

“No Voice No Choice”

A production of EDZAI ISU Theatre Arts Project & Zvido Zvevanhu Arts Ensemble © 2011

Report on South African Tour – November 2011



ABOVE: Tafadzwa Muzondo (founder of EDZAI ISU Theatre Arts Project), plays the preacher at a shopping centre and delivers a sermon of change - not regime or climate change - based on the story of Saul called Paul. Gibson Sarari (founder of Zvido Zvevanhu Arts Ensemble) plays GBH, a youth that is haunted by violent activities he carried out in the run up to the election, follows proceedings in the opening scene of No Voice No Choice at the SADC Best of the Best Community Theatre Festival on 13 November 2011

Supported by:



Report presented by:

Tafadzwa Muzondo, Email: tafartist@gmail.com, Mobile: +263 772 993 413

1.INTRODUCTION

“No Voice No Choice” had two performances in Johannesburg where the 10 member team of an amalgamated cast from EDZAI ISU Theatre Arts Project and Zvido Zvevanhu Arts Ensemble, supported by Culture Fund of Zimbabwe Trust, went to participate in the SADC Best of the Best Community Theatre Festival 2011. We had an opportunity to share experiences with 18 Community Theatre groups from South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, Swaziland and Zimbabwe. South Africa had the most number of the participating groups with representatives from Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Pretoria, Tembisa, Duduza, Heidleberg, Secunda and Johannesburg. The play is a result of a partnership born out of an imperative to take community theatre to another level through pulling together ideas, skills and resources hence the participation at the SADC Best of the Best Community Theatre Festival inspired us and convinced us that Zimbabwean art can compete on another level and also made us pull our stockings as presentations had their unique performance styles which made us stick to and polish our style.

The preparations went well in as far as the rehearsals of the production which was already in place having had two performances before (at the International Day of Peace by Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum and Protest Arts International Festival by Savannah Trust). The challenges where in terms of the funding since the festival was providing for accommodation and food in Johannesburg and so we had to seek supplementary funding for transport and allowances (per diems and honorariums) and we are grateful to the Culture Fund of Zimbabwe for being a knight in shining armour as our plans would have been seriously compromised had they not chipped in.



ABOVE: *The abuse of women in a violent election campaign flashback scene of No Voice No Choice at a fringe performance, courtesy of Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition Regional Office, after a meeting addressed by the Zimbabwean Deputy Prime Minister Hon. T. Khupe at the South African Council of Churches in Johannesburg, South Africa – 12 November 2011.*

2.EXECUTION

The 10 member team left Harare at 8pm on Friday 13 November aboard Greyhound and arrived in Johannesburg at around 3pm comprising of:

- Tafadzwa Muzondo
- Gibson Sarari
- Ratidzo (Eunice) Tava
- Everson Ndlovu
- Charles Biniweri
- Livius Chitsungo
- Charlotte Munyanyi
- Beauty Majira
- Gabriel Akupa
- Isheunesu Moyo

Two performances were done as follows:

1. South African Council of Churches (Khotso House): 12 November 2011 – 4.30pm

Attended by people who remained behind after a meeting on Cancer addressed by the Zimbabwean Deputy Prime Minister who also underpinned the need to have free and fair elections without violence - another cancer that has affected our politics, this performance was an opportunity to reach out to Zimbabweans in South Africa who have a role to play in creating and/or sustaining a culture of peace in our politics, societies and families. They identified very well with the set and plot of the play, its humorous and emotional moments in a performance that left the people who saw the play encouraging the artists to take the show to as many people in Zimbabwe and abroad to spread the message.

2. Sibikwe Arts Centre (Benoni): 13 November 2011 – 12pm

Initially billed to start the program of the day, we were pushed to the third group and thus performed at 12 noon. Although we failed to see the other 10 performances that were performed the day we arrived, we managed to see the other 7 performances from other community theatre groups that include: Mandy Productions from Gaborone in Botswana, Jahunda Arts from Gwanda in Zimbabwe, Zase Laduma Arts Projects from Secunda, B & T Productions from Port Elizabeth, Africa Jam from Cape Town, and Afrika Entle Theatre Workshop from Pretoria all in South Africa.

3.EVALUATION

Successes:

- The biggest success is the fact that we were able to put up the show and live up to the invitation
- We managed to share experiences with other artists from South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe as well as perform for our Zimbabwean fellows in South Africa
- We also managed to interact with theatre scouts from South Africa and other countries who will recommend the play for other international festivals as well as network with other producers of community theatre from participating countries who will be our contacts should we visit their countries.

Challenges:

- The biggest challenge was funding for the trip but we still managed to produce the play from internal capacity and support from Culture Fund of Zimbabwe Trust as well as Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition Regional Office
- We also had problems getting in with one of our drums on the South African border when an Agric Officer pitched from nowhere after all border entry procedures had been done and said we could not take the drum that had not yet been packed back into the bus.
- The arrival of the bus in Johannesburg at 3pm instead of 12.30pm nearly affected the fringe performance which we had to do straight from Park Station.

Lessons:

- Sharing experiences with other artists gave us new skills that contribute to the development of our craft thus make us produce world class productions which stand their ground on international stages
- We got critiques of our work by other artists, enthusiasts and experts who attended the festival and their valid points will go a long way in improving this product in particular and our craft in general.
- The fact that the organising team and the festival crew had a sizeable number of Zimbabweans made us realise how capable we are as Zimbabweans and we are inspired to organise festivals as we learnt a lot about festival organising with confidence that we are capable as a country.

ABOVE: Community members comforting a victim during a youth driven community truth telling and peace building arts campaign by the Youth Against Violence Ensemble initiated by GBH and Tellmore to lead & empower their community in finding and implementing lasting peace and democracy.