

# INTERNATIONAL CULTURE UNIVERSITY IN ZIMBABWE

## Journal

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**NHIMBE**

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ZIMBABWE CREATIVE CIVIL SOCIETY  
PLAN OF ACTION FOR  
ARTS AND CULTURE

**NPAAC**

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84 Fort Street, Canberra Building  
P.O. Box 509, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe  
Tel: +263 (0) 9 60002, +263 (0) 9 60019  
Email: [info@nhimbe.org](mailto:info@nhimbe.org)

Chief Editor: Mgcini Nyoni

## **Cover Image:**

Siyaya Arts Productions on a television shoot for Thatha at Edinburgh Fringe, August 2013.

*In the photo is Benhilda Ngwenya with Makbula Moyo and Peter Ruvanga behind her.*

© Siyaya Arts Productions

Tsitsi Dangarembga Image by David Clarke / CC Licensed

The stagnation of growth in the arts sector has been blamed by many on the lack of performance venues. If this is taken to mean the absence of the physical buildings in which performances can take place, then this is not true. What is lacking is capital investment to rehabilitate the existing buildings, which are plentiful, and to put in place proper management structures that can stimulate grassroots development of the arts and sustainable performances by arts practitioners.

I was thinking of this as I took a mini-tour of Bulawayo's youth centres, which are located in almost every suburb of Bulawayo and are run by the Bulawayo City Council.

Opinion on Bulawayo's numerous youth centres has, most of the time, taken the 'glass is half-empty' view. The common rhetoric is that the youth centres have been destroyed, by the economy, by the authority that runs them, in this case, the Bulawayo City Council. The factors that have led to the non-performance of youth centres are many, but the core of the problem is that art and culture are considered side issues by the Zimbabwean government and, without proper buy-in from the government, youth centres and other recreational facilities will remain desolate.

"These places are now shells, white elephants so to speak," one parent, who is part of the parents committee at Inyathi Youth Centre in Mpopoma, said when I sought an audience with him. "These places used to be vibrant, they used to be sources of employment even," he added with a sense of dejection.

When I had passed through the centre in the morning, about twenty young men were playing soccer on the youth centre grounds. Passing through the same place in the late afternoon I saw a group of young women playing netball. I did not share the old man's pessimism. The youth centres can be put to good use and help the many youths who spend the day at the shops for lack of anything better to do with their time.

Putting the youth centres to good use will not be easy, but it is an achievable task with buy-in from all the relevant stakeholders. And the government has to be the major player, otherwise we will be chasing the wind.

Inyathi Youth Centre is bigger and is in a better state than the likes of Luveve Youth Centre, which does not have electricity or any furniture to speak of. In a week I visited about five youth centres and I realised that almost all of them have ample space that could be turned into dance studios, theatre rooms, film studios or even music studios. It would be possible for the youth centres to have a proper management structure and to have resident dance, theatre, film, theatre and music instructors who can guide those who want to take up the arts as a viable career option. Maybe because I never saw the glory days of youth centres, I see them now as what they can become, not moan about what they used to be. When I look at the youth centres dotted around the city of Bulawayo, I see a glass that is half full.

**Mgcini Nyoni**

# Exploring the challenges of preserving the right to cultural expression in contemporary African society

*By Marshal N. Mapondera*

## Introduction & Historical Background

The world is a 'delicate mosaic of different cultures pieced together', whose common denominator is humanity.<sup>1</sup> Africa is arguably the most culturally diverse continent on earth. Our contemporary normative legal framework attempts to reinstate cultural identity as a fundamental aspect of social and economic development of peoples. We even have a Charter for African Cultural Renaissance (African Cultural Charter) aimed at promotion and preservation of African culture.<sup>2</sup> Various national constitutions now recognise indigenous people's rights.<sup>3</sup> Recognition of cultural identity has been elevated to mean 'self-determination' as cultural values or norms affect the entire socio-political and economic lifestyle of a people.<sup>4</sup>

National intellectual property laws (IP) today also attempt to provide protection of cultural creativity, preventing exploitation whilst allowing for the economic benefits of that monopoly.<sup>5</sup>

The inclusion of the legal protection of culture in Africa under IP or human rights has a concrete historical background on which the future of the continent depends. Colonisation upset the peaceful socio-cultural development of African peoples through slavery, apartheid and various forms of oppression.<sup>6</sup> Decolonisation for the last fifty-six years has been a battle of African identity in the world, hence the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (the African Charter) and various national constitutions emphasise firstly the abolition of

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<sup>1</sup> Paragraph 1 of the Preamble to the Rome Statute.

<sup>2</sup> Adopted in 2006 in Khartoum, Sudan to replace the 1976 Cultural Charter.

<sup>3</sup> First Draft Constitution of the Republic of Zambia, 2012 section 60 (d)

<sup>4</sup> SA Dersso 'The right to self-determination, minorities & indigenous peoples in Africa' in SA Dersso (ed) Perspectives on the rights of minorities & indigenous peoples in Africa (2010) 280; Articles 4(c) & 5(2), African Cultural Charter.

<sup>5</sup> See Part VIII of the Copyright & Neighbouring Rights Act of Zimbabwe Chapter 26:05 particularly section 85(2)(a); see also the African Cultural Charter Article 24.

<sup>6</sup> See the preamble to the African Cultural Charter Paragraph 5; SL Wooley 'The rights of indigenous children around the world- still far from reality', (2009) *Ach Dis Child*, May 2009 Vol 94 No 5 p. 397 available at <http://www.adc.bmj.com> (Accessed 7 October 2011)

Charter) and various national constitutions emphasise firstly the abolition of slavery, apartheid and all forms of discrimination (including ethnicity)<sup>7</sup> and secondly the protection of cultural values.<sup>8</sup> Though human rights are said to be 'inalienable' and 'universal', the African values of 'Ubuntu' promote collective rather than individual rights.<sup>9</sup> The African Charter states; 'the rights and freedoms of each individual shall be exercised with due regard to the rights of others, collective security, morality and common interest.'<sup>10</sup>

The enjoyment of this right is not absolute however, as conflicts arise in many spheres particularly where practices become harmful and violate individual human rights. Practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) or female circumcision and child marriages tend to violate individual rights such as protection against torture, human dignity and personal liberty.<sup>11</sup>

Homophobia to me is one side of the same coin with restrictive/conservative cultural values against 'indecent/unnatural' sexual acts. To what extent can regional human rights balance the preservation of cultural expression/identity and protection of individual rights? The paper will therefore define culture in the context of its place in African society and as a human right. Historical and developing limitations to culture and conflict points with other human rights will be evaluated. Legal and extra-legal solutions are proposed at the end.

## 1.What is culture and why is it so important?

Culture is the total sum of a people's way of life. It includes norms and values of a society: their religion, politics, economics, technology, food habits, medicine,

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<sup>7</sup> Paragraph 8 of the Preamble to the African Charter as read with Article 2 and Article 26 of the African Charter on the Rights & Welfare of the Child (African Children's Charter)- 'Protection Against Apartheid & Discrimination'. See also for instance the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 section 9, the Constitution of Namibia's Apartheid & Affirmative Action Clause Article 23, the Constitution of the Federation of Nigeria, 1960 section 27, Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995 Article 21 and the Constitution of Zimbabwe, 2013 section 4.13

<sup>8</sup> See Draft Zambian Constitution (footnote 3 above), sections 60 (d), 61 and particularly 63 (1)

<sup>9</sup> Unpublished: MN Mapondera 'A child belongs to everyone: recalling an African heritage of cooperative child protection' unpublished article 2013 7-8

<sup>10</sup> Article 27(2)

<sup>11</sup> FA Athaus 'Female Circumcision: Rite of Passage or Violation of Rights?' (1997) International Family Planning Perspectives 23

marriage, performing arts, and law.<sup>12</sup> Culture defines a people, gives them pride and a unique identity.<sup>13</sup> This is a facet of the right of self-determination of a particular people.<sup>14</sup>

## 2. How is culture recognised and protected legally in Africa?

Cultural expression as highlighted above is a human right. This is clearly provided for in the United Nations (UN)<sup>15</sup> as well as the African human rights system.<sup>16</sup> Further, international law imposes a heavy individual criminal penalty for the destruction of cultural property.<sup>17</sup> Cultural identity is recognised nationally in the constitution as discussed above.<sup>18</sup>

The new Zimbabwean Constitution has cemented this in its founding principles, national objectives and bill of rights.<sup>19</sup> Copyright laws protect cultural creativity through folklore giving the community an opportunity to exploit the economic advantages of their unique cultural practices.<sup>20</sup> This is a crucial aspect of development that is regionally promoted in the African Cultural Charter.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>12</sup> K Njogu & E Orchardson-Mazrui Gender inequality and women's rights in the Great-Lakes; can culture contribute to women's empowerment? (2006) UNESCO 9.

<sup>13</sup> Article 6, African Cultural Charter.

<sup>14</sup> Dersso above. the International Covenant on Economic, Social & Cultural Rights (ICESCR) article 1(1). Articles 4(c) & 5(2), African Cultural Charter, above.

<sup>15</sup> Common Article 1 to the UN Covenants of 1966 (the International Covenant on Civil & Political Rights (ICCPR) &) ICESCR. See also the Preamble to the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court (the Rome Statute).

<sup>16</sup> African Cultural Charter; African Charter articles 17 (3) & 29 (7); African Children's Charter article 12 (2) & 31(d); African Youth Charter article 20; Protocol to the African Charter on Human & People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Protocol on the Rights of Women or PRW) article 17.

<sup>17</sup> Additional Protocol 1 to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 article 53; Rome Statute article 8 (2) (b) (ix). See also the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

<sup>18</sup> The African Cultural Charter provides a basic framework for a national Cultural Development Policy in Articles 8-10

<sup>19</sup> Sections 3(2) (i)(i)-recognition of ethnic groups; 2.8-Culture & 4.20 (b)- right to participate in cultural life of one's choice.

<sup>20</sup> Copyrights Act of Zimbabwe (foot note 5 above)

<sup>21</sup> Articles 10(2), 22-24 African Cultural Charter.

### 3. How is cultural expression limited in contemporary African society?

#### 3.1 Historical distortions of customary law

Probably the biggest blow to adequate recognition of African customary law has been its abuse by colonial powers<sup>22</sup> and its subsequent distortion by our courts after independence.<sup>23</sup>

Internationally unpopular *Magaya v Magaya* is exemplary. The Zimbabwe Supreme Court granted inheritance to a younger male child instead of the deceased's eldest daughter due to her gender and because Shona custom regarded women as 'minors'.<sup>24</sup>

Traditions are not clearly defined or become 'invented'. Younger generations quickly abandon culture to assimilate Western values as 'modernity'. The outside world simply misjudges all culture basing on bad cases like *Magaya*.<sup>25</sup>

#### 3.2 Conflict between right to cultural expression and the protection of individual rights from harmful culture and restrictive culture

Not all culture is positive hence the identification of certain practices as 'harmful'.<sup>26</sup> These include FGM, forced marriages, and child sacrifices (*kuripa ngozi*).<sup>27</sup> These violate various rights such as health, freedom of marriage, human dignity and life.

It is my humble view that homosexuality as a right is limited due to a common 'restrictive culture' across Africa that sees this as an immoral or 'unAfrican' practice. Human rights advocates however view it as hate or homophobia.<sup>28</sup> It's a conflict between a 'continental public policy' and individual rights.

<sup>22</sup> E Akyeampong & H Fofack 'The contribution of African women to economic growth and development: historical perspectives and policy implications Part 1: the pre-colonial and colonial periods' (2012) 2 World Bank, Poverty Reduction and Economic Development Network, Gender Development Unit 7

<sup>23</sup> K. Dengu-Zvobgo et al, *Inheritance in Zimbabwe: Law, Customs and Practices*: (1994) 260

<sup>24</sup> *Magaya v Magaya* 1999 ZLR 100 S.

<sup>25</sup> D.M Bigge and A.M von Briesen, 'Conflict in the Zimbabwean courts: women's rights and indigenous self-determination in *Magaya v Magaya*' *Harvard human rights law journal* 301. Under Article 33 (a) the AU has a role of promoting positive awareness about Africa.

<sup>26</sup> International Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), preamble; Convention Against Torture (CAT) article 1; African Charter articles 4 & 5; PRW article 5; African Children's Charter article 21; Zimbabwe Constitution section 4.37

<sup>27</sup> This is the forcible transfer of a young girl from one family/community/tribe to another to appease the spirit of a murdered individual.

<sup>28</sup> F. Vijljoen, 'Human rights in a time of homophobia: An argument for equal legal protection of "sexual minorities" in Africa' expert lecture 12 June 2013 <http://www.chr.up.ac.za> (accessed 2 September 2013).

## 4. Balancing the scales of justice; right to cultural expression and violation of other fundamental human rights

Culture should be preserved.

Harmful practices discussed above, should never be tolerated in terms of the law, but the cultural values of those practices still deserve legal recognition and protection as well.<sup>29</sup> The values underlying a certain practice should never be ignored or tempered with, rather focus should be on limiting the negative effects ensuring that health, dignity and life are protected.

Non-physical, non-harmful initiation methods like 'initiation through words', rather than the razor has been adopted in Ghana and Kenya.<sup>30</sup> In some Kenyan and Tanzanian communities, girls are secluded and 'circumcised' through life planning skills relating to various issues surrounding adolescent development.<sup>31</sup>

Community leaders must

encourage tolerance and peaceful practices. 'Ubuntu' is actually about group solidarity, respect, human dignity and unity (the Zulu expression: *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* - a person is a person because of other people).<sup>32</sup> Our Shona equivalent is *ndiri nokuti tiri, uye nekuti tiri, neniwo ndiri*, meaning 'I am because we are and because we are, therefore I am'.<sup>33</sup> African citizens are expected to work for peaceful development and social unity as a cultural value.<sup>34</sup>

Social means might go the extra mile that the law fails. Take the reckless circumcision rites in Eastern Cape (Umtata and surrounding areas) amongst the communities of the Xhosa tribe of South Africa, for example.<sup>35</sup> Teenage boys die in scores yearly due to hazardous

<sup>29</sup> Section 14 of the Ghanaian Children's Act abolishes forced marriages. Contravention carries a heavy fine plus one imprisonment.

<sup>30</sup> Njogu & Orchardson-Mazrui above, 32

<sup>31</sup> African Youth Alliance, 2002

<sup>32</sup> See AM Anderson, 'Restorative justice the African concept of Ubuntu and the diversion of criminal prosecution' 2010 9; JY Mokgoro 'Ubuntu and the law in South Africa' 1998 Colloquium Constitution and Law, Potchefstroom 31 October 1997

<sup>33</sup> T. Nhenga- Chakarisa 'Who does the law seek to protect and from what? The application of child labour in an African context', (2010) 170 African Human Rights Law Journal, 169

<sup>34</sup> Article 29, African Charter

<sup>35</sup> 'Why South Africans risk death & injury to be circumcised' BBC News 15 August 2012 available at <http://m.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-19256839> (accessed 7 September 2013)

practices as community leaders refuse certified mobile clinics from their ritual cites.<sup>36</sup> The rituals are a constitutional right however they now conflict with rights to life and health. Community sensitisation may mean life for these boys. The difficulty is the religious/mythical beliefs that are unchangeable and legalised.<sup>37</sup>

## 5 Conclusion

Various ethical and legal dilemmas surround cultural preservation. My brief evaluation highlighted the importance of cultural expression as a means to exercise ethnic self-determination and negative implications that violate individual rights. The outcome is that a balance may be maintained where progressive limits are imposed by law- preserving values but uprooting the harm. The law needs substantial social support as the complex religious nature of a culture naturally allows harmful practices to persist. Our Heads of State agreed that 'African culture is meaningless unless it plays a full part in the political, economic and social liberation struggle...' <sup>38</sup> I am therefore convinced that a collective positive promotion of our cultures is necessary for both self-determination and equitable socio-economic development of our diverse ethnic groups.

*...The world is a 'delicate mosaic of different cultures pieced together'.....*



*Marshal N. Maponderera is a human rights lawyer, writer and researcher.*

*He is lecturer of law with the Zimbabwe Institute of Legal Studies in Harare, Zimbabwe. Marshal is a member of the American Bar Association- Section of International Law (African Committee) and writer/editor for the African Law Today Journal, Washington DC. He is also Co-Founder of the International Justice Initiative for Africa, Kenya*

<sup>36</sup> 33 men "die in South African circumcision ceremonies" The Telegraph 22 May 2013 available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/southafrica/10073918/33-men-die-in-South-African-circumcision-ceremonies.html> (accessed 7 September 2013)

<sup>37</sup> Children's Act of the Republic of South Africa, No. 38 of 2005 as amended in April 2010 section 8 (a)

<sup>38</sup> Paragraph 9, Preamble to the African Cultural Charter

# Dance in Zimbabwe

*by Butshilo Nleya*

## Introduction

Dr Kariamu Welsh Asante defines Zimbabwean dance in form and content and further qualifies her observation and research saying that it aesthetically expresses two sources which are its external appearance and the significance of something good. Aesthetics, this word usually describes something well made, beautiful, pleasing to the senses, virtuous, useful, correct, appropriate, and conforming to customs and expectations. These adjectives are the corner stones of my summarised analysis and argument on the state of dance in Zimbabwe.

## Pre-colonial

African societies were built on a bed rock of culture, heritage, spirituality and solid governance. These four facets of African life were expressed by various artistic forms that included instrumental and vocal music, storytelling, poetry, paintings and dance. Dance was fundamental mainly because it embodied movement, heritage, spirituality and dramatic storytelling. Zimbabwe before 1838 was culturally homogenous with the Ndau, Zezuru, Manyika, Karanga, Kore Kore tribes governed by a series of dynasties. These peoples were brought together in their history, linguistics and their artistic practice and performance was varied as it was similar in context, structure and presentation. With the advent of Mfecane, the Zulu, Shangan, Sotho, Swazi, and Tswana tribes made their way to Zimbabwe

part of Mzilikazi's 20 000 strong new nation. United as amaNdebele, these tribes co-existed and continued to practice their traditions and dances. Dances; Mbira, Dinhe, Muchongoyo, Mbende, Mhande, Chokoto, Jaka, Zhana, Shangara, Amantshomane, Isitshikitsha, Njekunje, Amabhiza, Chinyambara, Izangoma, Hosana, Amajukwa are some of the popular dances that formed the core of cultural dances. Their functions were ritualistic, commemorative and griotic. In rituals, dances were performed by spiritual mediums and other traditionalists to facilitate the process of cross world inhibition whereby the hosts were possessed by the spirits of those and served advisory, warning, counselling roles. Events like the beginning of the farming season, wars, hunting expeditions, harvest, births and

deaths and an array of other community and national events were commemorated through specific dance performance. As part of heritage and perpetuity of their way of life, griotic dances performed for entertainment and educational purposes. To our ancestors, dance was part of the fabric of society, its culture and future.

## Colonial

Exploration, modernisation, globalisation and Christianity, which we have since summed up as colonisation changed the dynamics of dance in Zimbabwe. With white rule, the practice of dances was banned in their original context. Words like demonic and barbaric described hundreds of years old forms of civilisation and heritage and artistic expression. And with the agenda of colonisation, European lifestyle, dressing, language and dance was imposed on the Zimbabweans. In came the Russian, Scottish, Weiner Waltzes, the Galop, Ballet and these became the new acceptable forms of dance. In a turn of attitudes and resilience, Zimbabweans adopted and adapted the European dances to the township culture that had begun as rural to urban migrations intensified. In Bulawayo, dances like Tsabatsaba, Idabhu, Isichathamiya became popular in community halls. The pre-colonial traditional dances were still practiced in closed quarters away from the police, but their influences of poly rhythm and individual talent became apparent in new forms of dance like the latin and jazz dance revolutions.

Our cousins taken during slavery began to influence dance in Europe and the Americas and these found their way to Africa and Zimbabwe. Gumboot dance played a pivotal role in African dance preservation and influence during the gold rush and migration. The dance embodied the old values of ritualistic, commemorative and griotic forms of expression. Miners would communicate with their ancestors in a new context and setting, seeking protection as they went underground. They would hold competitions on weekends and special occasions and would communicate their heritage and history using their bodies, voices, gumboots and any percussive instruments.

## 1890 - 2000

In the townships of Zimbabwe, a new energy gripped the children of the new born country. Our once dominant European culture was finding its way in a new integrated society of cultural diversity and expression.

Previously demonised and secluded traditional dances could be seen in the townships as Zimbabweans gave reverence to their ancestors. Contemporary dance found its way to main stream newly formed dance academies. Ballet and other European dances co-existed with the traditional, neo traditional and township dance styles. This was the Zimbabwe of the 1800s where diversity was celebrated and encouraged. In the south, through the strong links with South African culture, Pantsula dance began to percolate through the townships as young people stood up against the faulty norms and borrowed values. In the east, Skokotsha bearing roots in soukus music from Central Africa found its way to townships. A new street dance was being created by young people yet the progressive society seemed not to have room for this new expressive and rebellious form of dance. Variations and improvements of these styles would later emerge but still be marginalised by traditionalists, classical dance arts sector. While in the country side, with a small percentage of urban to rural migration, ritualistic dances wrestled with the Christian dance and culture. Mbende that had been renamed Jerusarema to suit the colonial rulers was documented and inducted into the UNESCO Representative list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

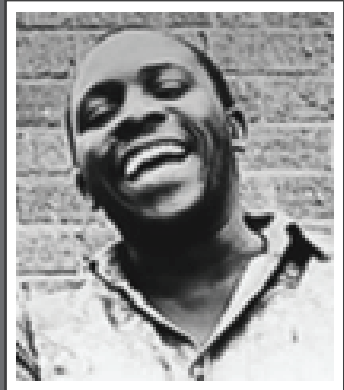
*“A new street dance was being created by young people....”*

## 2000 - present day

To date, dance styles, cultures and heritage exist side by side with each tribal grouping fighting for the preservation of its art and culture. Pantsula and Skokotsha have evolved with trends in Southern and Central Africa, while modern traditional dance groups have continued performing dances as commemorative celebrations at airports receiving dignitaries. Ritualistic dance has found its place in modern Zimbabwe in the cities and countryside with variations but mainly sticking to the original cycles, phrases and styles. White Zimbabwean dance academies and companies keep in line with international developments in classical, modern and contemporary dances. With an emerging working class, young people are learning and spreading Black/ African American Hip-hop culture and its associated dances like breaking, locking, crumping and bboying. Community dances have become social dances performed at parties and celebrations with each attendant participating with their individual style and flare.

## Conclusion

The definition of dance in Zimbabwe is still at its infancy mainly because of the lack of appreciation and support of small ethnic minority groups, their cultures and dances. Also contributing to the status quo is the emergence of a class system largely determined by wealth. European dances have become synonymous with upper class living while traditional dance is described as for the poor and anti-Christianity. An underground sub culture of sexy and suggestive dancing has become popular and somewhat acceptable in the private and night clubs of the rich, circumventing the law on sexual solicitation for money.



*Butshilo Nleya is a young producer who is keen on applying himself to any creative art in Zimbabwe. With an 8 year professional career as a musician and arts worker in Europe, he toured and performed at major festivals (Edinburgh Fringe, Glastonbury Womad and Aberdeen Festival) and arts venues.*

*The latter part of his international career involved producing theatre shows in part with Trestle Theatre (UK), Tavaɓɓira Dance (UK) and Worldshapers academy. Back home, he aims to produce, profile and sell quality arts from Zimbabwe.*

# The Media and the Development of Theatre in Zimbabwe

*By Elton Mjanana*

Theatre has always been there and practised even before my time, but my early experiences with it were in the late 1980's reading about the exploits of various plays happening in our environs, the Free Mandela Campaign featuring Walter Muparutsa and Dominic Kanaventi in Athol Fugard's plays *The Island* and *Sizwe Bansi is dead*.

I also enjoyed numerous productions at my primary school performed by a cocktail of amateur and semi-professional groups in my then adopted town of Bulawayo - these included Nasa (now Siyaya), Amakhosi, Bambelela and some lesser known ones that have either since dissolved themselves into the ones I have mentioned or folded altogether. There was certainly some movement in theatre trends then, lest I call it development just yet. Certainly theatre seemed to be alive in these times of the 1980's with the ban on a play by Amakhosi; Workshop Negative.

I was only later to realize the brilliant exploits of other production houses then and came to fully be involved and experience the full catalogue of Zimbabwe's theatre in the mid-1990's when I became a practitioner of the trade.

The 1990's were still exciting, new ideas were being implemented by such directors as John Denison, Adrian Stanley and Dawn Parkinson all from REPS where I cut my early years as a member of their then

esteemed REPTEENS.

Certainly my own techniques and appreciation of theatre grew; needless to say I was in development. The National Theatre Organisation was operational and running many workshops and awards, not to forget the very resourceful library, that meant to equip young ones like myself and the older ones alike with theatrical skill and knowledge.

This was all in the direction of developing theatre.

Other organizations included the Children's Performing Arts Workshop (CHIPAWO), a multi-disciplined cultural grouping for young artists with a theatrical component in its work and the Zimbabwe Association for Community Theatre (ZACT) whose work was steeped in the community aspect of theatre, which was relevant at the time; a counter to the Rhodie-style of theatre that I was getting all too sucked up in at REPS and 7 Arts.

ZACT and CHIPAWO were nevertheless all for the betterment of theatre and its practitioners through numerous productions and workshops all in the name of development.

My question begs, where was the media in all this? The media, by and large only featured on the theatre to report on production which reports were hardly anything to write home about, as they only served to parrot the play and re-tell as it happened without in-depth analysis or much knowledge exhibited by the writers. This, however, is not any contribution to the growth that was taking place in the period of the late 1980's to the late 1990's years which I can arguably call the refreshing times of Zimbabwean theatre.

Throughout this period the media, mind you I mean just the print media, as there was nothing at all on the electronic side, continued to duplicate the role of the audience by only turning on their theatrical beings when there was a production happening. This was to just report on it, mostly reproducing the programme content, or the press statement as provided by the production house. Never was there any in-depth look into the industry itself as whole, to scrutinize its state and happenings with the aim to aide its development.

If there were no plays and productions happening, one would expect the media to question this to criticize this and then offer solutions all leading to the development of theatre. Even in the years when REPS and their Rhodie-type, Euro-centered and quite irrelevant-to-Zimbabwe

theatre was dominating the media and I mean print, limited to The Herald, The Chronicle and The Sunday Mail there was no outcry by the media to this unhealthy status quo.

The advent of the 1990's saw something challenging the healthy growth that many theatre individuals and groups and organizations had championed. This was the coming of social-issue-based plays as commissioned by organizations dealing especially with the challenges of HIV and AIDS. It became profitable to engage in such plays and organizations as they readily offered gainful employment.

Theatre in Education where O and A level set books were rehearsed and performed around schools across the country became another useful way of gaining profitable employ in theatre.

Community-based groups took full advantage of the Health and Safety policies prevailing in the industrial sector then and embarked on Theatre at the workplace.

These and many other interesting factors of theatre, including a strong theatrical culture in schools saw the emergence of numerous vibrant and viable community, semi-professional and fully-fledged professional groups across the country.

Who can forget such groups as Pamuzinda, Together As One, Over The Edge, Amakhosi, NASA, Bambelela or even Shoudder Troupe to mention but a few? New venues such as Theatre in the Park offered new and exciting alternatives, and greatly influenced many young and emerging thespians to strive for a full-time occupation in theatre. There was real development and indeed the future seemed bright.

Still, the media continued to just watch and reproduce these developments.

As the turn of the millennium approached with Y2K gripping the international community, Zimbabwe's fortunes politically and economically took a dip. This brought about what many of us in the sector called the New AIDS Political theatre. The New AIDS because just like HIV & AIDS had gripped all theatre activities and offered a ready market and income for groups and practitioners, the political situation in the country presented the same opportunities, if not more.

Many organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) sprouted and the Civil Society of Zimbabwe went into overdrive. It is not my place to argue whether rightly or wrongly so engaging theatre companies to inform and educate the masses on the politics of the day. This worked to counter all the development that had been

made in the theatre industry from the advent of the 1980s to the late 1990s.

Plays tended to carbon copy what the newspapers in most cases the private newspapers were reporting on politically. Newspaper reports were reproduced on stage. Appalling and mediocre work was passed off to applause by its commissioners, a stunned audience that mostly admired the bravery of the actors and playwrights of this work and the satisfied independent and international media.

In this reverse development of theatre in Zimbabwe, the private media praised the direction theatre had taken, often twisting some of it to be more poignant in its criticism of the government to suit its editorial policy. The public or government media selectively reported on the barrage of these plays and occasionally damned some.

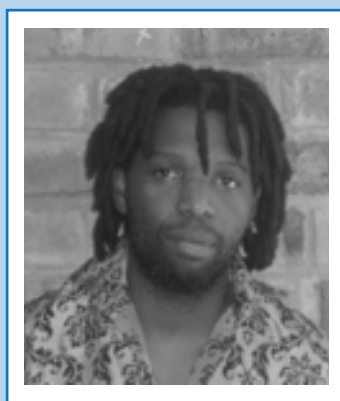
But again the mainstream media was awash with political plays that the media happily reproduced whether in praise or condemnation through intoxicated journalists who would have been fed snacks and alcoholic beverages on the premiere nights. It is safe to say from 1999 theatre fell into a sad state and continued in that mode for the next decade.

This brings us to today, where there seems to be some very often conceited or at times unsupported and unappreciated effort to revive our theatre and take it back to the 1980's and 1990s, the refreshing years. The media continues to be spectators, and reproducers of the work. Some of the media with electronic being the chief culprits have ignored us totally.

Maybe this is so because we continue to have the one and only broadcaster ZBC, thus leaving us with no alternatives. Besides, with the voice that theatre has portrayed in the last decade, it is wishful thinking to expect any favours from ZBC radio and television stations, for obvious reasons.

In concluding my paper which I would like to emphatically say the media has NOT played any part in the development of theatre in Zimbabwe.

Credit goes to all individuals, groups, organisations past and present and various festivals like the Harare International Festival of the Arts (HIFA) which launched a developmental programme for theatre called HIFA DIRECT, and Intwasa Festival koBulawayo which has a vibrant aspect of Schools Theatre in its programme, have tirelessly worked for the development of theatre in this country Zimbabwe NOT the media!



*Elton Mjanana*  
is a writer/director of film  
and theatre.

# The Arts and Culture Budget

## *If 2012 is anything to go by*

By Cont Mblanga

**Editor's note:** *This article was written before the pronouncement of the new cabinet on 10 September 2013 and contains references to some ministries that might not be there anymore or are slightly different from the ones referred to in this article.*

As one of the captains of the Creative Industries I followed the then Minister of finance's Votes with some keen interest. Contrary to the widely held belief by those irking a living in Arts that Government does not fund the Arts, a closer study of the national budget reveals that the Department Of Arts, Sports and Culture that was housed under the Ministry of Education does get a fair envelop in comparison with other departments and or even some ministries given what our economy can afford at present. The Minister always said we should aim to 'eat what we kill' as a nation.

In the \$707.325m vote allocated to the Ministry of Education, the Department of Arts, Sports and Culture got \$8.446m. At a quick glance one may feel Arts and Sports always gets a raw deal from Education. It is only when you take a look at the votes of other Ministries and Departments such as Tourism and Hospitality Industry, Media Information and Publicity, Information Communication Technology, Economic Planning and Investment Promotion, Women's Affairs, Gender and Community

Development, Science and Technology Development and Small and Medium Enterprises and Co-operative Development, and many others, that one gets to observe that the envelop for Arts, Sports and Culture Department is not far off the average mark to warrant claims that the Government is not financially providing for the development of the people's arts and culture. Agreed the funding is inadequate but it is so for all these other ministries that I have listed above.

However the real challenge and concern of the artists is that despite the allocation to the Department of Arts and Culture nothing gets down to support the making of great art and its aggressive marketing at provincial capitals and some selected district centers of the country. It is clear then that the challenge of marginalisation of the people's culture is not in the Ministry of Finance, Cabinet or Parliament but it is within the Ministry of Education Arts, Sport and Culture its self. The way the 2012 budget of \$8.446m has been allocated within the Department is very silly, irresponsible and outrageous to say the least.

This suggests a lack of interest and effective representation of arts and culture by the Minister and the Permanent Secretary and their team of Directors or else how does one justify getting \$8.446m and fail to allocate even half a million of that amount to the production and aggressive marketing of great art. I subscribe to the theory of arts and cultural activity that prioritizes investing in the making and marketing of great art across the country. Molding and strengthening the arts industry is primary and any other activity is secondary to this. The department of Arts and Culture in the Ministry of Education is not investing in the production of great art that is marketed aggressively across the country and globally.

The Ministry of Education is not only letting down other ministries and departments that are tasked with marketing the country's tourism, identity, national pride, national unity, local consumer products, national campaigns such as Buy Zimbabwe campaign and the national brand, but it is also letting down the whole nation and its essence of Independence. It is this Ministry that should be in the forefront driving and leading the nation's Cultural Revolution, and its local and international image. It is this same Ministry that should be coordinating all other Ministries that house cultural elements within their Ministries for maximum national

impact, but alas nothing of that sort is happening. One would be forgiven to think that the Ministry of Media, Information and Publicity or the Ministry of Tourism and Hospitality Industry are the Ministries of Arts and Culture in Zimbabwe. They have a greater impact and visibility on the arts and culture sector than the Culture Ministry. Why is it so?

The Culture Ministry needs to urgently re-prioritise, re-focus resources and streamline activities between those in arts and those in culture. The \$8.446m is for three sections, Arts, Culture and Sports. When the envelop is this thin the logical thing to do is to put Arts and Culture back to back as arts is a direct expression and product of culture. This will reduce the sections to two that of Arts and Sports to share the envelop equally for the next years till the envelop grows to twelve million for the department, then it can be shared between the three sections of art, sport and culture. The correct thing to do at present is to share equally the \$8.446m between the Arts and Sport sections of the Department. This way these two very critical sections of our society; because involvement in Arts and Sport participation is dominated by children, youths and young adults of the nation who are the majority will each have \$4.223m to gradually build the Arts and Sports Industries of this country.

Anyone who can tell me that this amount of money is too little and cannot be effectively spread across the country with maximum impact only confirms their lack of understanding and ignorance of how these two sectors function at community level and how they can be developed and should stay away from making decisions for these two sections.

The 2012 allocations we have now don't consider this option. They tell us that the people's arts and culture is not important. It is primitive content that must not be funded by Government and should be left to die because it is largely consumed by the working class and the poor of our society. The country's three National Galleries that provide space for already finished works for a few selected visual artists in the country gets more than all other arts sub-sectors of Literature, Dance, Theater, Music, Visual Arts, Film and Television Production. What rubbish is this? How does any responsible arts and cultural administrator in a culturally diverse country such as Zimbabwe justify such a wayward decision? Three buildings get \$1.873m against \$1.175m to the National Arts Council that represents arts Institutions, Associations and Groups in ten provinces in all the seven arts and culture sub-sectors, visual arts practiced by the low class included! Sports Commission gets a cool \$2.215m.

Why? Because in some crazy person's mind who personally likes cricket or soccer has concluded that sport is more important in society than all the country's seven arts and culture sub-sectors. It does not end there as the Ministry keeps a further \$900.000 for what they call Sports Promotion, \$450 000 for State Occasions (I have no problem with this amount but what it is called. It should be named National Celebrations in my opinion), then the blow comes \$300 000 for Cultural Promotions! AGAIN ARTS AND CULTURE GETS THE LEAST!!! Even Corruption gets far more than arts and culture as a total of \$1.338m has remained hidden not allocated within the Department! This is shocking to say the least.

This abnormality calls for correction urgently or heads somewhere should roll. I have proposed that the logical thing to do is to allocate Sport and Arts an equal share of the Minister's 2012 envelop for the Department as they are both equally critical and important to society. Once that is done there will be \$4.223m dedicated to funding the Arts. The Ministry then needs to spread the funds across the country from the bottom to the top and not what is happening now where the funds are spread only at the top and in offices in Harare. This current model is rubbish and nonsensical. It does not drive the growth of the creative industries and the preservation of the nation's cultural

heritage while creating new jobs for young people through growing the arts and culture sector. In the current model national resources are being thrown down the drain, surprisingly by our very educated elite of society who should know better.

Allocations should be made for each province and a \$100 000 sent to each of the ten provinces to produce and aggressively market great art at provincial cities and some select district centers, with two hundred thousand each for Harare and Bulawayo will only get \$1.2m of the arts allocation of \$4.223m. The National Arts Council of Zimbabwe already has structures at all provinces to manage and handle this mandate on behalf of the Ministry and Government. No need to duplicate structures as is the direction that the Ministry is now tackling particularly when the envelop is still this thin.

The arts industry does not need more culture officers but it needs more great art to be produced by the nation's talented creative artists in all sub-sectors of arts and consumed by the public. A hundred thousand dollars in each province, two hundred thousand each for Harare and Bulawayo every twelve months invested wisely in producing good art will lay a solid foundation for a Cultural Revolution in this country and will go a long way in creating a regional and internation-

ally competitive creative industry that can earn huge revenues for the Treasury in the very near future if not right away. For managing this public investment in arts across the country the National Arts Council gets \$1.1m for employment costs, capital assets and operations. However if we remain using the current model, it would seem that the National Arts Council gets an allocation from government for taxing the poor artists and those that go out of their way to promoting them.

Allocate \$900.000 for the three national galleries and this will bring the total to \$3.2m from the \$4.223m. The Ministry at Head Office is left with \$1.023m, the bulk of which should go to National Celebrations. This in my humble opinion is not asking for too much or the impossible from the parent Ministry that is mandated by the nation to look after the people's arts and culture. It is all in the attitude of those that have been put in charge.

It is possible to spread \$4.223m effectively across the nation to stimulate and develop Zimbabwe's rich cultural diversity and heritage. The question I have is can the artists and the Nation depend on the current Minister and Permanent Secretary and the current Directors for this mission? This brings me to remember what I learned at Sunday school many years ago, 'Problems that bedevil humanity

are from mismanagement of resources. Failure to manage is from mismanagement of man's heart and God's will.' It is indeed in the attitude of those in charge as attitude is the product of one's heart.



*Cont Mhlanga* has had an illustrious career in the arts industry and is founder of Amakhosi Theater in 1982 and spearheading the building of a multi-purpose arts complex, Amakhosi Township Square Cultural Center in Bulawayo which was the first of its kind in Zimbabwe in 1995.

Cont Mhlanga, a true hero of resistance theatre has despite the political turmoil's that has always hovered around his work proved to be a man of vision and seemingly inexhaustible dedication to his work.

# Spotlight on

## Tsitsi Dangarembga



Tsitsi Dangarembga is one of the finest authors and filmmakers in the world and she has proven her worth over and over again at individual and organisational level: She is the brains behind Women Filmmakers of Zimbabwe (WFOZ), which is the mother organisation to the annual International Images Film Festival for Women (IIFF) and other initiatives.

Tsitsi Dangarembga was born in 1959 in Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia), in the town of Mutoko. She spent her early childhood, ages two through six, in Britain. She began her education in a British

school but after returning to Rhodesia with her family, she concluded her early education at St Augustine's mission near the City of Mutare and completed her secondary education at an American convent school. In 1977 Dangarembga went to Cambridge to study medicine. After three years she became homesick and abandoned her studies, returning to Zimbabwe in 1980 and started to study psychology at the University of Zimbabwe.

During these years she became involved with the Drama Club and wrote and staged three plays, *She No Longer Weeps* (pub. 1987), *The Lost of the Soil*, and *The Third One*. "The writers in Zimbabwe were basically men at the time," she said in an interview. "And so I really didn't see that the situation would be remedied unless some woman sat down and wrote something, so that's what I did!" After graduation she worked as a teacher, but finding it difficult to combine an academic career and literature, she devoted herself entirely to writing. Her short story, 'The Letter' won a prize in a writing competition arranged by SIDA, the Swedish International Development Authority, and was published in the anthology *Whispering Land* (1985).

She then became an active member of a theater group called *Zambuko*. This group was directed by Robert McLaren. While involved

in this group she participated in the production of two plays, "Katshad!" and "Mavambo."

As a novelist Dangarembga made her debut with *Nervous Conditions* (the first novel in English ever written by a black Zimbabwean woman), a partially autobiographical work which appeared in Great Britain in 1988 and the next year in the United States. She had already started to write in her childhood, and read mostly the English classics, but the period following Zimbabwean independence inspired her to read contemporary African literature and the writings of Afro-American women. "I personally do not have a fund of our cultural tradition or oral history to draw from," she once confessed, "but I really did feel that if I am able to put down the little I know then it's a start." A sequel, *The Book of Not*, was published in 2006. After her first success Dangarembga turned her attention to film. She studied at the Deutsche Film und Fernseh Akademie and wrote the story for *Neria*, which became the highest-grossing film in Zimbabwean history.

The protagonist is a widowed woman, whose brother-in-law uses her difficult situation for his own advantage. *Neria* (played by Jesese Mungoshi) loses her material possessions and her child, but gets help from her female friend (played by Kubi Indi ) against her former

husband's family. The title song is by Oliver Mtukudzi, who also appears in the film.

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- Hard Earth – Land Rights in Zimbabwe (2001);
- Ivory (2001);
- Elephant People (2002);
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- High Hopes (2004);
- At the Water [Pamvura] (2005);
- Growing Stronger (2005);
- The Sharing Day (2008);
- I Want a Wedding Dress (2010);
- Ungochani (2010);
- Nyami Nyami Amaji Abulozi (2011).

## Last Word

### Ministry of Sports, Arts and Culture *A panacea for the Arts woes?*

On the September 10 2013, the Insiza North Member of Parliament, Andrew Langa was appointed minister of Sports, Arts and Culture in the new cabinet of the republic of Zimbabwe.

Benefits to the Arts and Culture sectors will depend on how aggressive the arts and culture practitioners are and so far there has not been much noise from the arts and culture sector except celebrations that will turn to the all too familiar despair if not enough lobbying and advocacy is done. The sports people have been quick off the blocks and I am sure the new minister's in-tray is already full with sports issues like the US\$4 million ZIFA debt and the continued attachment of property at the national association.

Zifa chief executive Jonathan Mashingaidze has been talking of meeting with the minister to introduce him to the Zimbabwe football Trust board, the golden jubilee committee and the 2014 Chan-bound senior men's national team.

There has been talk of how the Basketball Union has failed to raise funds for the Afro-Basket Championships and how the Hockey Association of Zimbabwe has also failed to get money for African Cup of

Nations qualifiers.

Magamba Stadium has to be refurbished to host next year's World Club Championships, while Bulawayo has won the right to host the 2014 Zone Six Games. The list goes on and on and it's bound to make the minister's head spin.

What will the new minister of Sports, Arts and Culture find in his in-tray from Arts and Culture practitioners? Will we strongly raise the perennial issue of community halls and youth centres lying idle whilst arts practitioners have no proper rehearsal space and space to showcase their works? Do we have our own multi-million dollar proposals for the proper renovation of available infrastructure to meet international standards?

Are we going to take the minister to task about the government's role in taking artists to the myriad of festivals dotted across the globe?

Are we going to take the minister to task about proper arts venues with direct and consistent government funding to ensure consistent and quality programming?

The creation of the new ministry of Sports, Arts and Culture is a noble idea and arts practitioners should put the opportunity to good use by aggressively engaging with the new minister.

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84 Fort Street  
Canberra Building  
P.O. Box 509  
Bulawayo, Zimbabwe  
**Tel:** +263 (0) 9 60002, +263 (0) 9 60019  
**Email:** [info@nhimbe.org](mailto:info@nhimbe.org)