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| Simon, Barney (1932-1995) |
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| Barney Simon—anti-Apartheid activist, author, playwright, director—was born in Johannesburg, South Africa to Jewish, Lithuanian-immigrant parents on April 13, 1932. Simon found his passion for theatre in London, England where we worked as a stagehand for Joan Littlewood’s Theatre Royal (1959). Simon returned to South Africa and set up his own theatre group, the Phoenix Players with Ian Bernhardt. Simon became associate editor of the South African literary magazines *The Purple Renoster* and *The Classic*, the latter of which is notable for publishing black writers under the apartheid regime. In 1969 Simon spent a year in New York where we edited the *New American Review,* in which he introduced new South African writing to the United States. Simon founded the internationally acclaimed Market Theatre in 1976 with Mannie Manim in an abandoned Indian marketplace in downtown Johannesburg. The Theatre’s multiracial cast performed in front of non-segregated audiences—the troupe was able to avoid prosecution under the Group Areas Act, which allowed the mixing of races in marketplaces. The award-winning theatre is best known for staging the satirical *Woza Albert!* (*Rise Albert!*)—written by Simon, Percy Mtwa, and Mbongeni Ngema—in which Jesus Christ returns as black man to South Africa. Simon was an ardent social activist who fought ceaselessly against the injustices of Apartheid (he once staged a play *en plein air* so a dissident under house arrest could watch the performance out his window) and was called the ‘most significant theatre talent to have emerged in South Africa’ by Athol Fugard. Simon is the author of a collection of short stories, *Jo’Burg Sis!* and *Born in the R.S.A*. He died in Johannesburg June 30, 1995. |
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