütter's review in the Cape Argus suggests something of the attitude Van der Gucht adopted:

> The freshness and unselfconsciousness with which self-righteous nineteenth century sentiments were trotted out created a faint nostalgia and a delightful air of self-parody which was kept up throughout without too much strain.' (5 June 1969)

Perhaps not too much, but there was surely some strain, for the writer vividly recalls receiving a letter from Van der Gucht, when she was directing this play, where she was bemoaning the necessary use of an amateur who 'sings and can't act' to play Mr Laurie. This kind of casting does not make the director's task any easier.

However duty did not prompt all of Van der Gucht's productions in the sixties. There were productions in which she exercised far more freedom of choice; but staged for whatever reasons, Van der Gucht's productions could be relied upon to teach her students, and in all cases that was her foremost intention.