

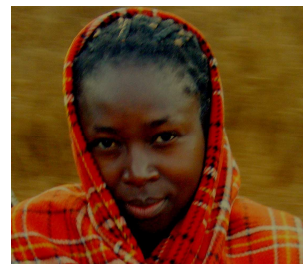
MeTambo News



International Theatre Institute
World Organization for the Performing Arts

Welcome Back!

Welcome to the second edition of **MeTambo News**. For those of you who are reading this for the first time, we say welcome to this space. This is the place where we talk about Imidlalo/Mitambo/Zakucheza, Madrama drama, playmaking and everything theatre. In our last issue we talked about ACTAH and said it stands for Association of Community Theatre Actors in Harare. **ACTAH** stands for Association of Community Theatre Artists in Harare. We apologise for the inaccurate information we put in the previous newsletter. This space, dear theatre lover and theatre practitioner is for you and we are immensely grateful for the amazing feedback that we have received so far. It is heartening to see so many young people being involved in theatre and the strides they are making in their careers and the innovations that they are bringing to the Zimbabwean Theatre experience. To those of you who are supporting, mentoring and encouraging young theatre practitioners we say continue doing the great work that you are doing. The youth are not only the future but we own the present as well. For what is the future without a present. To the young practitioners; the words to abide by are dream, work, aspire and achieve. To all theatre lovers, keep loving theatre and theatre will give back. We aim to keep improving our business. In this edition we have introduced a new feature in the newsletter which we hope you will enjoy. And we would like to thank you, dear reader for taking time to read our newsletter and we hope that we will meet you again on these same pages in our next issue. In the mean time, take the time to enjoy **MeTambo News**.



A New Phenomenon In Zimbabwean Theatre

Not many Zimbabwean theatre practitioners were conducting play reading sessions on a regular basis, but Almasi Collaborative Arts is working outstandingly to create a viable culture of such a practice.

Dramatic literacy is a crucial component of powerful, excellent play making. A noticed component needed in Zimbabwean dramatic arts development is the comprehension and in-depth analysis of excellent dramatic works that have come before.

The Almasi Play Reading Series pursues a core Almasi value of Education in dramatic arts; without an awareness and understanding of some of the greatest dramatic works, the Zimbabwean dramatic artist cannot develop to the level of dramatic literacy necessary to create compelling, well structured, dramatic works. Their goal is to facilitate excellent new Zimbabwean works into existence, works that can compete on global level and leave behind a Zimbabwean dramatic literature legacy.

The play reading series nurtures the Zimbabwean dramatic arts community. It facilitates actors who participate as readers of selected plays in their acting and dramatic literature comprehension; it also nurtures playwrights and directors to learn from great works as they cultivate their own specific voice.

The series also nurtures another core value in dramatic art development, that of dramaturgy. Dramaturgy, or the process of deeply researching the specifics of the world under exploration is crucial. It allows for the portrayal to be rich, resonant and specific to the placement of the play in time, space and moment in history. Also crucial in dramaturgy is comprehension of the structure of the story laid out and the cohesion of the story in terms of theme, character, plot and resolution. These components are vital to a high standard of play making.

Ultimately this series serves to strengthen the local dramatic community and begins the groundwork for comprehensive Zimbabwean dramatic arts development. It begins the process of how plays must be studied and deeply investigated in order for powerful, excellent plays and artists to result.

Radio Golf by August Wilson will be fourth staged reading in Almasi's play reading series. The reading performance, directed by Julie Wharton, will be at 2:00 PM on July 20th at ZGS. Auditions will held at ZIFF on July 8th from 2 PM - 8 PM.

This is play number 10 in Wilson's 10 plays Pittsburgh Cycle. Each different play in the cycle is set in a different decade and focuses on some aspect of what it is to be African American, what it is to be a member of society, what it is to be a human being. 'Radio Golf', set in 1997, looks at the public and private battles individuals choose to fight, challenges us to consider the conflict between personal gain and moral integrity, and highlights how identity is tied to the past as well as the future.

"Theater is life without the boring parts." Alfred Hitchcock

Taken from www.almasiarts.org

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What we are about:

- Theatre Reviews
- Festivals
- Opportunities
- I.T.I Zimbabwe Annual general meeting on 8 November 2013
- Tips and Pointers
- Thoughts, innovations and celebrations

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Journey to Africa, In Africa 2

by **Traver Tussi Mudzonga**

The starting point for every Set/Stage-Theatre Designer is a script then the rest follows. Africa is not poverty and African Design is not poor. It is not locked up in the Stone Age era. Africa is revolving and we need to recognise this and our choosing to be ignorant of it will not change facts. Two things come to mind as I reflect and write this article; *Africa* and its *philosophies*. Let us, yes you and I then look at *design of space in theatre* given in an *African* context to paint a picture of what I will term *African Philosophy of Theatre-Set/Stage Design*. We carry on with the 'Journey to Africa, in Africa'!

I recall the winter of 2012 when **Patience Gamu Tawengwa** and **Kudzai Chimbaira** asked me to read a Scandinavian drama script, 'Comrades' written in 1888 by August Strindberg. After reading the script, what caught my *interest* was the way in which relationships-marriage, art, business and pleasure were distilled into a 'marriage of convenience' in the play. The final set was a conventional box set, of only two wall sections and a lot of philosophy to complete the space. Yes, philosophy, my philosophy as the designer and the audience's philosophy as the viewers. Well you might be asking, 'what is African about it?' and you are right to do so. It is African never to be an expressionist all the way, using the value of communalism to fill up the blanks based upon one's background. In this set I gave the actors what to work with, another character in the form of a set and the audience what to read in the form of a design on the appreciation of *African Philosophy*. I got you, didn't I? No, I did not use mud, clay pots, gule-wankulu masks and grass; I employed *African Philosophy* as it has revolved today to come up with a set within the 21st century reason.

We may never agree on what constitutes an African design but Africa has a reason for every design (2D included). We may not know the reasons behind some African designs but our ignorance of them does not take anything away from them. The *African Philosophy* of design, art and or craft can be summed up into *utility-aesthetic*, meaning *function/purpose-with-beauty/creative appeal*.



About the set design: The two flats with working doors are an artistic representation of two worlds and line of thought both projected in the play and I may say as a designer I find intriguing. These worlds and line of thoughts, like a wall with a doorway into one's private or personal space creates the actors bedrooms. It is only the Bible in its first book and chapter that states man and woman were created equal and in the image of the creator, but life as we see it through COMRADES does not echo the same. This then gives us the contemporary style of a living room with more than one wall colour.

The living room, artist studio has its back wall made of an artist canvas, the world common to the couple of the house. This is where all the play takes place, well all the audiences get to see since the bedrooms are out of bounce for them

I encourage you to appreciate that Africa has a high regard for the spiritual being more real than the physical, but a point of contact in the physical is needed for the spiritual to manifest. What does this have to do with set-theatre design? Well in other circles we accept it as fiction, surrealism, romanticism and or post modernism but not in African canon. A glimpse at the people will greatly help us appreciate African Set-Theatre Design and remember African is more than territorial; here it is a way of thinking, an attitude. Let us recognise design as we cannot invent it, and recognise from deep within who we are for those of Africa in practice.

Theatre-Set/Stage

Designers add to their work the unseen elements that influence the visible set and they might never be there to explain their work yet the audience always read a set. How then can one with an identity crisis create authentic to themselves? To err is to try and view African set design on a foreign paradigm which often rubbish in ignorance what it cannot account for. I had pointed in the last article that I will make reference to three plays staged in Zimbabwe in the last two years but made to one. The Creator made all man unique yet all of them in His image, the best place to start recognising African set-theatre Design is from within. Part of the many roots of the African Philosophy such as *Dare Remadzimambo* (where the kings lived) and places of theatrical ceremonies were never divorced from the people.

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Peace At Last

By Tatenda Lunga

When a colleague informed me and told me to attend an intensive theatre workshop, I was so lonely at that time and kind of tired of everything. I would settle for anything that would occupy my days and keep me outdoors as much as it could. He assured it will put back a

smile on my face. I wondered on how physical theatre would achieve that. I failed to resist such an offer, so I took the details of the workshop's director and went for it.

It was my first day ever to enter the country's biggest college, I asked someone to help me find the University of Zimbabwe -Beit hall. When I entered the hall, everyone in there was busy on press ups. I watched breathlessly as males and females did the same challenging press ups. I looked at all the faces and bodies and most of them were not heavily built, except for four. They were giggling as they gave themselves an applause for making it. A chill ran down my spine as I feared that I had come to the wrong place for I had grown up an inactive child.

The workshop director, Mr. Lloyd Nyikadzino (a physical Theatre practitioner) came to me and told me to change into my studio attire and showed me to the changing rooms. "Start by walking, simply walking" that was the director's call. I smiled at myself as we walked aimlessly in the hall. "Now fast, a little faster, you are getting late somewhere, but you really have to be there on time, now you have to jog, time is against you, you are getting late, it's time to run, run fast, a little faster, fast guys!" He went on like that. Well that part was interesting as we bumped into each other, nonverbally apologized to each other, and then continued again flowing along with the directions. We had twenty minutes break time. We talked, joked and made friends so easily. That was so wonderful. I had been lonely for some time so this was my precious moment. I met young people who were also eager to achieve a lot in this workshop and life. We also shared our dreams and ambitions with each other. We all schemed about how we were going to make a breakthrough since most of us had never been on any professional stage.

After tea we all went back to the Beit Hall. This was the most brilliant part of the day. Always with our workshop director guiding us, we created a good story without a script and we also weren't talking. After he had explained how important it was to work in groups, we were divided into five groups. Within a limited space of time each group would choose an animal they know best, and then they would physically present it in front of the others who in turn had to tell which animal it was. Honestly, it wasn't easy. But we all know that practice makes things perfect. The more we practiced and co-operated the more we resembled our animals.

Again we had a number game, this was more funny but a little tricky. Our director would call out a number and we had to show him the number by lying on the ground and make up the number in five seconds. At first there was confusion as we bumped into each other all of us running to make up easy numbers like one and zero leaving two and five with only more determined individuals.

We went on and on like that every single day for five days. Obviously with different stories and games. We also had the opportunity to learn traditional dances and songs, until jogging, running and press ups were in our blood.

Before the workshop, I thought my body was done, for I was twenty-four and a mother to a four year old boy. I never thought it was possible for me to jump, kick or run. But the physical theatre experience proved me wrong in only a week. I started spinning on my second day at the workshop of course with some difficulties as I had a shoulder that hurt and finally with some help from my mates, I spun. I was stunned and that built so much confidence in me that even today I still feel that my body is strong enough to do anything physical.

Above all after that week I felt at peace. Physical theatre had washed away my depression. I regained my confidence and built up my trust. After I had condemned myself and called myself a loser for some time, I then declared myself a winner. For my soul was lifted up after the workshop and I was ready to face my life challenges without fear anymore. I was able to think fast and always have a second option in anything. I can now easily make friends and the smile is back on my face as my producer had promised. Whenever I am down I remind myself that you start by walking, simply walking. There and then my brains light up.

For women by women: The Women In Theatre Project

By Nonhlalo Dube

Women In Theatre (WIT) is a mentorship programme that was introduced by Nhimbe Trust in partnership with Amakhosi Theatre in February 2013. It's a program that promotes visibility and opportunities for women in theatre. WIT launched its first play '**Song of a Woman**' in March and now has more than 6 registered plays and all of them are set to premiere at Amakhosi as part of the **Plays on Sunday** program before taking off to other venues.

WIT is set to produce their second play entitled '**Mothers**'. **Mothers** is about **Mira**, a woman whose past catches up with her when her jilted husband impregnates their daughter **Bela** out of revenge. The story unfolds as **Bela** the daughter tries to inform her mother that she is pregnant. How will **Bela** break the news? How will **Mira** react? It's a fascinating two women play that is packed with suspense, action and humour. It will feature **Sarah Mpofu** popularly known as '**Tashi**' from **Amakorokoza** and **Precious Moyo** who featured in '**The But-ton Box**'. The play will be directed by **Thembi Ngwabi** and will be produced by **Nonhlalo Dube** the project co-ordinator of WIT. **Mothers**' first performance will be on the 4TH of August 2013 at Amakhosi as part of the **Plays on Sunday program**.

It's exciting to see women especially the young participating in the program and being more than ready to write, direct and produce their own plays. Women working in theatre and those already participating in theatre are encouraged to attend **Women In Theatre labs** and be part of an exciting and positive initiative that is set to make a difference in Zimbabwean Theatre.

The European Festivals Association (EFA) extends the deadline for application of the Atelier for Young Festival Managers EDINBURGH2014 <<http://www.efa-nef.eu/en/activities/atelier/edinburgh>> (3-10 April 2014) to 10 September 2013. EFA offers the opportunity to more young festival directors to apply for the seventh edition of this unique 7-day training programme organised by EFA in collaboration with the renowned Edinburgh International Festival <<http://www.eif.co.uk>>.

Applications have to be submitted via an online application form. Detailed information on the Atelier EDINBURGH, on the application process and eligibility criteria is available at www.atelierforyoungfestivalmanagers.eu <<http://www.efa-nef.eu/en/activities/atelier/edinburgh>>

My life in Theatre



By Mgcini Nyoni

I am one of the many practicing playwrights and theatre directors who have been very vocal about the unfortunate disappearance of the many university theatre arts students that are churned out of our universities once they are in possession of their qualifications. Most end up working in industries that are not at all related to what they studied at university. Of late I have been asking myself if perhaps a clear enough way has been paved for them to become theatre practitioners. Would the many university graduates know where and how to put their university theatre arts qualifications to effective use if they decided to become theatre practitioners?

Whenever I am asked by aspiring thespians what opportunities are to be found in theatre, I usually hesitate before I give an answer. Most of us sort of stumbled upon the artistic careers we now hold close to our hearts. There is no clear pathway to being a writer, director, producer or any other career in theatre or the arts in general.

My theatre career started when I took over the running of the drama club at Dinyane High School in Tsholotsho, in the Matabeleland North province of Zimbabwe in 2004. I took the school drama club to the national finals of the Intra-Africa competitions organized by the Zimbabwe German Society. That was my first real encounter with theater and the next year I was at Amakhosi Cultural Centre, being mentored by Cont Mhlanga.

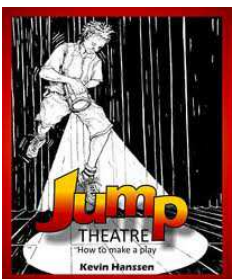
I spent two years learning a lot about scriptwriting for film and theatre, directing and even delved into music and dance. After two years I was ready to enter the industry or the illusion of an industry. I soon realised that the theatre space was not segmented at all. There were no amateur, semi-professional and professional demarcations and everyone had to 'compete' for the same space. I hastily retreated and buried myself in poetry and founded the organisation, **Poetry Bulawayo** which I run to date.

After a couple of years I returned to theatre and this time I was fully aware of what I was getting myself into and I pursued minimalist theatre, a form of theatre I have always been fascinated with. Since there is no clear pathway to becoming an artist in Zimbabwe, what factors contribute to someone becoming a successful artist? Does geographical location have a bearing to what a theatre practitioner eventually becomes? Where one happens to be located has a huge impact on one eventually becoming a 'successful' artist. Looking at the theatre scene in Zimbabwe, one would be forgiven for thinking that there are no theater practitioners in any other part of the country besides Harare and Bulawayo.

Since the majority of theatre practitioners in Zimbabwe are to a large extent self-taught, those in Harare and Bulawayo are helped along by their close association with places like Theatre in the Park, Amakhosi Cultural Centre, Reps Theatre, Bulawayo Theatre and many other spaces that help shape their theatre careers. Whilst there might be some theatres in places like Gweru, Mutare and Masvingo, these are just buildings with no real theater life like the ones that dominates spaces in Harare and Bulawayo. Some individuals have beaten the odds in some instances and made it whilst not residing in neither Harare nor Bulawayo, but it is an undeniable fact that geographical location has a huge bearing to the success or failure of a theatre practitioner.

How to make a play: Jump Theatre, A guide for All

Kevin Hanssen is a theatre actor, director, producer, musician, teacher and published author who started practicing theatre at a very tender age. He later joined Repteens, (a teenage group-junior wing of the famous Repertory players of Zimbabwe). Somewhere in the middle of that he met the guys that became what was later known as Over the Edge, whom he spent the next ten years working with (1994-2004). These are **Gavin Peter, Craig Peter, Zane E Lucas, Wiina Lucian Msamati, Chipo Chung, Karen Alexander, Sarah Norman** and the late **Shaheen Jassat**. The boys had to basically run the company on their own, as the girls left for powerful universities. The company was disbanded and 2004 was the last time they had a production under the name *Over the Edge*. Everyone went on their diverse calling paths. **Wiina** started living in London and tried to make it as an actor (he made it there- he is now the Artistic director of **Fahodzi Theatre**.) **Chipo** and **Sarah** had already started establishing themselves as professionals in London (they have also made it in London, writing, directing and performing plays in **West End theatres** and other London theatres). Everyone just started doing their own thing.



The MeTambo team (MT) caught up with Kevin Hanssen (KH) recently to discuss his illustrious career and his latest offering, the text book – "Jump Theatre"- how to make a play.

How to make a play: Jump Theatre, A guide for all

MT. So Mr. Hanssen tell us, after the disbanding of Over the edge where or what did you go off to do?

KH. I went to the United Kingdom, where I did all kinds of crappy little jobs like everyone else. I was a supply teacher (something I wouldn't recommend anyone in the world). You go to a school where you fill in for the teacher who is not there that day. Eventually I got a producer job working in an audio book company. I ended up working for them for two years. That was really fun. I did everything from recording the book, working with the actor and in the process I also learnt sound engineering. That was for up to about 2005 when I had to come back home.

MT. Why come back home? Why not stay in London like what everyone else was doing?

KH. I don't know. It was time to come back home, I think. There was just kind of a pull to bring me back home. It took me a little while before I settled in Zim.

MT. Why did you write the book, Jump Theatre- how to make a play?

KH. I came back after time away from Zimbabwe and ten years of Over the Edge behind me. I came back with all these notions and together with a friend, we approached Africalia Belgium. Writing this book was a profound intimate learning process for me, I knew some things but some things I had to research on. Slowly but surely I managed to get the book out and launched it at HIFA 2011, after 4 years of writing it.

MT. Do you think your book could actually make a difference to someone's career in theatre, someone who is already in theatre or someone who wants to pursue theatre as a career?

KH. A US based woman who trained in London on who came to Zimbabwe and was working for Allied Arts, said that the book is brilliant. It is like a map that someone can use it. The director of the recently launched "My Big Fat Shona wedding" said the book helped him to direct the play. An artist from Bulawayo said that he used the book to develop his play for HIFA. A teacher from Arundel said that she liked the lighting section and found it very useful. Most people who have read the book say that it gives a good feel of what the whole process of making a play really is. For some people they might need the whole book, for other people they just need to dip into some sections that they are not familiar with. It also has a lot of pictures, I like reading a book with pictures and I would find it difficult to read a book without pictures. There are some things I put that were from pure experiences and just hacking it out on stage and some I had to research on. My experience with Theatre has always been practical, kind of very hands on. That is where the name of the book comes in. Jump in is just about doing things and learning. Just jump in and do it. Don't get scared. Don't wait until you know everything for you to start doing things. Just get started and you will learn as you go. The book is also like a guide like jump in but jump in with this book, hopefully with experience coupled with some friendly advice on the way you should be able to put something up.

MT. What are some of the challenges that you faced in your career in Theatre and what is it that pushed you to put this guide together?

KH. With over the Edge, we used to do everything ourselves. We were acting, writing, directing ourselves from the beginning, someone had to sort out the press release, I had to get home and sort out the sound. We had so many things that we were trying to do. And it would be so exhaustive. By the time we got to the show we, would just be exhausted and sick. My personal belief is that everyone has got a gift and talents in different areas. As I have grown older I have come to appreciate how much we need each other and how you cannot do things on your own. Theatre is such a beautiful example of that. A good theatre company is like a good family; People respect each other and everyone is just having a good time because they are all doing what they enjoy. One of the needs I have noticed in Zimbabwean theatre is that we don't have all the people that we need; we don't have agents, lighting people and designers who understand the whole 3 dimensional picture. I don't know how many times I have watched a play and have come out with the feeling that the play has been designed by 5 different people. Like everyone was just chipping in and there was no clear unified vision of the picture. We need training for directors etc.. My writing the book was an effort to explore that idea. I think we are a long way to go. What we should aim for is to develop all these different talents. Lack of exposure also plays its part. I am very grateful for my travel because I have seen plays in other countries, how things are done in other countries and I have also been part of making stuff in other countries.

MT. What advice would you give a young person who wants to get involved in theatre or someone who is in theatre and probably wants to give up?

KH. I think you need to realize some of the realities of Theatre. Theatre happens mostly at night. You need then to be able to work within that reality. I think the main thing to do is to get involved and not to be proud. Be ready to play any part. My first role on Reps Main stage I had two words. And then they were cut and so my character had no lines then I was just this character who walked on stage and walked off stage and that was the whole role in the play. The main thing is also to be honest with yourself. Exploring all the options of what theatre is and exploring the things that turn you on and what energizes you. If you are always energized by that then it means that you are probably in the right place. If it drains you all the time and then it means that you are probably in the wrong place. The idea is that theatre is not about theatre, it is about real life. People who are involved in theatre they forget that. It is about telling stories and stories are about people and there are different people out there beside theatre people only.



Kevin Hanssen is currently exploring the world of story and the role that theatre has to play in it.

Notes from Abroad

A new feature on our newsletter. This is the space where we have our fellow Zimbabweans who have worked and or are still working in the diaspora tell us of their theatre experiences outside. To start off this initiative, we have **Dylan Wilson Max** a seasoned theatre and film actor and director write about his experiences in South Africa.

The Bank Job

By **Dylan Wilson Max**

About a week ago I was privileged to have been invited by the International Theatre Institute-Zimbabwe to share and I suppose lend support morally and spiritually. I was in two minds, one of my problems is I have taken a very low profile regarding the arts, these days I tend to watch an amazing amount of movies it is much safer for me. The reason being I am an addict. I have been on stage and I cannot get off. Anyone who has gone down this road will tell you. I am now in the private sector and my biggest fear is getting involved in something artistic and abandoning the employees that depend on me for a living. Trust me it should be an easy choice, for me it is not. Like an addict I could sell my last body part to stay performing.

I had a very busy performance arts career capping this with becoming a Director for a Zimbabwean soap opera Studio 263 in the early 2000's. I then decided that I wanted more and moved to South Africa, whatever I had achieved in Zim meant absolutely nothing when I landed in Johannesburg.

I had to start from scratch after having a choice of roles and being able to input back home, I found myself having to first get an agent and secondly attend auditions which I hadn't done since I started my career back in the 1990's. At the same time my Fiancée now my wife was pregnant with our first child and it was near Christmas. I had gone to several auditions and though I thought I cracked them I didn't get them. Time was running out, my wife had given birth, Christmas had come and gone, money was so tight that we celebrated buying a 2 Lts coca cola instead of cans – we spoiled ourselves. 3 weeks after the birth of my daughter, I attended an audition for one of the big South African banks.

I stunk, I am not a public speaking off-the-cuff kind of guy, when I take on a role my character must have motive a history a background for me to get confident in the role. This job was kind of like that but it also entailed being factual and bringing up stats in the middle of mock interviews that the writer and presenter knew but the interviewee did not. I walked out of the audition feeling lucky to be alive and out of it, after frustrating them with my lack of subject. The writer who was in the auditions looked like he was reaching for the sawn off shot gun, standing imposingly in the corner, that he uses for actors who butcher his script, dare I say I felt his anguish. Convinced there was absolutely no chance I called up my agent looking for any other opportunity, but there was nothing. I got home and told my wife the news 'There is absolutely no chance I got that' I said. The next day just after 9 I get a call from my agent, two things were running through my mind either there was another audition or the writer from the previous day's audition held an old age home to ransom and would only let them go if I turned up and did justice to his script. I was convinced it was the latter. To my utmost shock they wanted me for the job and it was a good paying job it set us up for 3 to 4 months financially.

I learnt a lot from my time in Johannesburg about the way things work out there:

- *It's 80 -90 % look: if you look right for the part they will give you that part – that does not mean you must not prepare – in fact over prepare there are still directors and producers out there that believe in good solid work
- *You are always going to do things you don't want – This bank job I really hated it but I got a really good pay packet it is also something that I can put on my CV. If you stick at it long enough you can then choose what you want – this also has a lot to do with the kind of agent you align with.
- *Make use of the little opportunity that you get and you will get them – I didn't enjoy the subject or the style however I could have used this network more to my advantage.
- *Work on your auditions – these should be the most important and the best performances of your life.

I cannot end without a tribute to some of the most important actors and actresses to have come out of Zimbabwe in the last decade. They are **Wiina Lucien Msamati** – recently seen on HBO's Game of Thrones - if you don't know **Wiina** he was the pirate with the Shona accent. **Arnold Tongai Chirisa** – Recently seen on HBO's American Horror Story – The Asylum. **Chipo Chung** recently seen on PBS Masterpieces' – **The Last Enemy**. **Chipo** is up and down Htown and Harare North (London) spreading the gospel. **Danai Gurira**, also going between Zim and the states sharing her experiences through productions. They do us proud I have met and worked with some of them and gathering by their performances the inevitable has happened, I can tell you now for them to get where they are they had to go through the ringer and for that I SALUTE THEM!



Theatre groupsTheatre individualsTheatre organisationsBambelela Arts Ensemble in communities

Bambelela Arts Ensemble is a fulltime community theatre based organization made up of youths who have worked together in a broad alliance concerning their common interest in Community Development and other related matters.



The Ensemble was formed in response to an increasing demand in Zimbabwe for overt, organized support and comprehensive development delivery services. The Ensemble has a long standing history of activism on development which back dates to its inception on the 20th of June 1992 in Matshobana suburb, Bulawayo. Due to the success and progress made in the past and fact that the issues around which Bambelela Arts was formed continue to prevail, the individuals who have been involved have decided to take up the challenges of ongoing development work. For the Ensemble to function what matters most is not the number of followers it have but the ideological unity, mutual trust, understanding and solidarity of purpose which implements the organization's activities.

Community Theatre: Patsime Trust

Patsime Trust is a Zimbabwean non-profit Organisation established in 2002 and based in Harare, Zimbabwe. Patsime's core activities include production of edutainment theatre, participatory theatre for development, capacity development for community based theatre groups, information collection, production, and dissemination and promoting communication and dialogue on cutting-edge issues related to HIV and AIDS and Gender.



Currently, the organization is running the Buddyz for Luv project which targets young boys and girls in primary and secondary educational institutions in Zimbabwe. Through the use of edutainment theatre the project addresses life skills around sexual and reproductive health and rights. Over the years the project has supported the establishment of school based clubs in 36 schools distributed in clusters of six, in six provinces of the country.

International Theatre Institute-Zimbabwe Launches The Schools mentorship Program

On the morning of the 26th of June 2013 at Churchill Boys High School, the International Theatre Institute – Zimbabwe Centre launched the SCHOOLS Mentorship Clinic. The Schools Mentorship Clinic is a platform for budding Zimbabwean theatre artists, who want to pursue a career in theatre to activate a mentoring relationship with a professional artist of their choice. This platform also presents them with a diverse national network of other young artists making their mark in the industry.

This was the first mentorship Program that the International Theatre Institute-Zimbabwe Centre has hosted in partnership with Churchill Boys High School as part of commemorating the Day of the African Child. On this exchange showcase, theatre plays were presented from four different schools (**Churchill Boys High, Danhiko, Queen Elizabeth Girls High and Chiedza Child**). The four mentors were **Nothando Nobengula** (Talented film, television and theatre Actress; 2013 Best Actress- National Merit Award winner), **Patience Tawengwa**, (A Prominent National Arts Merit Award winning female theatre director and producer), **Julia Wharton** (A United States of America Theatre teacher currently based in Zimbabwe), and lastly **Dylan Wilson Max**, (A seasoned Theatre, Film and TV Actor and Director).

The mentorship clinic program is designed to enable emerging artists in schools to access and learn from the incredible pool of talent in Zimbabwe theatre. The goal of the SCHOOLS Mentorship Clinic is to create and organize platforms that encourage youth to showcase their talents in all areas of theatre. Beyond the exchange showcase platforms, ITI- Zimbabwe hopes to bring together a community of young artists who can further expand and develop their talent and inspire generations of young artists to come.

Patience Tawengwa said it was a great event and a pleasure to see and interact with High School drama groups. It is a good initiative which you have done to partner High School drama groups with practicing theatre artists. Others like **Julie Wharton** said that we must continue with this initiative and continue to do it annually and develop it into a festival. She also advised us to also give them a structure like a time limit for the productions that they present. It is good that it is not a competition, which makes the children more relaxed. **Dylan Wilson Max** was very happy to have been invited to be part of the program. He said this is where theatre begins at Schools and we should nurture young talent. He advised the young people that they should not be ashamed or afraid of the roles that they are given and they should do them whole heartedly.

Nothando Nobengula observed that As much as it was not a competitions it was a platform to show off to each other. She would really love to continue working as a mentor because it is amazing to be able to witness talent in its rawness and watch it grow. **The Teachers** wanted more of such like initiatives and also have the mentors come into schools and help the teachers in teaching drama as most of them do not have the required expertise. They also said there is value in interacting with other schools and seeing what they have to offer and having the opportunity to be inspired by great work.

Gideon Jeph Wabvuta who also performed on the day thinks the schools mentorship program is something that should be done. He says that Established artists should be there to help children, There is a lot of potential in children. And it is good for artists to invest a little of their time to help young talent. **The Students** were quite happy and enthusiastic. They wanted to know if they could have these mentors come more often, to help them improve their directing, writing and acting skills.

Do you work in the culture sector in Zimbabwe?
Do you already speak a little German?
Want a 4-week course in Germany to catapult your language skills to the next level?

WE HAVE A SCHOLARSHIP FOR YOU!

Win a course at a Goethe institute in Germany – 4 weeks, all expenses paid, including airfare, accommodation and living expenses.

Requirements:

You must -

- **Be over the age of 18**
- **Have a valid passport (min 6 months validity beyond date of travel)**
- **Have learnt some German already (at least A1 level)**
- **Be able to leave the country for 4 weeks between Sept 2013 and Jan 2014**
- **Work in the culture sector, with a desire to pursue exchange with German-speaking partners**

Interested? Apply by sending your application either by email to info@goetheharare.org or delivered to 51 Lawson Ave, Milton Park. Shortlisted candidates will be contacted for an interview.

Please include in your application (Please submit in ENGLISH):

- 1. Your C.V.**
- 2. An application letter explaining your reasons for applying (and the benefit the experience could bring to your work); your suitability as a candidate; your current German language level.**

-The ZGS/GZH Language Department

Procedures for bringing in foreign artists

IN THE last two decades, Zimbabwe has witnessed a lot of interest from bi-lateral and multi-lateral partners in bringing artists to Zimbabwe as well as sending artists to other countries especially Europe. This is a positive development and critical aspect that enables Zimbabwe to benchmark its arts with that of other countries. There is no law in Zimbabwe that inhibits this activity as there is freedom in arts activity in Zimbabwe.

However, it is important for those that have brought artists (and those that may wish to do so) to know the steps to take, along with the documentation required. These procedures only apply to public performances and not private ones. Generally speaking public performances are those that the organisers invite the public to attend either for a fee or free. The organisers should be certified by National Arts Council of Zimbabwe (NACZ) to organise public events.

This is obviously done in order to protect the public. Should the organiser wish to bring an artist to Zimbabwe, he/she must approach NACZ at least eight (8) weeks before the event and the Council will normally request for contract between the artist and the organiser. The organiser will be issued with a letter that they take to Zimbabwe Revenue Authority and Board of Censors. The letter together with all the contracts and any other pertinent documents will be submitted to Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA) for tax purpose. Public performance in Zimbabwe is deemed working and so the remuneration so obtained in such a performance is taxable.

In addition there is need to get a performance certificate from Board of Censors. Armed with Zimra tax certificate and certificate from Board of Censors, the applicant (organiser) will then be cleared by NACZ to hold their public show. The clearance letter will then be taken to Department of Immigration for issuance of Temporary Employment Permit (TEP). Currently the fee for TEP costs \$500.00 per person or group that performs together. Depending on the type of certification issued by NACZ, the organiser has to pay a fee to the Council before such a show is cleared. The above will not apply to cultural exchange programmes as defined by NACZ.

It is true that individual and groups are free to participate in cultural exchange of any nature and follow the processes as explained above. However, should the cultural exchange be approved by the Government of Zimbabwe through the Ministry responsible for Arts and Culture or National Arts Council of Zimbabwe, then the organiser need not pay the above fees. Cultural exchange may either be done as a fulfilment of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Government of Zimbabwe and another government or just individual initiative. In the case of an individual initiative, unless otherwise with a written authority from an authorised person in a government department of Ministry, the organisers will pay the requisite fees for holding of any show involving a foreign artists irrespective whether one calls it a cultural exchange or not. In the event that it is an approved cultural exchange, then there will be waiver of all the fees as given above.

It is important to note that cultural exchange is a mutually agreed activity between two or more parties. Should any organiser wish to get waivers from paying statutory fees, the government, through the relevant department, Usually National Arts Council of Zimbabwe, should have agreed to the activity being classified a cultural exchange. Some of the characteristics of an activity deemed cultural exchange includes that there should be a clear mutually agreed benefits for the parties involved. It is the responsibility of the initiating party to clearly articulate the benefits and the receiving party should agree with the proposal.

Not all performances organised by embassies accredited to Zimbabwe can be deemed cultural exchanges deserving to be waived from paying statutory fees. The next time an organisation plan to embark on a cultural exchange programme, it needs to engage National Arts Council of Zimbabwe for guidance without assuming to avoid unnecessary inconveniences. This especially applies to festivals that usually bring many foreign artists with the intention of cultural exchange.

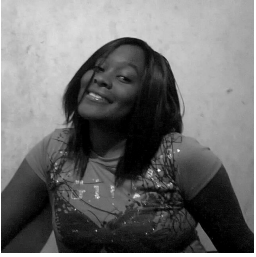
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Playwrights Workshop Phase One- Review

By Privillage Netsai Mutendera



In March of this year the British Council (Zimbabwe) in collaboration with the Royal Court Theatre

(England) sent out a call for applications from Zimbabwean playwrights to participate in a two year writing program. This came about upon the realisation that the country has been going through a "crisis of stories" despite the presence of indigenous story tellers. This program is the same as the one the Royal Court theatre and British council centres have had with writers from Mexico, Brazil, India, Chile and Nigeria. Fifty (50) applicants applied countrywide but only twelve (12) were chosen. So on Friday 28 June these young playwrights set out on their journey to Johannesburg, South Africa in search of tools to strengthen their intangible writer's voice.

The writers namely Kevin Hanssen, Blessing Hungwe, Leonard Matsa, Elizabeth Muchemwa, Sifiso Mabhena, Nelson Mapako, Rudo Mutangadura, Mgcini Nyoni, Nonhlalo Dube, Musekiwa Samuriwo and myself have an experience of writing plays and have had our works produced. It was then our duty to go in search of the stories but we were yet to find out that the stories were there under our very noses and that we just needed to perfect our craft.

The week started off slowly following an intense six days full of hard work and non-stop writing.

The week started with arriving at Mokoya Lodge, SA. The following day we introduced ourselves and we got to know the facilitators of the workshop from Royal Court Theatre namely Elyse Dodgson, Leo Butler and Winsome Pinnock. The next day we had group sections where we learnt how to combine personal, external events and research material in creating a play on a specific topic. We also had individual sessions where we were required to come up with a scene not more than 5 minutes and perform it using tools like music, pictures and newspaper articles which we had been asked to bring prior to the workshop. The following day we had to come up with a story which we had to structure the scenes of a play and at the end of the day write a scene then present it the following day.

To get our writing juices flowing we climbed to the summit of Magaliesberg mountain range and saw Shelter rock. Magaliesberg is over a hundred times older Mount Everest making it one of the oldest mountain range on earth. We then spent the rest of the day nursing our blisters.

On the 7th day we were told that the first draft of the scripts were due in October and these are the plays that we are going to be working on the next two phases of the workshop in the course of two years. We each presented a scene from the plays that we are going to write. After presentations we got notes from our group mentors. On this day I am happy to announce that we beat the Chileans at a game of "KIPPIE UPPIE" which is a ball game where the group has to keep the ball in

the air, after days of trying to beat the Chilean writer's record of 77 we came out with a score of 87. We left the workshop with the hope that the South African group that was coming after us would not break our record.

It ended in high spirits with everyone more eager to writing our great scripts yet.

I personally am appreciative to this program because it has given me an insight on the vast of stories that I can write using the tools I learnt to make my work more pronounced as well as how to write for collaborations.

After all was said, done, learnt and written we had our sad good byes, well only till the second phase so I sign out saying keep putting words to paper.



The Playwrights and the Royal Court



The Female Playwrights

Privillage Netsai Mutendera is a Playwright and Actress based in Harare.

Deadline: 11/10/13 05:00 PM

Are you a 16-to-25-year-old playwright? Do you live on planet earth? You've come to the right place...

The International Student Play script Competition (ISPC) is a playwright competition open to anyone aged 16 to 25 based anywhere in the world.

It is totally free to enter and there are no restrictions on form, content, or length, except that it must be a new play, or adaptation, and it should be written in English.

Every submission will be read and the winner of the competition will receive constructive feedback from the team at NSDF, £500 prize money, and mentoring from an established playwright. The winning script will also be workshopped by a professional director at the National Student Drama Festival 2014.

The ISPC is now in its 39th year and is proud to have Alan Ayckbourn, one of the world's most performed living playwrights, as its patron.

Find out more about the National Student Drama Festival <http://www.ideastap.com/Opportunities/Brief/The-International-Student-Playscript-Competition-111013#Overview>

The information age and the survival of theatre in Zimbabwe



By Peace Mukwara

While Zimbabwean theatre has always kept pace with current trends in popular culture and politics, recent trends in communication and the dissemination of information have somehow left the theatre behind. Digital technologies may provide a means to create theatre reviews that will speak to modern audiences in ways compatible with our fast moving culture. This article discusses the possibilities, means and potential of digital technologies in promoting theatre viewership and attraction of new audiences in line with changing global trends.

The Information Age (also known as the Computer Age, Digital Age, or New Media Age) is an enthralling period in human history characterized by the shift from traditional industry brought on by industrialization, to an economy based on the computerization of information. During the information age, the phenomenon is that the digital industry creates a knowledge-based society surrounded by a high-tech global economy that spans over its influence on how the manufacturing throughput and the service sector can operate in an efficient and convenient way.

Writing on the role theatre reviews in Zimbabwe, **Samuel Ravengai** (2011) aptly observes that: *much of what we know today about the history and development of Zimbabwean theatre is derived from media archives. The theatre critic and/ or reviewer is, in essence, writing for today's theatre audience and the future theatre historian.* It is however of much significance to also consider, the changing times and in particular the digital tide that might threaten the survival of theatre if not carefully adopted and embraced.

A traditional theatre review often begins by giving the reader some background about a production, a brief outline of plot and themes, a sense of what the staging looks (and sounds) like; it offers an evaluation of writing, production and performances and concludes with a summing up. But it doesn't have to be like that. Particularly in this digital age, when a theatre review can be a succinct and witty 140-character critique on Facebook or Twitter, an occasional or regular response to a comment or thread, or a piece of writing on a blog that runs to a few words and uses the production as a springboard to discuss wider issues. Most importantly, the information age has created a generation that hates reading especially long sentences. To counter this, constantly uploading images and video clips of a show particularly the dramatic moments will definitely have far reaching positive consequences.

Blogging has changed the world of theatre criticism, and for the better. A wider range of voices on many different platforms isn't challenging the authority of theatre critics but broadening it. It may never have been as hard to get paid for writing theatre criticism, but it has never been easier to get noticed for writing it and to gain yourself an audience for what you write.

Theatre Arts at the University of Zimbabwe

By Gideon Jeph Wabvuta

The University of Zimbabwe theatre arts department over the years has produced a number of performers that have made an impact within the theatre industry. I bet one would wonder where the rest have gone too as only a few people remain within the field to be performers. Education within the theatre arts department is quite broad as students are exposed to literally everything within the theatre industry from pre-production right up to post production. This includes acting, design, arts management, scriptwriting, directing, applied theatre and the historical aspects of theatre. Being a theatre arts student especially an Honors student, one is always under so much pressure as the volumes of work are always high.

There has always been the perception that UZ theatre students are only taught the theoretical aspects of theatre and never the practical. This indeed is a misnomer as the students go through the whole Stanislavski psycho technique in acting and also dance training. However, the weakness in this is that not much studio time is available as one has to balance with other courses that are theoretical and have their own demands. The greatest weakness I have noted that exists within the university setup is the link between the school and the industry. Most students are not aware of what is happening within the industry and when they graduate they tend to find it hard to break into the market. One area which is stagecraft has made headways into the industry as we saw HIFA 2012 most part2 students interned at HIFA as designers and even HIFA 2013 three students managed to take part. This is clearly a step in the right direction and I hope there will be more of these synergies between professionals and students.

The inception of weekend live in the final semester 2012 saw Beit Hall being revived, the norm had been seeing Beit hall alive during exam times and the culture of watching theatre productions seems to have been on the rise. One can be glad to note that weekend live managed to have an audience of up to 70 individuals who came to watch a theatre show. This included people who had never watched a single show in their life, it can then be said it was a job well done when that same person would return the following week to watch another show. Shows that were featured included **Miss Julie, My Father is a Goat, Dirty Laundry, Qapela Merman, Alcatraz, This or That** and many others. One hopes that more shows will make their way to UZ.

As a student at the University I feel that I carry information that has the ability to help the industry grow the only problem I face is where to use that information. I have noticed that the University of Zimbabwe has produced graduates from the theatre arts department who later on divert to other fields when in fact other theatre companies could benefit from them. It's interesting to note that the University of Zimbabwe has arts management a course which is really required within the field and every honors theatre student does it, yet after graduating most of them don't use it.

I stress that there should be a relationship that is struck to enable the growth of the industry. Credit has to be given to Almasi Collaborative Arts which introduced its play reading series, this saw a number of students taking part as the initial play a raisin in the sun, took most of its cast from the UZ. This was a great step as most students could now be seen going for auditions for plays. Theatre arts at UZ is a great experience and not a walk in the park but a tough journey that needs continuous support of those that have gone before us, as we have the same goal which is see our industry grow.

Until next time!

This analysis of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of theatre practice in Zimbabwe is based on personal experience mainly of theatre practice in Harare. There is no doubt that theatre practice in other parts of Zimbabwe will show some characteristics that may differ with those characteristic dominantly observed in Harare.

This analysis is not substantiated with figures or statistical comparisons and has not been checked or tried out to a large group of selected theatre practitioners. A small number of theatre practitioners who have been asked to comment on this analysis felt they would have benefitted from a comprehensive study of the theatre practice in the country with special emphasis on gathering different views of theatre practitioners and the general public.

Except for accessing a few theatre products by students of the University of Zimbabwe, I have not had the chance to come into contact with theatre products from other universities in the country to warrant a definitive stance on theatre practice in the theatre education institutions of higher learning.

Strengths of Zimbabwean Theatre Practice.

- *A huge number of resilient and highly committed self- taught and within- group apprenticed practitioners.
- *Existence of many practitioners with strong will power to soldier on despite huge viability challenges.
- *Theatre scene dominated by self-reliant and resourceful practitioners.
- *Clearly known history of applying theatre to communicate both development ideas and criticism of the prevailing socio-economic, cultural and political environment.
- *A huge appetite for and confidence in exporting theatre products world-wide.
- *The existence of a sizeable remnant of community based theatre professionals

Weaknesses in Zimbabwean theatre practice:

- *An excessive tendency to 'kill' theatre productions/products after exposure to insignificant size of audience.
- *An excessive dependence on plays written by the group or members of the group.(A persistent unwillingness to produce plays written by others especially published ones).
- *A persistent tendency to shun collaborations in both production and marketing of theatre products. (A dominance of egotistic or ego-tripping practitioners constantly seeking for individual glory or personalized 'kingdoms').
- *A tendency to crave for praise and to hate all criticism.
- *A dominant existence of practitioners who appear to approve or appreciate best example or excellent talent of colleagues in the public and yet in privacy seething with hatred, disapproval and bad- mouthing of colleagues especially before potential sponsors or funders and even authorities.
- *An absence of promotional and value- adding media coverage and the scarcity of informed theatre critics with appreciable knowledge of the dynamics and needs of a viable theatre industry.
- *A diminishing number of female theatre practitioners.
- *The inability for theatre industry to attract university graduates with theatre studies.
- *The absence of a national theatre industry plan of action.
- *The absence of regular platform for Department of Arts and Culture/National Arts Council and stakeholders in the theatre industry reviewing the industry and planning together for its development

Opportunities in the theatre practice in Zimbabwe

- *A growing number of platforms for theatre practice promotion and professionalization of theatre occupation.
- *The possibility of the adoption of a new constitution that has several references to culture especially cultural rights and recognition of cultural diversity.
- *The re-designation by the government of the Great Zimbabwe University as a university for arts and cultural heritage studies.
- *The growing number of arts and culture festivals with space for theatre exhibition.
- *The emergency of private and commercial audio-visual media especially radio.
- *The potential emergency of private television stations.
- *The ongoing process of reviewing the national cultural policy.
- *The growing trade or market by theatre practitioners in DVDs of stage theatre productions.
- *The continued existence of a resourced Culture Fund of Zimbabwe.
- *A growing number of corporates showing interest in supporting partnering theatre companies.

Threats to Theatre Practice in Zimbabwe

- *Diminishing scope or space for theatre skills acquisition and enhancement.
- *A continued fear by government especially the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture on theatre groups accessing in school audiences.
- *A continued unwillingness by government to bring into the formal education/curriculum of arts education (The imposition of sport as core-curriculum activity a while keeping the practice of arts education as mainly extra-curricular activity).
- *The absence of a national theatre policy.
- *A high reliance by theatre practitioners to external funding of theatre practice or projects.
- *A persistent marginalization of theatre artists/theatre in national galas wholly sponsored and funded by the state machinery.
- *A ravaging fear of challenging government's 'arm's length' institutions created to service the arts sector.
- *A ravaging fear by theatre practitioners to challenge legislation, administrative structures, procedures and practices by some state machinery which undermine the vibrancy and viability of the theatre practice.
- *The continued practice by local authorities to minimize access to community halls by theatre companies.

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INSTITUTE-ZIMBABWE

This newsletter is brought to you by **International Theatre Institute-Zimbabwe** and **The Young Practitioner's Committee** with support from **Global Arts Trust**.

The International Theatre Institute ITI, the world's largest performing arts organisation founded in 1948 by theatre and dance experts and UNESCO, strives for a society in which performing arts and their artists thrive and flourish. ITI advances UNESCO's goals of mutual understanding and peace and advocates for the protection and promotion of cultural expressions, regardless of age, gender, creed or ethnicity. It works to these ends internationally and nationally via national centres and cooperating members located in all corners of the world. In Zimbabwe ITI is represented via the Zimbabwe centre for ITI which was re-established on 8 November 2010.

The Young Practitioner's Committee, YPC has two main axis of work:

To encourage and facilitate the presence of a new generation of theatre artists, to develop new forms of artistic participation and to contribute to the transmission of the ITI legacy during the World Congresses.

To build up an international network of young performing arts practitioners in order to facilitate international mobility, exchange ideas and maintain the contacts made at a World Congress.

Three thematic working groups of young practitioners were formed during the YPC committee sessions—these groups will continue to develop activities under the following groups:

1. The Mentorship Group 2. The Networking Group 3. The World Theatre Day Group

Get Back to us.

It is our wish that our work is fully representative of Zimbabwean theatre, with stories, articles coming from every corner of the country. So, if you have a story that you want to tell the world, you have an opinion, you are working in the field of theatre and performing arts, you are the person we are waiting to hear from.

You can contact us on:-

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The Schools mentorship clinic at Churchill Boys High School