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Professional development through community arts projects: a study of the influence of Thesele Creative Society on the career paths of five people

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B A C K G R O U N D

Since 1980 fieldworkers have been a large and crucial part of the Lab's programme. Fieldworkers are educated professional's who are trained to go out and work with a variety of community based cultural groups of drama schools on the reef and in the rural areas of the Transvaal. Many groups who showcase their plays at the Lab. work with a fieldworker. These groups usually phone and request assistance from our field workers with running their workshops, helping with their play structure, with dance or training of basic theatrical skills. The fieldworkers emphasize developing skills within the groups, most particularly amongst the groups' leaders. A limited amount of time is spent with a group with the intention of empowering rather than imposing ideas on the group.

Community theatre is a very important part of South Africa to-day as it illustrates an important voice that has not been given a chanve to be heard. The motivation behind the festival is to give an opportunity to the players to perform to the general public as well as to see each others work. It also gives the fieldworkers an opportunity to observe the work being done by their colleagues and to assess the general state of community theatre at present.
After the Lab. festival A.S.of Star Tonight said - `What transpired over the next three days under the M2 flyover in Gooch St. will nourish South African theatre for years to come. From morning to evening hot talent and burning issues scorched the icy tarmac as companies and groups danced, acted and sang in the festival tent, or the cosy yet spartan Lab space. Audiences and theatre critics were mobilised into the frontline of South African culture.'
And G.A. of S.T had this to say. `Community theatre and grass roots culture are buzzwords that have almost lost their meaning, especially because the great majority of theatre goers never see the work of these groups. That is the chief reason why Tale Motsepe grapples with the substantial obstacles of producing the annual Market Theatre Laboratory Community Theatre Festival which proved to be a fascinating experience.'