M.R.A. play

THE LATE DICTATOR

THE PLAY: The Dictator's Slippers (Alexander).

THE PLAYERS: Maxwell Ntombella, Manasseh Moerane, Ronald Hogg, Jerry Ngwane, Leslie Manule, Benjamin Phatshwane, Palmer Kote.

THE DIRECTOR: Norah Caulfield.

By BILL EDGSON

THE PLAY OPENS on a darkened stage with a red light flashing and a beep-beep signal. No, we are not in the world of "Dr. No," but in a country living under the dictatorship of Adamant, " comrade of all the peoples."

Adamant has been "ill" for a while, and his Minister of Interior and Chief of Police, Saturn (Maxwell Ntombella) has been holding the fort with the aid of Adamant's personal physician Dr. Hippocrat (Manasseh Moerane), who looks like the original Uncle Remus in tails, but who provides the play with its biggest surprise near the end, when we learn that Adamant has been dead for nearly a year.

" The Dictator's Slippers " is a Moral Re-armament play which revolves around a conference of world power delegates (from Britain, Africa, India as well as one man called Polyglot who is at home in many lands).

PRISONER

Also present is a political prisoner (Palmer Kote) who was a witness to the will of Adamant in which the dictator's successor is named.

The play is something of a costumed conversation piece, which takes a lot of time and a lot of talk to say quite a lot of worth-while and valid things.

There are several good big speeches and some humorous and topical passages about going to prison ("it has become a social necessity").

The cast, mainly gathered from the local African townships are a bit stiff, but manage to hold the attention unflaggingly, considering the conference-like nature of the play.

The most lively is Benjamin Phatshwane as Polyglot, a man who has 18 passports, finds that power "suits" him and has useful information on all the homosexuals and womanizers in high places.

I found it a pity that the Indian delegate could not have been one of that race, since the others were so carefully chosen by the director.

"The Dictator's Slippers" has little beginning, middle and end plot development and hardly any of the action and trappings of more visual theatre. But it is an interesting and rewarding experience for those who do not mind using their ears and minds.