

Theatre News

Royal Court Workshop – Phase One



The eleven Zimbabwean Playwrights who took part in phase one of the Royal Court writing program with the Royal Court mentors. *From Left to Right:* Nonhlalo, Winsome (UK), Sifiso, Rudo, Mgcini, Blessing, Kevin, Elyse (UK), Leo (UK), Leonard, Elizabeth. *Front row:* Musekiwa, Nelson, Priviledge.

Eleven Zimbabwean Playwrights flew to South Africa on Friday the 28th of June 2013 for the first phase of the Royal Court workshop. They stayed at Mokoya Lodge. A conference and function venue, situated on the banks of the Magalies River between Hartebeestpoort Dam and Magaliesberg. Elyse Dodgson, Head of International Department, Royal Court travelled to South Africa where the workshop took place, accompanied by two workshop leaders and conducted a 7 day workshop for a total of 11 Zimbabwean participants. The aim of the workshop was to support each individual participant in writing a new contemporary play. The workshop was designed for the needs of each writer and in the end each writer was asked to propose an outline of a new idea for a contemporary and original play. The first draft of this play will be submitted three months after the end of the first workshop. The workshop consisted of group and individual sessions and there was also time for writing.



The Zimbabwean Team breaking the world record of 77 set by the Chilean team. The new world record, set by Zimbabwe stands at 87 times the ball is hit into the air before it falls to the ground.

Women in Theater to launch new play



Women In Theater coordinator, Nonhlalo Dube (Extreme right) with fellow female playwrights: From left to right; Elizabeth Muchemwa, Sifiso Mabena, Priviledge Matendera and Rudo Mutangadura.

The Nhimbe Women in Theatre (WiT Labs) in partnership with Amakhosi Theatre's Plays On Sunday and with the support of Africalia is working on a new production titled *Mothers*. *Mothers* is a story of Mira, a woman who gets caught up by her past when her husband impregnates their daughter out of revenge. The truth unfolds as Bella the daughter tries to tell her mother that she is pregnant. It's a two women play that is packed with suspense, action and comedy and will feature Mbali Maduma and Natacia Popova Sibanda. The play will be directed by Thembi Ngwabi and produced by Nonhlalo Dube the co-ordinator of WIT. The first performance will be at Amakhosi 'Plays on Sunday' on the 4th of August 2013.

Opportunities

- **Reps Auditions – Death of A Salesman**

Several parts are still being sought for Death Of A Salesman, the 2013 Reps schools' production (it's an O Level book). There is a misconception this is a Repteens production – it is not. Adults are being sought for the roles. In particular, director Paul Shephard is looking for some older men, a rare commodity among the acting talent we have available. If anyone is interested please call Paul very soon: 0712 606073

- **The International Student Play script Competition**

Winners

The winner of the International Student Playscript 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.

Deadline

11 October 2013 at 5pm

Description

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 Playscript 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.

For more information go to: <http://www.ideastap.com/Opportunities/Brief/The-International-Student-Playscript-Competition--111013#Overview>

- **Infecting The City 2014: Call for Proposals**

<http://www.infectingthecity.com/2013/>

The Africa Centre is calling for proposals for its Infecting The City Public Arts Festival that will be held from the 11th – 15th March 2014*.

Infecting The City is a public arts festival that happens on the streets and various spaces of Cape Town, South Africa. The Festival provides an unusual opportunity for art, music, dance and performance to leave the confines of theatres and galleries and engage with or disrupt the daily activity on the streets and communal places of Cape Town's Central Business District (CBD). The Festival's programme challenges audiences, breaches boundaries, shifts perspectives and helps to make sense of the public spaces we occupy.

This call is looking for works from two categories: New Works and Restaged Works. Visual and performing artists and practitioners from other disciplines are invited to submit. The work can be a full ensemble piece, an intervention, a live performance, a visual art piece, an installation, a video, a happening, via social media, totally interactive or some other form newly imagined. All works should translate to or work within a public environment, and actively engage intentional and incidental audiences. For more details about the call, time frames and process go to the webpage.

The deadline for this submission is the 15th August 2013 at 17h00. The short list will be released in mid-September 2013. Please watch the Facebook page for announcements.

*all performance dates are provisional and subject to change.

Events Calendar

- **Mothers**

Date: 4 August 2013
Venue: Amakhosi Cultural Centre
Time: 4pm
Entry: \$3

Mothers is a story of Mira, a woman who gets caught up by her past when her husband impregnates their daughter out of revenge. The truth unfolds as Bella the daughter tries to tell her mother that

she is pregnant. It's a two women play that is packed with suspense, action and comedy and will feature Mbali Maduma and Natacia Popova Sibanda.

- **The Woman In Black**

Dates: 12 – 28 September 2013

Venue: Reps Theater Upstairs, Harare

Time: 7pm

Email theatre events to mgcininyoni@gmail.com. Twitter: @MgciniNyoni. Cell: +263 772 103

Play Review –Farai & Chipu in Love

‘Farai & Chipu’ explores abstinence

by Jonathan Mbiriyamveka

WHEN two university students, Farai and Chipu, fall in love they agree on 10 ground rules but with time it appears they were left with one option - abstaining.

However, the two find themselves in a complex situation when Chipu's so-called uncle comes into the picture.

This is perhaps what you can expect in a new play titled “Farai and Chipu in Love” by Rooftop Promotions that is running at the Old Mutual Alliance Francaise Theatre.

Starring the delectable Nyaradzo Nhongonhema, Nama award winner Silvanos Mudzvova and talented Dereck Nziyakwi, the three-hander explores the dynamics of sexuality among the young generation.

For long the two lovebirds have been sticking to their 10 ground rules which include abstaining and not going to each other's rooms.

However, one day Chipu invites Farai to her room and they discuss several issues. Farai thinks this is an opportunity for him to sleep with Chipu but she refuses. He, however, leaves the room disappointed but on his return he catches Chipu in an uncompromising position with her “uncle” Zimuto.

The short play ends in suspense but it raises more questions than answers.

Will their relationship last if Chipu agrees to sleep with Farai? Will Farai ever trust Chipu having caught her hugging “uncle” Zimuto in her room?

Are the two lovers prepared to wait for four years and then another two years as they look for employment before getting married?

Will Chipu be able to resist the temptation of gifts and goodies she was being offered by “uncle” Zimuto?

Will uncle Zimuto stop his sexual advances? If he is a typical

Zimbabwean man he will continue since most men believe that when a girl says “No” it means “Yes”.

The love story touches on the dynamics of relationships. We are not told of the other ground rules but it appears sex was the important aspect of their relationship. As much as they were able to make those ground rules, they could also be break them.

But there were lot of laugh-out-aloud moments in the play and great acting from Nziyakwi who is cast as Farai. Apparently, Nziyakwi replaced John Pfumojena just days before the premiere but he pulled through with ease.

Of course, Nziyakwi has featured in many plays for Rooftop Promotions which include “Wedding Day”, “Dependency” and “Heal The Wounds”.

He also performed in the April Theatre Festival in Zambia in a play titled “All Systems Out of Order” as well as appearances in several television, film and radio productions.

He is complemented by the talents of Nhongonhema and Mudzvova. Nhongonhema is a University of Zimbabwe theatre graduate who is a top model with many titles up her sleeve including Miss Top Model, Miss Personality 2010, second runner-up Miss Universities and Miss Talent 2010.

There is also excellent direction from Daves Guzha, who also doubled as the producer of the play. The play was written by veteran playwright Stephen Chifunyise.

Source: The Herald

Theatre Digest

Criticism or Critique?

The dictionary describes criticism as disapproval, censure or downright denigration. On the other hand critique is described as analysis, evaluation or review. I am sure most artists would prefer critique as opposed to criticism. What are we as theatre practitioners giving each other or getting from the very few theatre critiques around?

I am not a fan of post-performance discussions that seem to be the norm these days. As much as I appreciate the audience comments about a particular production, I feel this exercise destroys what would have been a lovely experience for the majority of audience members. How does post-performance discussion destroy the theatre experience for the majority of audience members? In the audience will be a few fellow practitioners who ‘know’ how theatre should be or should not be done. They will criticize as opposed to critiquing and point out ‘serious’ mistakes that ordinary members of the audience would not

have noticed thus destroying a perfectly woven illusion carefully put together by the writer, director and the actors.

Colleagues who have been in the industry longer than I have tell me of how Susan Haines would take them aside after a show and tell them what worked and what did not work in their productions. In a number of cases more would not have worked than what would have worked. They would dread reading Susan's weekly theatre column in the newspaper; expecting the worst. But Susan Haines, because she was more concerned about the growth of the industry than criticising practitioners would have written a glowing a review of the show. She would use expressions like, 'a must see show', 'I enjoyed every minute of the show'. That way she propped up the confidence of the theatre practitioners and made them into the great artists they are today. I met Susan Haines when I was still a school teacher in charge of the drama club. She had been driven all the way from Harare to Tsholotsho to assess our play for a national competition. I know now that the play we had put together was faulty, but she gave a glowing report and I was well on my way to becoming a theatre writer and director I am today.

Modern day theatre critiques should learn from the likes of Susan Haines: It's not criticising, but critiquing. It's about destroying the creator of the work under review, but about building on what has been created. And to pull that off one needs many years of real theatre experience and exposure to many forms of theatrical expression. And I wonder if all the aspiring theatre critiques understand this. Do they also understand that it's not criticism, but critiquing?

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