

"King Kong" starts new theatre fashion

By OLIVER WALKER

THESE HAVE BEEN DAYS OF HIGH NOON and high jinks in the peri-urban areas. It all began about the time rehearsals were called for "King Kong," and the cooks, the maids, the office messengers and cleaners, suddenly began asking the "Madam" and the "Baas" if they could go off early to practise their parts.

The idea of Jim and Annie cutting a rug and crooning a love-song seemed terribly funny, and most of us entered into the conspiracy in the right saucy spirit.

After all it did show how broad-minded we were, didn't it, and it was rather fun to cock a snoot at Dr. Verwoerd and the more ridiculous of his "apartheid" laws.

The fun did not cease to be fun when the show itself actually started. It was launched with a swagger, three-guineas-a-seat premiere, and if you had shouted "View-Hullo!" in the vestibule that night half the men would have instinctively tried to leap in the saddle.

The show was a "burster." It became fashionable overnight. If you hadn't been to it you were conversationally bereft of speech. Tickets were at a premium. That made it more exciting when you could wangle a couple. It was just like New York and "My Fair Lady" in miniature.

WORTH IT

Best of all, socially, was it if you had a maid, a chauffeur or a cook in the show (the cast was 60-strong). It was worth the discomfort to be able to boast that you had actually played chauffeur to your chauffeur in the "Caddy" in order to get him to the theatre.

Art and Entertainment

"The Messiah" with a 150-strong Black choir and a small White orchestra has continued the fashion in showing how race relations can work in the entertainment field.

Don't ask me if all this goodwill is more than skin-deep. All I know is that a leading ticket hustler in this town said the other night: "If I wanted a box-office draw these days I'd insist on having some Black faces on the stage."